

Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 13 Mar 2022 05:01

Hello, I am TheNextStep. I have been a member here for a month and a half. I have tracked my 90 days progress (and falls) and listened to some audios, but have been nervous about posting on the forum. I haven't been able to get a streak longer than 8 days, and more recently, I've been struggling to get past 3 or 4, and so I decided now is the time to stop going in alone, and post. Well today, I am fighting those nerves, and am making this thread. As the saying goes, "The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, it's connection."

My main goal is to post here every day or every second day, and give an update. I think a couple sentences or more should be fine, so that it isn't too daunting. I will also try to surf and post on the forum more often when I have time. Anyone interested can read my perhaps too-lengthy backstory below. If you skip it that's fine! Glad to finally join the forum and write this.

---[Lengthy Backstory]---

I found this website over a year ago, but didn't consider wasting seed to be a big issue back then, so I never joined. More recently I started thinking seriously about the sin of wasting seed, and also about marriage and started dating, and learned that in many ways the habit can harm a future marriage, since it does not just go away. Having a good future marriage, shalom bayis, etc, is my major motivation.

I joined the site near the end of January, and started using the 90 day counter. I thought, now that I'm serious, this counter should be enough and I should be able to just quit...with maybe one or two falls. Well, the first 3 days were easy, but shortly after 5 I found an excuse and had a fall. Then, 8 days (my best yet!), but again another fall. I had an idea that, if I continued falling, I would add more and more to my fight against it.

So I got into the audios, since I can listen at my job. I decided to save all of Rabbi Shafier's "The Fight" audios from this site, and pledged to listen to one a day at work. These were very helpful, but on weekends I didn't listen to any, and tended to have falls then.

Once I finished them, things started to get worse again. Now my streaks were down to 2-4 days. I decided something had to change, I can't just be passive listening to audio (or watching

videos) about the issue. That is why I'm here looking to the forum for help. I changed my username to "TheNextStep" to sort of mark the change.

I think I've identified a major underlying issue for me, which is I am very good at rationalizing. For example, you'll notice in my story that I've focused on wasting seed. That was my only original goal, but for the first month or so I had convinced myself that I could still look at explicit material. Please don't make fun of me for this, I know the name of this website...haha. (I also found out today that "Intentionally viewing improper sites" counts as a fall, so I've been doing it wrong.) There was a second issue with...I'll try to put it vaguely...improper touching but not finishing. This is playing with fire for one, but it also undermines the purpose of the 90 day challenge, since I was still partially maintaining a bad habit. If you read all that, thank you.

---[End of Lengthy Backstory]---

Rationalizing that, since wasting seed was my only mission, therefore things adjacent to it (like seeking improper material) were acceptable as long as I didn't cross the line, was the major cause of my unfortunately short streaks. I will be entering this next step without holding those as acceptable, and properly counting seeking illicit sites as falls. Finally, I made a pledge with a friend not to do it for a week, and that I will reward myself with ice cream if I can reach that mark.

Tonight marks the first day clean with the new pledge. I will be back tomorrow and for the next few months to log updates. I am open to suggestions.

Thanks, TheNextStep.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 19 Apr 2022 17:05

Day #2

Feels like day #5. The new more difficult route will probably accelerate my search for a new job. (The old reason was the long commute.) Stress makes the fight harder, as does poor sleep.

Some difficulties, but so far so good.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 21 Apr 2022 03:18

Day #3/4

Alright so far. And I think that's important, since last run was cut short because I was very tempted early.

Secondary goals: I have not really kept up with the goal of reading/watching something GYI related. I think that will be a beneficial habit, and so I will try to read some more of the new book tonight. The goal, once again, will remain active for the entire 90 days. Maybe after I'll add that reading time to torah study.

As you can see above, I'm likely going to just use the numbers from the 90 days counter on this site, even though late at night is a day ahead.

Alright, onward!

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 30 Apr 2022 03:24

Well...I think it's about time to get back on the horse.

Day #1

The last eight or so days have been a minefield of falls, and actually some tough life days in general. There's probably a connection in there. But moreso, I had some fuzzy (and foolish) definitions for goals as well. So, I'm returning to the old basic and simple goals. No looking at things, and no wasting seed. On a partially good note, a point of optimism, I did not return to my old ways completely unrestrained. It's a small constellation, but I had at least a little restraint. I think that will help me get back up easier.

