

New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Fool - 22 Feb 2021 17:37

Ok, here I go again. It's been a few years since I became aware of this problem and there has been a lot of ups and downs, mostly downs. The longest clean streak I accomplished is 28 days, which is great, but feels pathetic in light of the time I've spent trying to achieve just that.

This time has to be different. I am dating a girl seriously and hope to get married within the next few months. I refuse to bring this problem into the relationship. I will let her know about my struggles in general, she deserves to know what she's getting into, but I will not make her go through the hardships I've had with it. She's too good for that. I am determined to have it under control by my wedding night.

I'm on day 8 right now and I will not fail.

Activities I've taken on to ensure this time works:

1. Guardyoureyes
2. Daily exercise - alternatively calisthenics and running
3. Daven daily - at least once
4. Learn daily - at least one mishna
5. Daily mindfulness meditation

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Grant400 - 01 Mar 2021 19:03

[retrych wrote on 01 Mar 2021 17:14:](#)

I don't know that its exactly the same. For one thing, the knowledge of how far you have gone and what you are capable of getting through is a big difference. I also feel the periods of difficulty come less frequently and usually not the same strength. Not always, and the fight is still there, but it's not the same, all life encompassing battle. **Or maybe it's us who change.**

Yup, that's it my friend. The battle is the same, we aren't. That's why as soon as we weaken our resolve, and relinquish our chokehold on lust - we are immediately thrust back into the heat of things just like before we put the brakes on.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Fool - 24 Mar 2021 17:11

37 days! After a strong PMO addiction (many hours per day, every day) that has spanned over half my life, this is the longest streak I've ever had! The most before this was 28 days, and that was in January of this year. Before that I had a couple of periods a little over three weeks. While I've had this addiction for a long long time, its only in the past five years (after I found ybop and gye) that I've been trying to fight it. Most of my fights have ended in early failure, leading to many long periods of not even trying.

While I would never have been able to get this far without all the work I did in the past five years, there are a few things that are different this time. The main difference is that I have been dating an amazing girl for over 4 months that I hope to get engaged to soon.

I know it is not great to change for someone else, and I have a lot of thoughts about it. But in short I'm using it more as a push to get over the initial hump. To motivate myself to do the work that I need to do to solidify lasting change. It is working. During the most difficult times, thoughts of her and what I want for my marriage keep me on track.

I also have been reading everything I can about this addiction and recovery. I replaced much of my time that I would spend with P and lust related things(many hours per day, maybe half of some days), with instead reading all of the various forums and literature. My long term goal is to phase this out, and live a normal life with only some maintenance for my recovery, but for the initial 60 or 90 days I think it's OK to obsess over my recovery.

I often write these posts in my head and then never actually write them down. I'm going to work on writing more and documenting my journey as it's probably more helpful to actually solidify my thoughts.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Striving Avreich - 24 Mar 2021 17:48

Thank you for the post! Your obsession and effort for recovery and using that to replace the time and energy put in to negative and destructive behaviours is astounding!

Keep up the great work!

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Fool - 24 Mar 2021 21:15

Just spent 30 minutes writing a post about my history and it wouldn't submit and then deleted everything. Message from Hashem that I shouldn't post that I guess.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Fool - 26 Mar 2021 03:28

I'm finding it really difficult to fall asleep on time. It seems the only way I can get to sleep these days is when I am completely exhausted. The only time I get more than five hours is shabbos, and a lot of days I only get three.

The main problem I'm having is with fantasy. With the amount of time I've spent with erotic material, I have a virtually endless library in my head. I can probably spend many many hours going through it all. The way I've stayed away from fantasy is by force of will. The same way I'm careful with shmiras eynayim, where I look away instantly from anything that triggers my lust (aside from my girlfriend of course, although I do try and limit the amount I lust after her). I do the same thing in my mind. Any time I have a thought that triggers lust I immediately "look away" I send my minds eye in a different direction and actively think about a different subject while letting the lustful thought go.

I'm doing very well with this generally. Rarely I'll have incredibly vivid memories of P pop up in

my mind during the day, along with my heart racing and my libido awakening, and it will take some time for that to fade away. The problem arises when I try to go to sleep. I've never been great at falling asleep and to do so requires long periods of me laying down in a very relaxed state. This means I let my guard down and my mind wanders. Inevitably this leads to thoughts of P and because I don't have my defenses up I end up thinking down a memory path longer than I want to. No longer than 10-30 seconds but this still definitely triggers me and awakens those pathways in my brain. Once this occurs I find it very difficult to "look away" in my mind and the P memory takes up more room and becomes more powerful.

The only way I've found to deal with this is by opening my eyes and picking up my phone or a book to distract me for a while. Then I'll try and sleep again. And get triggered again. This cycle goes until I've totally exhausted myself and fall asleep.

