

Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 13 Jul 2009 21:08

I'm new to this forum, but not new to this struggle. I signed up to the weekly E-mail lists a few months ago. I often just glance at them, as I'm trying not to spend so much time reading E-mails. But, even with this, I have gotten chizuk through the themes that keep repeating themselves.

I grew up secular, but did Teshuva in college--I came to Yeshiva in Israel and never left. Now I'm married with five children (our oldest is eight and our youngest is a month old).

I was in the habit of staring at girls, I remember even in nursery school. I just liked the way they looked. Things got worse when I was 10 or 11. My sisters had a "facts of life" book with indecent pictures and crooked ideas, and I found it. It described Mast... as a fun thing to do, and so I followed the instructions. I've been stuck ever since.

I was a member of a shul youth group around the age of my bar-mitzvah. The youth group leader gained my trust very early on, and I could discuss anything with him. Luckily, I learned early on that mast... is wrong. I've been fighting it ever since, sometimes more successfully and sometimes less so. I think now I go two or three months clean, and then I tend to trip up a few times close together. I always feel that the yeitzer hara tricked me, and somehow it's strategy was different than last time. Also, I view it as tripping up for one "phase," instead of multiple times. So, I manage not to get too depressed about it, and can pick myself up again pretty quickly.

I would like to be able to stop altogether. But, I am more concerned with controlling my eyes. I feel that it is impossible to walk down the street without taking a look at every woman along the way. I think the trickiest part is that, in my neighborhood, everyone is dressed so tznius that it's hard to feel that I'm really doing anything wrong.

Besides that, I slip up every once in a while with the internet--probably a few times a year. But then, I feel that I was somehow outsmarted again by my Yeitzer. I wasn't looking for indecent pictures... I was just curious about such-and-such an actress... I wasn't expecting to find such indecent pictures...

I see the progress is still very slow on my own, and that's why I decided to become more involved in this forum.

But, I find this is also a challenge. I think my own situation is rather mild, and I find that by seeing other people's stories which are more involved than my own, I end up getting thoughts instead of getting rid of them. Any advice on this point would also be helpful. Thanks.

=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by Dov - 09 May 2011 18:58

Not sure if this is what you are getting at, but here is what I hear in your post - and I exaggerate to make a point. Please, please bear with me.

I hear this in your post:

"If we '*just*' use the 12 steps, then doesn't that mean that we must spend each day waking up and screaming, "HELP!! I am in such big trouble! I can't do this, at all! I need a miracle *just to stay sober today*. Forget about spiritual *growth*...I am concerned with spiritual survival! *Who has the time to grow?*! And instead of ever getting *religious* again, I must always pull back and remember that no matter how from I ever look or even feel, I am really *just a pervert* and that deep inside me, all I really want is to grab the behind of the young lady walking by me in the street right now! After all, I must be honest with myself *and what more could I ever expect of an addict*!! G-D, HELP ME!"

OK, so I know this is not exactly what you are saying, but....

This litany is just plain nuts. It is not what recovery looks like, at all. Yes, there are chunks of truth in every twisted sentence of the above, but Goehring had a lot to say, too (ym"s).

Everywhere I look, recovery using the steps leads to progressive peace of mind and a calm and deep relationship with everything in and around the recovering addict. The 1st, (part of the) 2nd,

and 4th, 5th, and 8th steps lead to peace of mind because of the self-acceptance of *some* of the facts about me and of *some* of my limitations. Acceptance is the most important first ingredient I know for peace with *myself*. The 2nd (part of it), 3rd, 6th, 7th, 9th, 10th and 11th steps lead to a peace that allows me to have progressively more comfortable and useful relationships with *others* (including G-d, who is *not me* the last time I checked!). The 12th is a recognition that, as I am an addict, in order for me to *keep* all this good stuff, the truth must remain first priority in my mind no matter how healthy and free of lust I get, and that I must try to give what I found away to anyone who wants it.

No self-disgust, no sweating desperation, no begging from G-d (my very Best Eternal Friend), and a constant *and trusting* forging forward in our usefulness to G-d and others. This is very different from what many of us got in our teenage and post-teen years in yeshivah...*which was when we developed our sex and lust addiction (and our twisted and nearly useless desperate begging relationship with Hashem) in the first place!*

Does that mean anything, or am I way off what you intended?