I also had some ideas like, if I fall, then I have to do X minor consequence (reading extra from the Battle of the Generation, if you're wondering). But that seemed to have a counter-effect in that my mind now had factored in falling as part of the system going forward. My brain is strange like that. I'll just read the book regardless, and if I fall I'll report here.

Oh yes, and I am further into it by a couple chapters. I have that, and the Universal Garden of Emuna, so I have some book support there. I think I will also start asking for help in personal prayer. It's an obvious next step forward, I guess I was embarrassed to bring it up. Sorry for the long post, but it's been a while. If you got this far, thanks!

Finally, I had a morning of temptation in all that, which I managed to resist...and winning that battle felt good, even exciting. It's something that will be useful to remember, even if I don't get that feedback after every fight.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 04 May 2022 05:29

Day 4

Still going. Days 2-3 were very busy for me, and there was not much temptation. Today, an old image came back and has been haunting me for much of the afternoon. I decided to speak to Hashem about it, as Rabbi Arush says in the Garden of Emuna. Hitbodedut? Anyway, I got an interesting insight while I was talking. I will save some the sharp logical process through which I came to the conclusion, but here it is.

It is maybe a harsh insight but fascinating one. There is an idea that humanity don't by default have permission to do certain things. One example is that Adam and Chava were permitted to eat from "any tree" in the garden. Some say, that this means, since meat was not explicitly permitted, they were vegetarian. The permission to eat meat didn't come until Hashem told Noach, "Every moving thing that lives shall be yours to eat; *like* the green vegetation, I have given you everything. But, you may not eat flesh of a creature that is still alive" (Bereishis 9:3-4). We were now allowed meat with a caveat. After this thought, I also remembered the prohibition against harming one's body (or worse). Through thoughts like this and more, I came to a conclusion that is perhaps obvious:

1. Our body is a gift from Hashem, we don't necessarily have permission to do whatever we want with it. (Perhaps more than this, we even need permission for things as basic food.)
2. Wasting seed and consuming illicit materials, I think we can safely say, we do not have permission to do. It could, at least metaphorically, even be considered a form of self harm. (Especially since it causes negative chemical effects/changes in the brain.)

Now, I think anyone on this site knows that these are forbidden, and that's why we're here. The main thrust of this for me, the reason it affected me emotionally, is that I came to the supposition: **Since my body is from Hashem does not belong to me, I should not misuse it. Why should I misuse or harm this which Hashem gave to me? Shouldn't I be taking care of it?**

It's this emotional appeal, backed and bolstered by the logical/scriptural points, that really got to me as I finished the hitbodedut.

Whew. That's all for today.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 05 May 2022 06:47

Day 5/6

I didn't write it, but before I started this streak, I decided that a week was a little too long for my first reward of choice (ice cream), since a lot of my streaks struggle around the 5-6 day mark. I decided ice cream was going to be at 5 days from now on, and so now I have ice cream. Hurrah! haha.

Not much otherwise for today. Oh, I adjusted one of my personal rules because I could see that it would almost certainly cause a problem in the future. I will keep it private, but I think declaring this decision here could help.

Also, I am aiming to post on threads other than my own more, probably slowly at first. Most of my posts are here, and perhaps it is a little selfish, no give only take hah. Plus, I think Rabbi Shafier said something about how helping others with the issue helps you also.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 06 May 2022 05:04

Day 6

Still alive...and kicking.

Had to do a lot of thinking today. Also, mornings continue to be a weak point, I am going to have to start coming up with ideas to do during that time, while I am still sleepy and my will is weaker.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by yechielmichel - 06 May 2022 05:41

[TheNextStep wrote on 06 May 2022 05:04:](#)

Day 6

Still alive...and kicking.

Had to do a lot of thinking today. Also, mornings continue to be a weak point, I am going to have to start coming up with ideas to do during that time, while I am still sleepy and my will is weaker.

That's all for today

Can I step in and ask, what is your "why"? Why do you want to stop?

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 12 May 2022 17:55

Reconstructing...

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 19 May 2022 07:54

Day 0

Well. There is a saying that one can only sin if a spirit of folly overcomes them. Likely I've fudged the quote, but regardless. The last thirteen days have been quite folly-ish. Actually, mostly I've been trying to get back up and simply not doing it. A proper return to the negative habit.

So today, after falling, as the habit goes, I picked up my copy of *The Battle of the Generation*, sat in my reading chair, and read chapter ten. Well, half of it.

