

Sholom's Mindfulness Recovery Path

Posted by tiefster88 - 22 Feb 2018 17:19

Hi everybody,

I am posting on this website for the first time. I have tried a few different methods in the past to recover. The highest quality for me was the mindfulness app programs for addiction by Judson Brewer.

In the past I was sober using this program for months and didn't have to struggle with difficult cravings as much. However after so many weeks I lost the emotional push to keep up with the program. Other things came up in life and this got pushed to the side. Eventually a craving came along and knocked me over.

This time I am going through the program again in combination with a Taphsic neder. I hope that posting my insights of the program on here can help me with my program and staying sober. If anybody else reads it and gains something that can help them then that would be a great bonus.

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How long do cravings last?

Posted by tiefster88 - 19 Apr 2018 20:39

Its like we have a big committee in our head trying to convince us to do what they want. They are out to protect themselves because they are threatened by the mindfulness. They tell us cravings will last forever. In the moment we can get stuck wondering when this is going to end.

How long do your cravings last? Its hard to estimate how long because we only have this moment but our minds say it's going to last forever. **All we really have is tightness in this moment, restlessness in this moment etc there is no real catastrophe that's going to happen now.** If we note these moments we can break them down into each feeling. What does 'I cant stand this' feel like in my body right now. Bite sized pieces aren't so bad. And when we are really curious it feels good.

Explore all feelings and thoughts that come with craving and note what each of them feel like.

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Radio Thoughts

Posted by tiefster88 - 23 Apr 2018 11:28

Thoughts are just intangible words and images that appear in our minds. They can be associated with emotions. They can be random images and words that just pop up and trigger us to lust.

When we use our mindfulness skills to start observing our thoughts carefully we realize that there's not much more to them. They can trigger body sensations and urges and body sensations can trigger thoughts but in the end we can see that they are still just thoughts. They can seem like never ending. We don't have to take them seriously.

They don't have power on their own. Only the power we give to them. Each time we listen to them they get louder and louder. We are on auto-pilot and feeding our inner kid lolly pops.

We can pay attention, note that thought as thinking and then let it pass. "I heard you but that doesn't sound like a good idea."

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Tripping On Thoughts

Posted by tiefster88 - 26 Apr 2018 10:29

There's a big difference between being aware of thoughts and noting them than being sucked up in them, where they can fuel fires of craving and create mind states that can take us away from living a healthy life.

Lets say you're walking down street and you see an attractive woman and a thought pops up, "it might be nice to have a fantasy about her" It's like a rock on the road you don't see so you trip

on it. **What happens next is very important. If you note it as thinking you can quickly regain your balance without falling down.**

If you aren't paying attention and don't notice it, and continue into a fantasy, that is like falling down a deep hole into the mud. More thoughts like "I've been good lately" etc are like starting to play with the mud.

If you become mindful you can step out note it as thinking or craving and remind yourself of your goal. Then you can ride it out until that thought stream and craving subsides.

Lets say you don't and fall into muck and you looked at some shmutz. You could examine closely and see what you got. Was it worth it? Did it help with whatever triggered you in the first place? This is like climbing out of the hole and washing yourself off.

But thoughts like "I cant believe I did that" "This is too hard" "I am never going to be in control of my lusting" This is like jumping up and down in the mud crying that you are muddy. You are only getting muddier. Or you might watch more which is like wallowing in the mud. Here too you can note frustration, self judgement, worry fear or whatever come up. Pay attention to what you got from acting out and what you got from beating yourself up when you lapsed.

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Re: Tripping On Thoughts

Posted by cordnoy - 26 Apr 2018 14:03

[tiefster88 wrote on 26 Apr 2018 10:29:](#)

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The action book writes: if we permit a lust thought to remain in our heads without dealin' with it immediately, we begin physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and neurological changes within us. If we repeat these lust thoughts, we will create the reality.