=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 09 May 2011 19:38

Dov,

Thanks for the reply.

The first half of your reply, the crazy litany, is exactly what the 12-steps has sounded like to me.

I don't understand how you made the leap from that to the second part of your reply, especially since, and I don't think I'm mistaken, I hear these exact sort of statements frequently (from the crazy litany), even from people who have had solid sobriety for years. If you could explain, I would greatly appreciate it.

--Eye.

=====
=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by Dov - 10 May 2011 01:59

Okay, okay...maybe Goehring was a poor choice. Really every one of the things in that nutty and dysfunctional first part *are* valid bechinos of a person's recovery.

But only as they stand by themselves. They can be used at times. But that cannot be the standard for very long if we want to live a normal life.

So, the 'screaming out' needs to be transformed into a trusting and rather calm *dumping* of our current lust problem on His Rachamim gemurim for a living, at the time of the first sign of a problem.

The begging needs to become a calm sort of 'silent cry' - after all, he has helped us so many times already and taken away the lust obsession and the pain already - even though we didn't deserve it the first time! So I *know* He can do it, and that He *will* do it, even for *me*. What *is* there to go crazy about? Ask humbly and sincerely, and done. He will surely take very good care of us.

The *potentially* self-loathing view of ourselves as very sick people needs to be transformed into a calm acceptance of our sick-ness disease - just as any amputee *must* eventually accept his new body - *sans* leg, R"l. Or else things will not go very well in any department of his life. We are the same and like an amputee, there is no turning back. We need special care, and probably forever. (AA writes nicely about this acceptance in a few places.)

The negating of my religious pride must eventually give way to an acceptance of the fact that Hashem can do for me what I cannot do for myself - He *can* give me real emunah that works; some yir'as Shomayim; some real, precious, Jewish sensitivity; and He *can* allow me to be a decent and sober person today. Just today.

'Vayigbah libi b'darkei Hashem' may not have a place in the avodah of most recovering addicts in it's traditional sense - but I think there *is* some bit of it when I say "hagayvah vehag'dula lchei haOlamim" and I admit that Hashem deserves all the gayvoh, not me - because only He is really the Greatest and the Best, in any way. And I have the gift of being aware of that - without being jealous of Him (I have met some people who *are*)! Amazing. My G-d *is* awesome.

These transformations from desperation into health do not occur overnight, but *they do happen* if we work this program faithfully. That is, if we have faith in Hashem and faith in ourselves and faith in the process. And it will not always be pretty or smooth in transition. We (and I know this applies to me) may need to slip backward into the desperate and extreme phase of these tools every now and again...but that's OK. On the whole, there is growing and expanding peace (acceptance), trust (confidence), and hope. Oh, and joy.

No one can live with us comfortably until that happens.

=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 11 May 2011 18:32

I think I have clarified things a bit more.

The DC call is between cycles, so I've been off this daily dose of DC since before Pesach now. I feel like I've been okay. So, I start wondering if I really need such heavy involvement in the 12-steps.

Besides that, I've been getting lots of inspiration from these Chassidic sfarim. So I start to think, time to graduate!

I realized, there's no contradiction, there's no all or nothing. Along with 12-steps, it's perfectly fine to supplement one's spiritual growth with whatever material one finds inspirational. In fact, it seems to fit nicely along with step 11.

That being settled, I wondered if I haven't been a bit too removed from the 12-steps lately.

BUT, am I REALLY an addict?

I started thinking about what my life was like about 2 years ago before I joined this forum. Total emotional upheaval all the time, major mood swings, paralyzed by fear, feeling like I'll never amount to anything and that I'm basically hopeless and useless. Fears and resentments galore. ALL THIS HAS TREMENDOUSLY IMPROVED only because of my involvement in the 12-steps. AND, the only reason these things stay a safe distance away is because, EVEN IF I'M NOT ON THE CALLS, AND EVEN IF I'M NOT READING THE BIG BOOK EVERY DAY, I have internalized--at least to some extent--the tools of the 12-step program and I AM CONTINUING TO USE THEM IN ALL ASPECTS OF MY LIFE. I never quite looked at it this way before. So, I would definitely like to keep these tools fresh, and stay involved. I DON'T WANT TO EVER LOSE THEM!

