

Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...

Posted by shemirathabris - 11 Jan 2016 15:37

Hello,

I am just on my second day into recovery. For the first time though, I am not focused on "stopping" and not looking at this as a negative. I am looking at the positive of being able to embark on a journey towards kedusha. That said, the damage I've done after all this time of pgam habris has really had an effect on my spirit.

Any suggestions of what I can do to raise my spirits? Of course, I will avoid looking at things I shouldnt look at and doing things I shouldn't be doing. I plan on learning Torah every day for at least two hours, going to the Mikveh on Erev Shabbos, and trying to say the Tikun Haklali afterwards. Is there anything else I can do? I just feel like through all the damage I've done to myself through pgam habris, I lost my upbeat and cheerful personality and nature. I'm happy sometimes, but I'm so steeped in this aveirah that my overall affect, at least for me on the inside is not the same. I am more quick-tempered even if only sometimes, and it comes out at the people in my family who I care about and hate to lash out at. I have been much more irritable and moody and angry since falling to my taivahs.

Would love some suggestions for anything that could lift my spirits and remove some of that anger inside of me... Thank you! Tizku l'mitzvos!

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...

Posted by cordnoy - 11 Jan 2016 16:35

Welcome,

The fact that you are zoche to work towards kedushah.....that itself should lift your spirits.

B'hatzlachah

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...
Posted by Workingguy - 11 Jan 2016 18:06

In my personal experience, so much of those negative feelings come from our inconsistency and feeling that we are really dirty and unworthy of happiness or spirituality.

When we are working on improving and feel like we're living a life more consistent with Torah and who we would like to be, we might find that many of those negative and shame-filled feelings go away and our natural personality comes out.

Hope that's what happens with you!

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...
Posted by Shlomo24 - 11 Jan 2016 21:53

You ask for suggestions, what have you done so far that hasn't worked?

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...
Posted by markz - 11 Jan 2016 23:08

You could join me and take a [depressed person's chill pill...](#)

Or better yet

[cordnoy wrote:](#)

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Follow cordnoys truck, put your pedal to the metal - little steps of course, and your depression will slowly dissipate

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...
Posted by eslaasos - 11 Jan 2016 23:17

I haven't yet found a long term answer, but in my experience living right is the only way to prevent it from getting worse, and it does on occasion get better.

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...
Posted by bearman13 - 26 Jan 2016 05:23

There are techniques which are common in what's called CBT or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. It basically is the idea that our patterns of thought affect our moods and our being. And if we can change those patterns then we can have a positive impact on our well-being.

When being engaged in this struggle it's important to remain optimistic. Being optimistic will give you greater energy, help you avoid falling, and if you do fall it will help you to pick yourself and keep going.

Don't fall into the thinking trap of the three P's:

Permanence: Pessimistic people think that their failure is permanent. This demotivates them and prevents them from continuing the struggle. Optimistic people recognise that while they may have failed now with hard work and diligence they can beat it. It is not a "permanent" failing

and they can succeed. This energises them to keep up the fight and eventually succeed.

Pervasiveness: Pessimistic people assume that failure in this one area of their life means they are a failure in life as a whole. This demotivates them and prevents them from continuing the struggle. It also prevents them from participating fully in all other aspects of their life which reduces their overall well-being which then in turn makes it even harder to succeed in this struggle.

Personalization: Pessimists blame themselves for every time they fail whereas optimists apportion blame on causes outside of themselves. Optimists are therefore generally more confident. Optimists also quickly internalize positive events while pessimists externalize them.

Applied to this struggle:

- Permanence - The struggle isn't permanent. There are a number of people on this site who have had great struggles but have succeeded. With effort you will succeed.
- Pervasiveness - Just because you struggle in this area it does not mean you are a bad Jew in everything that you do. This is a particularly strong perception in the Jewish community. Yes many of us struggle with this. But we can still be successful in other aspects of our lives.
- Personalization - Don't blame this all on yourself. Yes we must accept responsibility for our actions, however also recognise that this is one of the greatest challenges of our generations. No other generation that has ever lived has ever had to live under such constant bombardment of sensual imagery and with such ease of access. We live in a very difficult environment.

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D = Disputation - This is where you become a good Jewish lawyer! Argue with yourself and dispute those erroneous beliefs that you have. E.g. It isn't permanent and you will do better, it isn't pervasive and you do succeed in other areas, it's not personal and you live in challenging times.