I'm not sure what to do here as this little sleep is definitely damaging. The cycle is hurting me. Beside the regular negative health benefits and harmful impacts on the brain, it also saps my energy that I need for shmeras eynayim. I hope as time goes on the memories will fade and I'll be able to sleep. Many people report insomnia when first kicking this addiction. For now I will just keep trucking.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail
Posted by Fool - 26 Mar 2021 14:34

Question for the olam:

A while back I was listening to a shiur from R Noach Weinberg (one of the 48 ways to wisdom) and he mentioned that jewish philosophy holds that P is worse than sex outside of marriage. He really didn't get into why that is though and moved on quickly.

He of course developed this talk before the advent of high speed internet and smartphones. I wonder how he would have talked about it if he was alive when everyone had unlimited access to shmutz in the palm of their hands at all times.

The reason I'm curious is not because I want to find a reason to engage in premarital sex, I find

abstaining from that pretty easy. I'm more curious to understand what Rabbi Weinberg found so damaging about P specifically that he felt it was worse than something so clearly assur.

So does anyone have any thoughts or other sources on this idea?

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Re: New Journey, can't fail
Posted by Fool - 30 Mar 2021 15:15

I'm 43 days in and just had one of my closest calls. I was feeling kind of down and frustrated, browsing the internet to try and distract myself which was just making things worse. I was an inch away from looking up P. The YH convinced me that I just wanted to see what's there, it's been 43 days, think of all the new stuff that came out! With the way I currently feel, it will definitely make me feel much better to just look! It's already decided, you are definitely just going to take a look.

Thank God I was able to step back from the edge. Not exactly sure how but I made it through. I stopped browsing the internet immediately and stepped back.

I realized what was making me feel this way. I was procrastinating about certain work things and felt I wasn't doing enough, while also worrying about social things I have to do later. I wasn't dealing with these feelings and instead was distracting myself with the internet, allowing the thoughts to fester and grow.

Instead of checking my favorite P sites I immediately did a work task and then came to GYE. I already feel much better.

In the future I have to be careful about how I'm using the internet. As a reward or in designated times it's fine and fun. But using it to distract myself when I'm supposed to be doing something else is very dangerous and needs to be avoided. It is a direct replacement for the way I used to deal with my feelings (lust) and only leads me back to that place. Going forward I will remember to be aware of my feelings and accept them, rather than try to avoid and distract.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by BHYY - 30 Mar 2021 15:44

[Fool wrote on 26 Mar 2021 03:28:](#)

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be able to sleep. Many people report insomnia when first kicking this addiction. For now I will just keep trucking.

I would recommend you download an app called "Calm". They have sleep meditation, sleep stories, and soundscapes to help you relax and occupy your brain while you fall asleep. I used to use it a lot to wind down and fall asleep when I didn't want my mind to wonder to fantasies.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Striving Avreich - 30 Mar 2021 17:09

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How do you plan to implement this ideal? I have an issue with this and am trying to find a way to combat it.

For me, just saying "I have to be better about this" doesn't help. I'm not exactly sure what works. What are you thinking?

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That's a great idea, thank you. I will try the app for a week and see if it works. I've been struggling with falling asleep for my whole life and I've generally avoided this kind of thing but I can at least give it a decent try to see if it works for me.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail
Posted by Fool - 30 Mar 2021 18:15

[Striving Avreich wrote on 30 Mar 2021 17:09:](#)

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Great question! Thanks for motivating me to solidify this method instead of leaving it in my head.

I agree that it's very unlikely to work if I just say "I will do better in this area". It also doesn't work to say I will never procrastinate or be lazy again. Very unrealistic. The way I'm thinking about this involves five steps.

1. Recognition
2. Step back
3. Awareness
4. Acceptance

5. Positive action

1. Recognition - recognize what is going on. This will take some practice but should happen automatically. I will recognize when I am feeling bad and investigate the reason. As time goes on I will recognize the situations that will make me feel this way before I even get to them.

2. Step back - stop whatever activity is making me feel this way. For me I generally use the internet as a distraction when I'm avoiding things and this ends up making me feel worse.

3. Awareness - become aware of why I'm feeling this way. Discover what I'm feeling exactly, what I'm avoiding, how I'm coping with those feelings, and how that's only making me feel worse.

4. Acceptance - accept the feelings. Instead of continuing to avoid and deny what I'm feeling, I will accept the bad without trying to fight it. The fight adds another layer of distress on top of the already negative feelings. It is unnecessary and counterproductive.

5. Positive action - do something positive. Completing everything that I'm avoiding is an unreasonable ask that will only make me feel worse. Instead I will do literally anything positive. This can be one tiny piece of what I'm avoiding or anything else including: reading or posting on gye, running, doing a couple of push ups, learning a mishna etc.