AND, I had a bit of a surprise test today regarding lust. It was unusual and caught me by surprise and I think I was half-way to Z"L when I caught myself and got out of the situation and turned to Hashem and asked for help and then returned to the situation with new, and clear, boundaries clearly stated and firmly in place.

I believe it is my renewed appreciation of the 12-steps, my reviewing the material just today, that prevented me from falling. I see now that I will always have this vulnerable spot. I don't have to be paranoid, but I have to stay in good spiritual shape. Thanks Dov for your description of a calm acceptance, much like an amputee; I can imagine such a thing, and understand that as a calm and sane way to accept this problem.

--Eye.

=====
=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by Dov - 11 May 2011 22:27

You are most welcome and thanks for the chizzuk! The obsessive and fear-driven thing is

ultimately nuts, and keeps us nutty if we hold onto it for too long. A foxhole existence may be OK for a year or two in early recovery, but the recovery that I am aware of is supposed to lead to more sanity, not more compulsion.

Similar to tefillah. You see plenty yeshivah bochurim kvetching like they are trying to pass a kidney stone during shemoneh esrei. They are trying so hard to....to what?

To *convince* G-d to do it for them?

To *convince* the Almighty that they really do deserve it? To listen to them and bring moshiach? To give them a better job? To save the Sh'chinah haK' from golus with us? Hey. C'mon. He knows the truth, He knows whats best and hears us....so we ask! But what's with the *straining*?!

And here is the kicker: How many *gedolim* or *older* real frum yidden have *you* seen davening shemoneh esrei (I'm not talking about psukei dezimrah and Sh'mah) like they are screaming at a deaf man ("Can you hear the words that are coming out of my mouf?!")? Not many, if any, at all. Why is that? Do they not care? Can't be. Ella what? They are comfortable with their G-d, that's what. They know He is good and that He wants the best. Their tefillah to Him is natiral and *what he wants*, not for them nor to 'convince' Him of anything. Why try hard by pushing? Why push at all? Daven with your entire heart for it is what you are dying for...but don't push. For it is not your force that gets the job done, but His power. And He has a lot.

Similarly, if this 'program-thing' really, truly *works*, in other words, if **Hashem** really, truly *works*...then stop pushing so hard! Just be with Him and do your best to do His work. Simple. No forcing is needed. It's about letting go of my will and seeing His Will and other peoples' will, for a change. It's liberation from our own tiny personal jail cell of self-obsession.

Sure, there is an initial period of great difficulty typical of all learning curves. For me there was the 1.5 year 'mark', when things started really getting better and most of my life (and *my* marriage, too) started getting really good, for a change. Then there was a five year 'mark' where things started really getting *very* good (including *our* marriage), then a ten year-ish growth period, and recently we are having one right now, too....every one of these growth periods really can also be called "pain periods" - for there is no growth whatsoever, but through some pain. None.

But after each and every initially hard learning curve, it should level out and the promises of this program start to come and grow and grow. No more constant strain and urgency.

The calm is what the steps are about. Deracheha darchei no'am is what Torah is about, too. So though recovery is derech erez and not Torah, at all, still there is a parallel. And that's good, for one prepares us well for the other that way.

Sorry about the megillah again.

Love,

Dov

=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 24 May 2011 16:57

I feel that I am coming closer to resolving quite a few issues that have been a major source of RID.

One is home renovations that went awry. We've decided to move on, whatever the price, just to get this behind us. I don't know if we'll get any reimbursement from the people responsible for damages, but for the peace of mind it's worth it just to accept reality the way it is, deal with it as best as we can, and move on.