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Change is Scary

Posted by tiefster88 - 29 Apr 2018 11:30

Our brains are set up to learn based on rewards. If this happens a lot it can become a habit. Habit formation can be a good thing. Imagine every morning we had to relearn how to walk, use the bathroom, put on our clothes, tie our shoes eat breakfast etc. We would be exhausted before lunch. Our brains are set-up to maximize efficient learning. Learn something quickly, store it away as a habit and free up some bandwidth, free up some memory space so that we have some energy to learn something new. Once we learn a short term solution to a problem

our brain says. "Well it works now so lets file that away in our memory banks so we can do it again tomorrow", and we do. Over and over.

Lust gets linked with either taking away our bad feelings or giving us good feelings or improving our lives in some way. Eventually we become habituated to it and don't even notice the link. We simply assume that we need to lust. We fail to notice when our acting out might even be making things worse.

If old habits dont work why don't we suddenly stop doing them? Even if we start to see the results more clearly, we are fighting against our brains and as prediction machines, our brains are aiming to make the future more certain, our brains don't like change. Habits feel comfortable and familiar. We form a habit and it starts to feel comfortable through repetition. Any time we try and change something it can feel uncomfortable. Even if the habits are unhelpful or unhealthy it can send a signal to our brains that says "don't do that stick with what you know, keep your old habits even if it's outdated or now causing problems".

Researchers found that depressed people choose depressing music and pictures of depressing faces over happy ones. This is because people prefer the familiar over being happy to verify their emotional selves. We are motivated to do things that verify who we are. If we are depressed we identify with that feeling. We do things to keep this going. This self becomes a habit pattern.

The philosopher Alan Watts put it "Ego, the self which he has believes himself to be, is nothing but a pattern of habits."

If we do anything enough it can become a habit. We become identified with these habits so that they become who we are. We are motivated to keep these habits patterns going, simply because they are familiar even if later they do not serve us anymore. And change is uncomfortable. This is who I am and it feels strange and even scary to change. These outdated short-term rewards lead to long term problems. What do our brains do?

When we start to **question if we are a lustful person and as we see more clearly that lust is just made up of body sensations and emotions that come and go, instead of who we are,** our brains start resisting saying "danger danger, this person is changing, stay who you are". If we can know that our minds don't like change we can anticipate the unease that comes with

changing habits. This is the master mechanic lesson. If we know that the engine is going to sound a little different as we start burning different fuel, we don't need to get scared and quickly return to adding the old stuff. In this case feeding the anxiety or staying identified as being an anxious person. The irony is that the sound the engine makes now, for example feeling anxious, is the only way it feels right. It had sounded this way for so long that we are familiar with it. At times that we don't feel anxious, we might even wonder what is wrong. At those moments the engine might really be more right. We can say to our brains that we are updating our behaviors because you have realized that these are more healthy.

So in summary:

1. Our Brains form habits, habits can be helpful
2. Our Brains make associations of certain behavior with performance. If we see that behaviour and performance are separate we can stop feeding the association.
3. Our brains don't like change. If we can anticipate this and relax into this. Change will be less stressful.

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Forcing Mindfulness

Posted by tiefster88 - 01 May 2018 10:08

Have you been doing well with changing some habit and then suddenly when you're exhausted or totally stressed out your brain says to you "you know you've done so well let's take a break"

Awareness itself doesn't take effort. For example how much effort does it take to be aware of what you are reading. You don't have to add extra effort to hear me you simply have to be paying attention. And what about staying focused, if you are curious about what I am going to say next, it might not feel like any effort because your interest keeps your mind from wandering.

Driving in 1st and 2nd gears if done properly don't take effort as long as that fuel of curiosity is there. Even driving in 3rd gear doesn't take effort either. As long as you keep adding that fuel of curiosity to your gas tank.

Yet many people ask "I worked really hard this week, I just need a break from being mindful." When we explore together their experience 99% of the time this is a result of continuing to add old habitual fuel to their gas tanks. They are so used to doing or forcing things they have brought this old habit to mindfulness as well. They are trying to force themselves to pay attention. They are trying to force themselves to be mindful.

