

the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 03 Jan 2023 01:51

Starting a new thread. I think this title better expresses my intent.

This thread about filters helped me:

<https://guardyoureyes.com/forum/1-Break-Free/379593-FREE-FILTERS-AND-ACCOUNTABILITY-SERVICES-THAT-WORK>

My experience with filters is as follows:

The notion that "I can always get around a filter, so why bother" is just the yetzer hara talking. I found a filter that works for me. I encourage you to find a combination of products that works for you, too.

There are many kinds of protection devices for the computer and smartphone. Here is a summary.

- **Content filters:** prevents certain images from being viewed on my computer. This includes Gentech and Techloq. There is also an easy way to block images on my computer, and that's simply by turning off the "display images" setting in my browser.

- **Website filters:** prevents me from accessing certain websites. Some filters do this with a "blacklist" - that is, I can view all websites EXCEPT the ones on an "exclusion" list, or a "whitelist" - that is, I can ONLY view websites on the "inclusion" list. "Whitelists" are stricter. NativUSA is a whitelist filter and advertises itself as "kosher Internet." I've also considered an advertisement blocker. The added benefit of a strong filter is that it can block advertisements. Some advertisements can be really triggering for me, so it's good to have them blocked.

- **Screen-time filters:** Microsoft Family Safety is a feature built into the operating system that lets parents set usage limits for the computers at home and can prevent certain applications from being installed. The Apple version of this for the iPhone is called Screen Time.

- **Monitoring services:** Someone outside of your household watches your content periodically to assess whether or not it is safe. This includes WebChaver (which is based on Covenant Eyes), Qustodio and NetFree. NetFree is run by a Vaad.

- **Installation services:** Techkosher.org provides "TAG" offices to help users install filters.

- **Accountability services:** Venishmartem.com can provide an anonymous partner to watch

my screen. This is especially useful if I feel embarrassed to talk about my problems.

I hope this can help you, too.

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by Hashem Help Me - 03 Feb 2023 11:33

Mazel Tov on 365. May Hashem help you remain pure for many many years!

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 05 Feb 2023 00:48

More *hitbodedut* lately. Talk it out.

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 12 Feb 2023 01:32

I wish that I were better at the *hilchot onat devarim*. I know that if I could learn to say nice things or not speak at all, it would keep me out of a lot of trouble -- not to mention not injure other people. I've been hurt by others and I react by being judgmental. When I get angry or frustrated, I used to bring it home and fall. Now, of course, I've had some success in not falling, but the anger and frustration is still there and I want to find better ways to deal with it.

I walk a lot. I walk at least an hour a day. I wish I could live and work in a place where I didn't have to drive at all. Driving in automobiles is a blessing and a curse: one gets to drive all day six days a week, but then one must drive all day six days a week. So I compensate by walking often.

When the weather is cold for months and then begins to improve, I start to get more energetic. I'd like to imagine in the ancient times that this is when planting begins, so a *Yid* would put themselves to work and be rewarded (instead of having all of these emotions accumulate for nothing.)

For those farmers that observed the *Shmittah* last year, they are planting again now during Shevat. I wish I could plant a tree personally. At least I can contribute with a donation. I have houseplants, too. Doing *mitzvahs* that connect me to the Land of Israel is how I can give my life meaning and purpose.

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 12 Feb 2023 03:04

Something else important that came up during conversations this past week:

My brain is built to stare at fires. That's how my ancestors used to cook food: with fire. In ancient times that is how my ancestors kept away predators while they cooked food. I stare at fire and I like it.

Advertisers abuse this hard-wired instinct in my brain. It started with television and then moved to the "smart" cell phones. The longer the phones keep me staring at the screen, the more advertisements they sell. The worst of the cell phone apps invite the Satan on purpose and use the Evil Inclination for profit. Really awful. Combine audio with this and now I'm **immersed** in the distraction.

I don't blame them. I know that even good things get abused. Heck, a little water is good for

The responsibility is on me, not anyone else. I work hard to break the immersion, and I pray to my Creator for help.

One of my computer filters includes **setting time limits** on my cell phone apps. I also have a timer that I bought for \$1.25, just a simple timer. "Why don't you just use the timer on your phone?" You might ask. Well, I open my phone with the intent of setting the timer and then I get 7 text message notifications, 5 WhatsApp notifications, 21 new emails and a message from

By the time I set my timer I already wasted all the time that I wanted to

So, no. I use a separate timer and that works well for me. It has a little beeper and that gives me a Pavlov-ian reward for meeting my goal of self-restraint.

I like the *tehilim tikkun habris* to *daven* for healing. If I had to assemble my own list of meaningful *tehilim* I'd start with 102 as a prayer to **PROTECT TIME**.

my learning app.

I also light candles during the week, sometimes with incense. If stick incense is a problem for me sometimes, I have a water-oil-and-tealight incense diffuser that works well for me. Also regarding lights, my computer and my phone have a way to change the colors of the screen to eliminate blue light in the evening. I find the bright lights from the screens to be over-stimulating, especially late at night. Making these color transitions helps me wind down, go to sleep, wake up early the next day and then be productive.