E = Energization - This is the end result how you feel now that you have successfully disputed the beliefs that previously had. Hopefully this would result in a more optimistic mindset which will make you more motivated to keep on with the struggle and to eventually succeed!

If you want more information you can look on wikipedia here:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learned_optimism

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...

Posted by shemirathabris - 26 Jan 2016 14:11

True. I have set good fences for myself over the past couple of days and am on a good streak for 3 days now. I am working better, learning happily in my free time, davening better, and just feel like less of a hypocrite--knowing that I'm on a good path. I've BH managed to stop beating myself up, to occupy myself with worthy pursuits and I come home without the bad thoughts. they really were coming from feeling like i was such a bum bc i was on such a bad path, but knowing I'm looking to be better is in itself hugely helpful!

Thank you!

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...

Posted by shemirathabris - 26 Jan 2016 14:15

Thank you so much for this, this comment was incredibly helpful!

Thanks to all who commented above! Very true that just to know I am on a better path now is hugely helpful. Through positive thinking, tefillah, talmud torah, and worthwhile pursuits of use of my time, I've really managed to be much better. Not only have I stayed a few days clean, but I actually feel good about myself. I don't feel tempted because the sense of shame that so often took over me, the yetzer hara that told me I may as well just give up because I'm so far gone, has left me. I'm sure it will be a struggle for me to stay clean but I'm confident I can do it because no more negative thoughts and so many positive outlets I have.

Thanks everyone!

[bearman13 wrote:](#)

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...

Posted by eslaasos - 26 Jan 2016 17:06

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Thanks everyone!

This was extremely helpful to me too. Bearman's post was textbook classic. Additionally, just reviewing the topic and seeing it again through someone else's eyes made me remember that Serenity's mantra of "progress, not perfection" is true for this also, and I had been forgetting that.

I was starting to get frustrated that I'm still dealing with the same old issues that I thought I had dealt with already so it was perfect timing for me to be reminded that some nisyonos may not ever go away permanently and the rate of progress generally flattens after the initial up-curve.

Thank you very much.

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...
Posted by Yesod - 26 Jan 2016 17:26

[shemirathabris wrote:](#)

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Any suggestions of what I can do to raise my spirits? Of course, I will avoid looking at things I shouldn't look at and doing things I shouldn't be doing. I plan on learning Torah every day for at least two hours, going to the Mikveh on Erev Shabbos, and trying to say the Tikun Haklali afterwards. Is there anything else I can do? I just feel like through all the damage I've done to myself through pgam habris, I lost my upbeat and cheerful personality and nature. I'm happy sometimes, but I'm so steeped in this aveirah that my overall affect, at least for me on the inside is not the same. I am more quick-tempered even if only sometimes, and it comes out at the people in my family who I care about and hate to lash out at. I have been much more irritable and moody and angry since falling to my taivahs.

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I felt like you were describing me.

I empathize 100 percent with this.

It's painful to see how our character has been affected due to this.

I guess we can only focus on growth and hope that we will improve.

I will add that after several months clean BH, not much happened automatically.

I realize that I'm just a suitable candidate for self-improvement but not lusting does not repair the damage.

Lusting destroys, not lusting does not destroy but it doesn't build either, it just let's us be.

I think back and and remember the times that i improved as a person, and it happened through sincere prayer and awareness of my defects and asking gd to help me be a better fellow.

Having hashem in a real way, present in my mind and conciousness, had me peaceful and humble, and i remember very trying situations of potential conflict that rolled off, like water on a duck's back.

I need to work on that again.

Hatzlocha rabba to you, and please post any new insights or victories.

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...

Posted by shemirathabris - 26 Jan 2016 18:57

@Yesod, Thank you so much! I'm glad you can relate. And it's nice to hear that a conscious mind aiming in the right direction has helped you shake off potential conflict. It's really very inspiring to hear. I just want to follow up with my progress and where I'm at. And it is my hope that my update will be helpful, insightful, or a sense of chizuk to you and anyone reading.

After doing some serious cheshbon hanefesh and trying to come up with a strategy to overcome this struggle, I started to change my approach. This is not my own approach. It is not in any way new. It's an approach that was touch upon or mentioned explicitly by people in this thread. It's an approach that is popular in true psychology and is used by people all around the world to overcome personal struggles and challenges.