One should not think of themselves as wicked, because it works against recovery in many ways, is essentially the message of the chapter. I'm not sure if that's what happened these last two weeks, but it's close enough.

Instead, one must see themselves as intrinsically good, and see falls as mistakes, not a return to some "true underlying nature." It rings in my mind as some sort of complex I subtly developed coming out of adolescence. I do have a rather sharp nature, though that isn't necessarily bad, mixed with a lack of tact, I've never had many friends. Or bullies. Some of people are rough around the edges, I once thought, well perhaps all I am is edges. Teeth all the way down.

And then the chapter appealed to that eternally optimistic part of me. The part that never gives

up, and upon realizing something is more difficult than I thought, simply switches to the long game.

Well, it's time to get up now. To use Shafier's boxing analogy, I've been lying here, listening to the count. 6...7...8... Well, I've had my eight seconds of rest, let's get back up and in it. I might fall again tomorrow, I'm not sure. I'm still quite withered.

But regardless, I'll read more and post here another insight. Not looking for any advice right now, maybe next week. As the axiom goes, **"Time and time again...even if all my bones are broken // I will drag myself back from the edge."**

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by Vehkam - 19 May 2022 12:27

No advice here! Just a thumbs up.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 19 May 2022 16:41

Well, I have woken up and even gotten out of bed.

And this is quite a surprise, usually I've fallen by now, since morning is not a very strong time for me. Especially since I did not sleep well at all since I was was up late posting and then reading more.

So even though 24h has not passed and I can't move my counter to day 1, I feel I've already had a victory. Actually not feel, I truly have had one.

In other news, in the past I spoke about my job, and how the commute is very long and how it's been stressful since they added to my workload. Well, I've gotten used to the extra work. But more than that, last week I applied for a new job. Closer, better pay, perhaps less actual labour. A reference and recommendation from an old coworker and extended family friend who works there now.

But they hired someone else. And then today, that friend told me, he's no good...can you read a measuring tape? (I guess the new guy can't...?) Sometimes, through Hashem, the world nods to you. This was only hours after returning to the ring. Maybe it's a sign? Maybe I'll even get the job?

Anyway, time to get ready. I'll have that insight from The Battle of the Generation tonight as promised.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 20 May 2022 06:21

Last night in The Battle of the Generation, I read about how seeing oneself as a good person who has falls, rather than as a bad person who occasionally has a good day actually affects how we behave, and how we recover from sins. Very interesting. I applied it right away and had a clean night and morning.

Today, as promised, here is the next insight from the book. "Even just one act of self control is something to be incredibly proud of...it proves that you can succeed." Again, it's fascinating, if not a little unsettling, that this exact passage was on the next page and I happened to read it in this situation.

It reminds me of people who recommend one keeps a notebook for hashgacha pratis and emunah stories that happen to them. Just little proofs that life is carefully orchestrated...anyway I'm getting washy.

Today was a good day, and tomorrow I'll be sending out another resume for that job. The HR department lost my first one, which I guess is what they do best...absolutely nothing. At least,

that's the reputation they have.

But I realized, whether I get this new job or not, I can be happy toiling away and doing my hishdatlus. Until I train a new skill, every job will pay and feel very similar, so I am not worried.

Finally, I noticed 2 things about my fight. First, weekends is a weakness, so tomorrow's post will have some plans on that. Second. Often when I get back up, the first days are fine, and then I let my guard down and in a few days (or weeks) I fall. This time, when I'm feeling good, I pledge to read or study a little more on the fight or on torah / emunah to counteract this problem.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 20 May 2022 14:49

Just reporting a fall. Strange circumstances (middle of the night urge). I won't get into specifics but it was nothing special just strange. Usually I'm tempted in the morning or night, but not upon randomly waking up.

Last couple times I fell and didn't immediately get back up it was because I avoided talking about breaking my streak. So, here I'm doing that talking.

Another thing is, I see it's a habit. I heard from a neuroscience youtube channel that when breaking a routine, it helps to change other every day parts of your life. Like rearrange your room, even that simple, so that there are less things constantly running that old circuit. I'll do that, I think. Or maybe just sleep upside-down for now?

More coming.

Also, whenever The Battle of the Generation mentions a Shmuz episode, I now download it and listen. Very complementary.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 21 May 2022 18:52

Day1

Fought this morning, and won >:0 !!

That's all.

Today or tomorrow I'm going to rearrange my room because why not maybe it will help break the bad mental pathway a little more.

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