This can definitely be written up and formalized better but this is my initial idea. These steps can also probably work (with some adjustments) any time I run into areas of negative emotion that I would normally cope with using lust. If you have anything to add or adjust I'd love to hear it!

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Striving Avreich - 30 Mar 2021 21:02

I find the hardest part for me is stopping in the moment. When the fires are burning it's much harder to put them out then to remove the coals in the first place.

Have you found that this "recognition" works for you previously? Please share you tactics, I'd love to hear.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by Fool - 08 Apr 2021 18:26

49 Days in and I had a fall. Back to square 1.

Just kidding! I made a ton of progress in 49 days. This is the longest I was ever clean. I went through some very triggering times and managed to deal with them and stay clean. I have learned a lot and found lots of tools that worked. I feel by getting to 49 days I broke a barrier in my mind. I feel that doing it again will be easy (of course not easy easy, but easier than the first time). I know it's possible for me to do and I will use the knowledge and skills I have developed and acquired to do it again and do it better and do it for longer.

So what went wrong? I've pinpointed a couple of items.

1. No filter. I felt that not having filters was important for my early recovery. I was deep in my addiction and needed to be totally focused to quit. Having filters would have just created a challenge for myself and I know from previous experience that if I decided to relapse I would have done it no matter what. I would have driven to a 24 hour Walmart and bought a new phone, and I would have felt amazing the entire time I was doing it. I always knew that I would need to get filters later on, when I inevitably (and desirably) became less focused on recovery and could get accidentally triggered. I thought it would be after 90 days but I should have gotten filters around day 40. I do not regret the decision to not have a filter, I feel it was the right thing to do at the time and would do it again. I only made a mistake of when I decided to implement it.

The way I failed is because I ended up wanting to just see what is new out there. I have specific things/people I follow and I knew that there would be a huge load of new content. I just wanted to look and see what's there. This is obviously a passing fancy and I had it many many times throughout 49 days and was able to fight it. The problem here is that I did start to move on a bit and lose focus on recovery (which is good, I want to live my life) but the stuff was only a couple of tiny thumb movements away. I convinced myself to look and it was just too easy to do so. Plus all of the weight of knowing it's so close and choosing constantly not to look added up and I failed.

This time through I will get a filter right from the start. I am not in the same place I was in last time and I feel the main physical addiction has been largely eliminated. I can use the filter properly, to avoid passing triggers or fancies. It also takes a little weight off my head in that it's not just a few thumb taps away and I would have to take much bigger action, which will be easier for me to prevent. I feel good about having a filter this time, whereas last time I knew it would not be positive at the beginning.

[I know most people here do not agree with me on the no filter thing. This is my assessment of myself, not a suggestion for others]

2. Lack of other positive changes in my life. This time I was totally focused on just not looking at P. Any time I felt bad because I was doing poorly in other areas, I'd focus on how the only goal for the near future was to not watch P. This made the challenge huge and hard and one of my only focuses in life. Which is certainly important when trying to break such a strong, long term, and deeply engrained addiction, but may be detrimental if left that way for too long. I had little to think about during the boring times, when all I could do was think. I'd just contemplate the recovery and while that was good for a while it got old and frustrating. While this all worked well for 49 days(!), it is not sustainable for the long term.

This time I will focus more on challenging myself and adding new and engaging activities. New hobbies, new skills, continue to develop professionally, new studies. I will not allow myself to be complacent and only focus on recovery.

?Important things that worked well last time:

1. Guarding my eyes - this one can't be stressed enough. Being ever vigilant made the whole process so much easier. The less lustful content I allowed to enter my mind the easier it was to never think about it and the easier it made it to avoid it. Plus the act of looking away, or thinking away, built important self control muscles and helped keep me focused, aware, and in control.

2. Exercise - quitting this addiction left me feeling pent up and frustrated very often. And sometimes down. Exercise helps relieve all these feelings while also making me feel like I accomplished something. I'd save the frustration up and then go on a difficult run to relieve it.

3. Meditation - so important for keeping me grounded and in control of my mind. It takes away a lot of negative thoughts and trains me to learn how to accept and let other thoughts and feelings go. Often times I fail because of the building tension and meditation allows me to address that tension in a productive manner, deal with it and let it go. Last time I allowed myself to be pretty lazy with it and gave myself a lot of slack but this time I am fully committed to doing it every day (and not leaving it till last minute).

4. GYE + others - reading the material on this board and others made me much more well equipped to deal with the challenges. Also, any time I felt down or like I couldn't make it, I'd read this website and others to see how others were doing or did and it would give me strength. It is comforting and empowering to know that I am not alone or unique in my struggles.

I'm going to come on here to try and post my progress in this journey to 90 days and beyond.

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Re: New Journey, can't fail

Posted by EvedHashem1836 - 09 Apr 2021 03:52

Very constructive post!

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