All of this has the effect of **taking away the thrill and comfort of computers**. I treat computers the way I treat junk food if I have a weight management goal. For example if I am on a food diet, then I know I must reduce or eliminate processed sugar like candies and starches. I have to eat more vegetables. At first, it tastes hideous to eat raw carrots. Then I refine my recipes with salad dressings or hummus or pickles. After a month the vegetables taste refreshing and nutritious, and the sugary starchy foods just give me a bellyache and a headache. Same thing with computers. I get a rush from the screens because the neurons in my wet brain are hard-wired to give me a kick when I see bright flashy things. That's just the way that I believe *HaShem* decided to create me.

So, I change my source of **thrills**, mental rushes and stimulation. Instead, I get a rush from exercise, or from success at work, or sometimes from mastering a challenging skill in my studies -- and sometimes from *davening*, if I'm lucky. And if I'm looking for **comfort** then the candles, good food, adjusting my screens, having good filters, a clean home -- and also sometimes from *davening*, again if I'm fortunate to receive tranquility from the Master of the Universe.

Comfort in prayer for me doesn't come from validation, because I am nobody to receive anything from the Exalted One. For me it comes from trusting *HaShem* to carry out His justice

and hoping to receive His mercy.

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 19 Feb 2023 04:42

I found a hole in my filter and I stopped myself. I then corrected the problem. I deleted old files, no excuses. ***I don't need them.***

There was a time when I didn't do teshuva because I didn't feel any deep regret. I did, however, feel a profound longing for something better, something holy in my life. It took a long time for me to build a logical argument, a chain of postulates that led from something that I did care about all the way to the behavior that I needed to change. I hope that I never look back and break that chain of logic. I want to couple that chain to trust in HaShem, my Rock. I will have faith that HaShem will save, because He does save.

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I learned this past week from listening to the Chabad Daily Rambam podcast that "everything belongs to HaShem except the fear of HaShem." And yet EVERYTHING belongs to HaShem! How do I reconcile these two opposing statements? When I do a mitzvah with the proper intent and fear and awe of HaShem and love for HaShem, HaShem "buys" so-to-speak that fear from me. He now owns it, and he pays me with a share in the World to Come. Good deal, *chaverim*...

I have role models. I don't worship them. If my role models are too lofty, I turn my attention from them and raise my level to where I can. I've also been around on this planet long enough to know that everyone decays -- sometimes gracefully, sometimes suddenly. Only **G-d** is eternal. So, I separate the deeds from the person. I separate the attributes and their attainment from the person or object possessing them. I aspire to be better than I am, and I keep and guard and maintain that which I already have.

I wish all of you good luck and strength in breaking free and sustaining your achievements. May you find the wisdom that you seek.

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 27 Feb 2023 02:17

Let me be as plain as I can about this. I will not use someone's desired pronouns. I will be polite, but I will not lie. I will be even more that polite! I will be compassionate! And it is not compassionate to go along with an idea that someone has when that person is hurting themselves through it! *Shema, Israel.*

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 19 Mar 2023 01:27

Filters work for me but I totally understand how filters are not enough. A filter on my computer doesn't do much when the smut is already in my head and the bad habits have already become part of my life.

So if the filter doesn't do much, then **I need to do more**. Sometimes, much much more.

I read a lot. I don't just read Torah books. I read secular books on self-improvement. I also write. I don't just write here, and I work hard to publish.

I plan a lot. Even if I don't execute all of my plans, I maximize my productivity.

As much as I want to be a Torah scholar, I also recognize that I absolutely must have some kind of a job that pays. I work so that I can give, especially to those in need.

I clean house. A clean house helps keep a clean mind.

I try not to lament my lot. However, I have read how some other people have grown up. Those stories inspire me, so I will also share mine in the hopes that it will inspire others.

When I was a young child of six or seven, I watched movies that displayed intimacy and horrific violence. I don't understand all of the reasons that my parents allowed me to watch. That exposure was not good for me. It gave me many incorrect impressions.

When I was a teenager of about 17 years of age I began taking medication to alter my mood. That also was not good for me. My problem was my behavior, not my emotional state. If I had stopped the behavior of p & m then I'd like to believe that my emotions would have been much more stable. I wish my parents had taught me that this behavior was wrong. I wish that my parents had not allowed me to take the medication. I wish that I had sought being uplifted (getting "high") through work, through friendships, through meaningful music and art, through travel and adventure. I wish I had been **high on life**.

I wish when I was a teenager that I had not been sucked into the culture of pursuing the loss of my virginity, as if that is some sort of sick accomplishment. I did not like the way that this "goal" was achieved. It hurt me and it hurt my partner. I was not intimate with anyone else for many many many many long years after that, but it did me no good. I had not quit the p & m, and so there was no *kapparah*, no atonement.