I stopping thinking negative and started thinking positive. It sounds fluffy and cliché, but it's not. The mind does not respond well to negatives and don'ts. Nobody succeeds at a diet because they continually tell themselves "don't eat the cookie." This just keeps the focus on that which is forbidden to us, and our mind has nowhere else to go. The temptation is front and center without anything to stop it, and without anything positive to look forward to. So rather phrasing in the negative and telling myself to refrain from falling in the area of kedushah, I started thinking positive. I started thinking about how much better I could be if I would refrain from those sins. There were so many things that were important to me that had suffered because of my problem, and I felt fired up and empowered to take them back.

My tefillah--which has always been the dearest thing to me in my relationship with HKBH--had been suffering tremendously. Even if I could physically get through tefillah, how much could I truly plug in if deep inside I felt like a hypocrite? How could I plug in and truly daven b'kavanah without feeling those piercing pangs of guilt? So my tefillah was not as sincere or as heartfelt and I remained at a distance.

My Torah learning had suffered as well. Aside from the time lost and the lack of desire when I

felt dirty, the learning I did when I was in yeshiva was just not as strong. Even when I was learning b'chavrusa in the beis medrash, I just wasn't clear-headed. It wasn't easy for me to get my head in the gemara or go through the chumash or whatever I was learning because I was out of sync with myself. I also felt a sense of guilt that a person like me, who is capable of and should be learning Torah, was at the end of the day stuck on such terrible things.

What I think kills me the most is the change in my affect. I don't know what would have happened had I never fallen and never committed the sins I did (at least in the area of kedushah) but there is no question it has had a major impact on my affect. I am such a sweet, soft-spoken, good-natured person who wants to help others. And that is still there. But for so long since first falling, I have been irritable, quick-tempered, angry, etc. and that completely affects my relationships. I'm not in harmony with my own self anymore. Perhaps this is just part of growing up and part of getting older--the load we carry in life has an affect on us. But I can say with some certainty my problem with pgam habris has brought some of these bad middos into my life.

In these and so many other areas, I completely lost control. They became kind of arbitrary, some days good some days bad, depending on how much my struggle was shaking me on any given day. And I want to be in control again. I want my tefillah back. I want my learning back. I want my character back. I want my sense of integrity back. For too long I've settled. And now I want them back.

So, to comment on what you said--you're right. Lust destroys. Pgam habris and all other violations and misconduct in areas of kedushah destroy. And in a sense they cannot build. But let's just step back for a minute and try to put our struggle into context. So many of us here are steeped so low, are in so deep, and feel consumed by our yetzer haras. We are addicted. We feel hopelessly stuck. And yet here we are on this website, in this forum--desperately looking to get out, looking to improve, to change and to grow. What might be easy for some is difficult for so many of us here--and any little step we take, even just a thought of teshuvah on any level is huge. So even just our remorse in a sense can build and is tremendous.

That being said, other than refraining, we must take active steps to change ourselves and remove some of the damage. Tefillah cleanses us. Torah cleanses us. Mitzvos cleanse us. We should take pride in knowing we are on a good pursuit to refrain from falling, and with that pride and new energized sense of self, take advantage of all the other opportunities we have in our avodas Hashem. Those opportunities can really help us go so much further and grow.

I personally am aiming right now for 90-day clean period as it is said that 90 days changes our

neurological wiring and helps break the addictions. I'm hoping but not expecting I will feel much freer by then--but I am also using the time I have to engage in pursuits other than just refraining (including those mentioned above). I also read some psychology and self-help literature that helps us feel good and get on the right track. I would absolutely recommended reading the book "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey. I read it every Elul and it is an incredible piece of work. Not a Jewish book or author, but it is so powerful and really great hashkafa and mussar for how to live a really principled life.

And I actually do feel a bit lighter now. I couldn't have written something this positive days ago when I was still unclean. But now, I feel like a lot of the self-doubt has disappeared. I'm hoping that continues.

Thank you so much to everyone for their input and support. And I hope this comment was helpful! Hatzlachah to you in your journey!

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...
Posted by Yesod - 26 Jan 2016 19:04

Good words.

Im a HUGE fan of the 7 habits.

I read it for years and it was my bible for self improvement.

I recently picked it back up, i was just thinking about it today.

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...

Posted by Shteeble - 28 Jul 2023 14:30

[bearman13 wrote on 26 Jan 2016 05:23:](#)

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I'm still appreciating this post.

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Re: Suggestions Wanted: Recovering from Depression...
Posted by chaimoigen - 30 Jul 2023 03:37

CBT can be an incredible tool.

On a simple and practical level: Write a short paragraph listing your motivations, goals, and courses of action to meet your commitments. Put it in your wallet (or Siddur!) and review it a few times a day (helps to read out loud, too). This can be extremely helpful.

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