We can switch the the clean fuel of curiosity if we are feeling tired and then we won't need to take a break.

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Mantras

Posted by tiefster88 - 08 May 2018 10:40

A mantra or maamar can be a really helpful tool for when a craving comes along.

Something like "Lust is cocaine" or "is this really helpful" or "what do I really get from this" or "I can do this" as a reminder that you have done this before and can do this now.

They work best when you have already starved the craving for a while.

I chose "is this worth it to me?" at one time. And at the moment am using "Whats happening right now?" to anchor me into the present moment. I can then focus on whatever emotions, thoughts or experience I am having with my 5 senses from an outside perspective and not be sucked in or controlled by them. I then have the free choice to make my own decisions.

Should I act out to temporarily remove these uncomfortable emotions? But then I will just get way worse emotions right after. And I will have to pay \$500 to a really bad charity. Can I afford that? What will that feel like after I pay the money and my bank account is decimated?

Have these emotions dissipated by themselves in the past? Is it really so bad just to sit and be curious about them?

Well actually no, they are quite interesting sensations. What do they feel like exactly? Where are they in my body? Higher up or lower down? All in one place? In the left side, the right side or in the middle? Do they move around? Do they change when they are in different parts of my body? What do they tell me to do? What thoughts do they produce?

?All this curiosity and learning about myself actually feels good. And just to see the niflaos HaBoreh that He could make the body like that! With all these feelings that come from emotions. Do you know how many processes have to happen just to make these emotions be there when triggered? And that they should produce thoughts to do something! Just to give us the opportunity to not listen to the thoughts produced by these emotions to think shmutz thoughts. And instead to just concentrate on the feelings themselves and how after a while they just dissolve on their own into thin air because they were just an emotion that comes and goes with time. And the thought to act out also disappear with time. They are not real. They are not me.

And anything that goes on outside of me. Any attractive woman that I pass on the street. Even if she may trigger me to have a craving, I can let those cravings die down. I don't need to think about the woman after she passes, instead I can bring my mind to the next thing on the street, the flowers, the bus stops, the sky, the feeling of my feet pressing against my shoes, the cool air breezing onto my body. **That is so much more real that the woman who just passed me 5 minutes ago.** I don't even remember what she looks like. I don't know anything about her. At this point she is but a product of my imagination. Whats going to happen. Am I going to introduce myself to her? Has anything like that ever happened to me before. Nope!

Any thinking about her is just my imagination and its unreal. **It's a lot easier to think about the true present moment which actually exists. Which is what really is "whats going on right now"!**

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Evidence Based Faith

Posted by tiefster88 - 10 May 2018 09:38

There are 2 types of faith. 1st is leap that you take to start something. The 2nd type builds on the first. Call it evidence based faith.

There is quite a bit of scientific evidence behind mindfulness.

Each time you ride out a craving or are able to let go of a destructive thought pattern you see the results in real time. People who doubt have to separate just going through the motions versus doing the practice.

Look at all the evidence clearly and bring it together to build your evidence based faith for this program.

Diligence to ingrain these new habits will take faith.

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Chazara

Posted by tiefster88 - 13 May 2018 09:18

- The abstinence violation effect - We trip on thoughts and if not mindful and become **stuck** in a hole. We can stop at any moment by bringing an awareness to that moment and noting our thoughts and emotions in that moment. That's what helps us to climb out of that hole.
1. Our brains are set up to form habits - like the habit of lusting
 2. Our brains **don't like change**- we naturally resist giving up lust
 3. Our brains are good at associating things - like lust at helping us in the past

Mindfulness helps with all 3 of these.

- We can investigate the feeling of comfort not to change and continue lusting and see what we really get from sticking with these old habits
- This helps us start exploring being more comfortable with change, which is what is constantly happening in the world anyway
- Can start exploring new ways of living- do I really have to lust to feel better.
- This opens us up to try new ways of being

Sometimes mindfulness can feel like a lot of work. **Awareness is really natural and effortless.** If we are fully curious we are drawn in with no effort.

