

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 - 15 Jun 2022 21:02

Day uh...one.

Since implementing the points system, I can feel the motivation. I still struggled, and did especially this morning, but with the incentive, I was able get my mind engaged in weighing and

calculating cost/benefits of falling and well...that's not very enticing and I lost the urge and hit snooze to sleep some more.

I also don't know if I noted it before, but stopping mid-struggle grants extra points, and stopping after a failure (since it's very tempting to just continue perhaps later) also grants extra. I noticed that these two were places where I might be able to "tempt" myself off of the negative path, and so far it was a good idea. (Of course, one should never ask for a test, as Rabbi Shafier illustrates with King David. That would not be worth any points in my case.)

I've had 2 clean mornings and 1 clean night so far I think in large part thanks to this incentive system. The fail I had before that resulted not in a loss of points, but simply in a 24h ban from soda drinks, which I was able to hold to.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 18 Jun 2022 07:30

I found it necessary to increase consequences, so now setbacks cost half of the points pool. I also made an online notepad to track everything. This is helping me a lot, I am encouraged.

I also bought an audiobook on the subject of quitting to listen to at work. Progress, slowly.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by Captain - 19 Jun 2022 12:54

Keep up your efforts! It can be hard to realize during a tough stretch, but every effort of your is very valuable. Each time you try something to help is worth so much. And also, these things add up, and soon you will see success!

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 23 Jun 2022 05:59

[Captain wrote on 19 Jun 2022 12:54:](#)

Keep up your efforts! It can be hard to realize during a tough stretch, but every effort of your is very valuable. Each time you try something to help is worth so much. And also, these things add up, and soon you will see success!

Thank you very much, I'm still working hard and learning much.

Update: Wednesday night.

The early days of this project have been difficult almost disheartening. I unfortunately kept falling nearly every day. So, I continued, and did some adjusting, and worked through the new book. Here are the results.

Recently, I had two tests and overcame both. I am currently on a 2 day streak. The audiobook said that really, one must start within, and that counting days isn't a good indicator of actual change. I think it's a bit of fun, but I get his point, it's a secondary indicator. Further, I heard a neuroscientist/ p quitting coach state that one has to be 100% committed to quitting for it to be successful...I admit I'm not there yet but close. Moving on, maybe I'll get into that some other time.

Adjustments to the system.

The points thing is not a cure, but it certainly slows me down when I'm tempted. Here are major elements.

- +1 per overcoming a usual temptation period (morning, night)
- +1 per urge overcome. As R. Shafier said, turning away from the "capsule" of temptation before it bursts open and gets worse.
- +3 if I get deeper into an urge, but still manage to stop. Also, if I fall, and then wish to use that as an excuse later to continue a fall, getting up instead grants these points. (This is second point is pretty useful for me.)

Those are the original set, and I've memorized them, and they come to mind and extend the

area where I can interrupt temptation and turn away. Here are new conditions:

- +2 Studying *The Battle of Our Generation* for 1-3 chapters.
- +1 Listening to something related. (This is worth less because it is passive. It is also a binary, as in, I can only get 1 point per day.)

The new audiobook I got (which I guess I can name, it's *The Last Relapse*. It is fairly good, though there is a warning from me, the author is Xstian) talks about journaling. I think this is a good idea, and I might in the future divide studying *The Battle* into +1 and journaling to +1.

The important thing here is that I can get points without having to induce a struggle. Rabbi Shafier gives the example of King David and Bathsheva, illustrating how we should not invite unnecessary tests into our lives.

Regardless, so far these new adjustments are helping greatly. And, I said I wanted to post here more often on other threads, but I haven't. I still wish to though. Maybe I'll have this approach fine tuned, and I can share it for the more nitpicky math-focused among use to use.

That's all, thanks!

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 02 Jul 2022 19:47

2 days free, and I've noticed I've been able to move away from temptation just a little easier. I'll think about this more and return with something more on it, but it reminds of what rabbi said in the Fight lectures. Perhaps we really can redirect taiva.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 13 Jul 2022 01:42

It's been 10 days and my situation hasn't improved very much. However, on Friday I had a talk with my accountability partner and renewed my dedication (which had slipped very low).

Since then, I had a fall but immediately after picked myself up and read from The Battle of the Generation, journaled a free about the issue, and read some Torah.

The next time I had an urge, I resisted but had a slip (not a full fall) shortly after

Since, as I said, I have a lot of time to listen to audio at work, I have downloaded some shiurim (on lyov so far) and got an audiobook about my particular fight.

My focus is shifting away from audio though, and more towards active and thoughtful things like reading and journaling which are more active. Since my promise, I've had 1 major fall and got up right away, and one major slip.

Tonight, and this week will be better, and surely the week after even more! As The Battle of the Generation says, the desire to win can overcome the desires of temptation! Anecdote: I was contemplating after my fall during journaling that I really do want to succeed this time, and then right after I read that section on wanting to win the fight. Curious :o

Finally, I now have a goal that I want to be 5x cleaner by August, and 10x cleaner by Rosh Hashana. I think I'll have some sort of prize if I make those goals.

That's all for now.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by Vehkam - 13 Jul 2022 01:46

[TheNextStep wrote on 13 Jul 2022 01:42:](#)

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you are doing the right things. keep at it and try to maintain as much consistency as possible in the positive efforts you are putting in. remember that the effort is more important than the results (although the results will definitely come....)

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by committed_togrowth - 13 Jul 2022 02:02

I agree with Vehkam, you are clearly trying very hard. Sometimes the success just takes a bit of time to show, but if you keep piling on the effort you are going to get there without a doubt.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 14 Jul 2022 02:28

[Vehkam wrote on 13 Jul 2022 01:46:](#)

you are doing the right things. keep at it and try to maintain as much consistency as possible in the positive efforts you are putting in. remember that the effort is more important than the results (although the results will definitely come....)

Thank you both, I think that's a good point. It's nice to hear too. I made another week-long pledge with my accountability partner. For those who haven't followed this thread, I've done that twice and both times had clean weeks. This time I also added that we should renew it instead of leaving my temptation hanging haha.

It seems I didn't mention something else, which is that I've added a small list of tedious tasks to do if I fall, to perhaps associate doing so with boringness or perhaps chores. Also, reading a page of The Battle is on that list, and so every fall comes with 15-20 minutes of consequence. I had a system like this for the last week or so, which was to decouple sleep from the bad habit. If I fell, I had to do something else after for half an hour instead of sleep.

That said, I recently had an even better idea. When I have an urge, why not do some of that stuff before the fall? Like read a page or two and perhaps something else. Maybe something engaging. I think delay is a key tactic, right? I'll try it next time.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 14 Mar 2023 08:32

It has now been over a year since the fight began for me. And 8 months since my last post here.

First a brief update. I had more or less "put on hold" my quitting mission during the summer, but it didn't go well. An old chronic issue ended up flaring up. Lasting bad moods, irritability, etc.

In November, I found perhaps one of the greatest podcast / youtube resources out there. (At least for me and at that time.) I will assume links, if they are allowed, are at least frowned upon. It was Gedale Fenster's video/podcast on the Breslev podcast. **Fighting Addictions**, it was called. (He has some others, but this one hit harder on my experience.)

Anyway, no grand streaks or anything, but I think mindset shifts are essential, especially when starting out, or being caught near the starting line. Now it's late, and sleep is important for willpower, so that's all for today.

– DT.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by Hashem Help Me - 14 Mar 2023 11:31

Welcome back. Thanks for sharing. Hatzlocha buddy.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by excellence - 26 Mar 2023 19:06

Welcome back!! PLs stay around this time! Looking forward to reading ur posts!

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