I know this: I would not be missing ***ANYTHING*** by having only one partner in my life. It would have been good for me as a teenager to hear that message consistently from my parents, my teachers, my role models, righteous celebrities and *gdolim* who were happy with their lot. It would have also helped to hear from *baalei tshuvah* who sincerely repented the terrible mistakes that they had made. Too often there are monsters that pride themselves on their *aveirahs* as if those were accomplishments, G-d forbid. This attitude is especially common in popular culture. My experience is that in the long term those "accomplishments" are meaningless.

The sin of sexual immorality is the single greatest sin in my life. In my eyes, all *halacha* is built to prevent that one sin. That sin is equal to murder and idolatry, G-d forbid, and I understand

why. The p & m doesn't make it easier to not cheat on my wife. It makes it much more difficult. I wish I could share this lesson with you.

What works for me is to **be good and to do good**. I want to do acts of kindness, and sometimes the greatest kindness is just to listen. I want to pursue meaningful challenges and adventure, and sometimes helping others can lead to a great adventure.

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Re: the journey requires effort
Posted by turning.point - 19 Mar 2023 13:01

As much as it is important to be grateful to HaShem for the blessings in my life, and grateful to others for the kindnesses that I receive, I want to continue to build and to grow, to learn and to explore. It is the duality of human existence.

Rabbi Shraga Kallus gave a good *dvar* on "the unspoken betrayal of marriage" where he talks about how the burning bush was not consumed. (By the way, when he says that the goyim use p as part of their relationships so much that it ought to be one of the seven Noahide mitzvahs... he was being sarcastic... *bochurim*...)

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Re: the journey requires effort
Posted by turning.point - 20 Mar 2023 15:24

The mitzvah of *shmirat einayim* goes along with all of the other mitzvahs. It is one among the 613, not the only one.

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Re: the journey requires effort
Posted by turning.point - 26 Mar 2023 19:32

Some of the best advice that I ever got about getting married was:

1. I should think about the kind of woman that I want,

then I should think about the kind of man that she would want,

2. Also, *shmirat lashon* is a very important mitzvah. I can't engage in it, and I can't hear it. This mitzvah helped me understand when **not** to say and to do, and when I **must** say and do. I've seen many matches end because of an over-heard word that was over-trusted.

3. Finally, I will say that I had many "never" conditions. It took me a long time to learn that some of my "never" conditions were not really "never" conditions at all. I had to understand why those attributes mattered so much to me. I wish someone had told me that certain characteristics don't matter. See *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 145.
then I have to become that kind of man.

I have heard that I can't be married if I'm an addict. This isn't being strict - this is a kindness.

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 02 May 2023 14:14

Back on 29 March I had what I considered a fall. I've still got over 450 days free from p but I had a problem with m when I was exercising at home. It made me understand that the nature of exercising is not to make me look good. It's to make me stronger, physically and mentally. It's not in my nature to be a narcissist. Even if it was my teivah to be a worrier, I don't need to fear other people's expectations about my appearance. I should do things because HaShem wants me to and because I enjoy them, not because of what someone else might think.

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 02 May 2023 15:23

I learned an expensive but valuable lesson about six weeks ago, too. This was on 19 March, after I had been traveling on business. I was a Very Good Boy and had fillers on all of my devices and not used anyone else's devices and not acted out and not had a fall. I got in trouble with the law for something completely unrelated. Thank G-d the judge showed mercy on me but dealing with this has made for a difficult six weeks. I gained from this experience. Everything happens for a reason! The lesson is: just because I am working very hard on my sobriety, doesn't mean that all of the rest of the Torah's laws and our civil laws don't still apply. Take care on your journey!

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 10 May 2023 20:51

I am very grateful to be so fortunate to have my difficulties, because working hard on my struggle has led to new dimensions of sobriety.

Now that I have some victory over my addiction, I have focused more on the **other** problems in my life. More than anything it has been about time management. I am reading and learning and applying a lot of new techniques, and the productivity gains from it have been remarkable.

I will say that I used my addiction as a crutch to numb a lot of pain. I no longer have the crutch, and so a lot of the pain has become a lot more painful. So, in some ways, the struggle is more difficult, not less difficult. However, the benefits from sobriety are, THANK G-D, much greater than the increase in the difficulties from dealing with my addiction. So, overall, it is good.

I have written before that I have an over-active imagination and a problem with fantasies. As much as I can, I turn my imagination to the good and I try to imagine the *beis hamikdash* as it once stood. I try to memorize *halachot* of *korbanot*. It helps a lot and it works for me.

Last note: my troubles have encouraged me to do more *gemilut chassidim*, and I did not expect to be pushed to increase this due to my troubles. But, that's how it happened. Everything worked out for the best.

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Re: the journey requires effort

Posted by turning.point - 19 Jun 2023 17:15

Don't give up! I'm still here. I've just been busy with my studies. My time management practice has motivated me to be more productive, and that means I haven't had time to be on this site. I am still working hard to stay away from the evil and stay close to the good. **DON'T GIVE UP.**

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