If we do take a break from mindfulness it is helpful **not to beat ourselves** up or feel guilty.

Every time you move from contraction to expansion you are moving in the direction of **flow**. More of an on/off thing. You can be getting wound up and getting contracted or be unwinding and being expanded at any moment. We can find the right conditions for unwinding. Each time we notice the contraction of a craving, you can train your brain to move in the direction of flow (and not the other type of flow ;-)).

Find simple ways to get mindfulness bells to go off in your head when you are about to feed a craving. Instead of fanning the flames or falling into a hole you can find a short **mantra or maamar** that helps you regain your balance

As we try a new thing out we gather evidence to see whether it works. Each time you collect more data and this helps you see the benefits of being aware. You don't have to believe anybody. **You know it for yourself!** That's moving from knowledge to wisdom.

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Mindful Restraint

Posted by tiefster88 - 15 May 2018 11:38

Our pre-frontal cortex which controls self-control goes offline when we are stressed. We drop into our old habits instead. If we can't rely on our pre-frontal cortex, what can we do?

2 things we can do:

1) not get stressed in the first place. When we **start to see reactive thought patterns we can get curious and pull away any fuel so fire doesn't fuel.**

2) If we know our prefrontal cortex is going offline **then can set new habits. The new habit to**

respond mindfully rather than react. We will see how big this hole is before we step in it. **A mindful pause to notice the why of lusting is critical.** Was I triggered or stressed or bored. We have to support the muscle of RAIN.

A mindful pause provides those critical seconds to simply pause and reflect. **Why am I about to act out? What did I get from this the last 10 times?** Memory of previous outcomes.

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Re: Sholom's Mindfulness Recovery Path
Posted by lionking - 15 May 2018 11:55

Congratulations on reaching 90 days. Hatzlocha Rabba on your journey forward.

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Reached 90 days!!!!
Posted by tiefster88 - 15 May 2018 12:24

Thanks Lionking!

I wasn't going to make a deal about it and wasn't sure anybody would notice:blush:.

This is only my 2nd time ever making 90 days. And my first time making 90 days not in SA.

When I was in SA for a couple of months, a few years ago I made just over a hundred days but was looking at inappropriate pics for a couple of weeks before 100, and fantasizing most of the time.

This time I haven't looked at any shmutz intentionally and have had a fraction of the lustful thoughts B"H.

There was one day recently where I started needing to go to the bathroom to wee all the time. I looked into at NOFap and it seems to be something that a lot of people going sober complained about. I Knew the only way to get the feeling away would be to act out. It was driving me crazy and I couldn't concentrate on work. It was soo uncomfortable!

All the mindfulness and Yiras Hashem didn't help at that point and only the Taphsic helped me. I wasn't going to lose \$500 dollars to get this feeling away. For me I need Yiras Hashem, mindfulness and a taphsic neder.

So just to list the things that I have done to reach 90 days of sobriety with very little lust compared to the past:

- 1) Both formal and informal mindfulness **every day**.
- 2) **Posting** the mindfulness modules on GYE.
- 3)A large **taphsic neder** with mindfulness built in.
- 4) Learning **Tanya** for the first time and practicing the meditations of Gedulas Ein Sof in there **regularly**.
- 5) Talking to a **Rav** occasionally about how I am doing.
- 6) Using mindfulness to **take my mind away from any lust thoughts** when they come up.
- 7) Using mindfulness to **focus on the cravings** to act out produced by emotions that came from triggers, until the cravings died down.
- 8) Using mindfulness to **deal with other negative emotions** like anxiety before they lead to craving to act out.

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Re: Reached 90 days!!!!

Posted by Markz - 15 May 2018 13:18

KOM!!

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Re: Reached 90 days!!!!

Posted by tiefster88 - 15 May 2018 19:44

Those drives and energies that were being used for shmutz and lusting aren't going nowhere!

They have to be used for something!

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