Another is, I am sort of in a transition period as far as recovery is concerned. I feel the DC calls, and Dov calls, are a great help. I came to some clarity and realized, what I am still missing, is a support group in the same time zone. When I'm really down and need to call out for help, it hasn't been so easy to reach people who are available at the same time that I am. Also, I find that, for really detailed and personal matters, I don't feel like I've gained a designated sponsor to really guide me. Also, I made an initial investment to make the calls every day, and it wasn't

easy--my wife and I had to rearrange our schedules to accommodate. But, I can't keep it up. So, I'm going to try a weekly face-to-face meeting which is not local for me, but not too far away either.

We've had a lot of unexpected freak medical emergencies. As a result of one of them, we have to take one of our kids to the hospital a whole bunch of times over the next couple of weeks for treatment. It was a really freak occurrence and I couldn't believe it and I was feeling like there can't be a G-d. I spoke to someone about it, and he suggested that I'm guilty of too much negative thinking which is generating negativity in my life, and I need to think of positive thoughts instead.

I hate ideas like this. "Just paste on a smile and everything will be fine." I think it oversimplifies things, and sounds totally fake.

But, I did some thinking. I realize that when I am on-schedule, I feel good about myself. When I'm off-schedule, I start feeling hopeless and worthless and really depressed. I was wondering, "do I just have to think positive?" Or, "Do I just have to accept life on G-d's terms?" Or is there something more?

One of my major breakthroughs in recovery was when I saw behind the isolated incidents. Instead, I saw that my RID was caused because I am always DRIVING myself, PUSHING myself, making myself tense with goals and expectations and filled with frustration at falling short of them, or with the fear of falling short of them. I discovered this undercurrent of TENSION, and have really tried to be more relaxed about things, and the lust attacks have been overall much fewer and much weaker since then.

I still lust, and I think it's constant, but it's a faint tint in the background instead of a front-line battle. I keep wondering, "WHAT IS CAUSING THIS!"

So, in noticing how depressed I get when I'm off schedule, and for a couple of other reasons, I realized I HAVE TREMENDOUS SELF-HATE. No doubt, the result of a dysfunctional home, and being a social outcast throughout childhood. I can cover it up by taking pride in my accomplishments, or in learning something interesting. But, on my own with nothing to do I AM EXTREMELY UNCOMFORTABLE. So, I think the type of positive thoughts that would help is to work on accepting myself and loving myself. This doesn't mean to become self-centered and full of myself. Just to accept myself and feel comfortable and happy with who I am.

I think I have had this realization before, but now it has hit me at a much deeper level. It's not one thing out of many I need to work on. I think it's an undercurrent, which flows into everything I do, and must be stopped in order to reach greater peace of mind and happiness in life.

Besides that, I have had some confusing, dysfunctional relationships with certain relatives. To widen the gap, I am a BT and they are not. I wish I could share my life with them. I have gone to great lengths over quite a few years to try and "explain" myself to them so maybe they would understand me and appreciate me (and change). At other times, I feel like it's all useless and I should just cut off all contact. Sometimes there's a ray of hope--THEY ASKED A QUESTION! But I recently reached a new level of peace. I can decide, once and for all, to just choose one approach and forget about the other one. So, I choose to have a relationship. However, I CAN'T FORGET the religious differences and also certain shortcomings either they have or I have. I HAVE TO STAY REALISTIC and ACCEPT that our relationship will be a limited one. I can't lose my ground just because a ray of hope seems to be shining--experience shows, it's just an illusion, and I can't forget that. Instead of alternating between great hopes and cutting off communication, I can put in an effort to maintain some sort of limited relationship AND NOT EXPECT ANYTHING IN RETURN.

These are some of the thoughts going through my head recently. I thought you might appreciate them.

--Eye.

=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by Dov - 25 May 2011 03:38

Yeah, admitting to ourselves what the correct and healthy relationship actually is with various people is hard to do. Keeping to it is sometimes harder. But of course, it is even more important

than figuring out what it is. Relations and relatives is a tough parsha. At least friends you *pick*. Why did Hashem throw us together with some of these people?! Nu. He's got a reason. Maybe it's to teach us proper balance in relations and how to say no, maybe it's something else....

Daven.

=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 25 May 2011 14:39

thanks for sharing those thoughts Eye, they are appreciated and helpful

=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 25 May 2011 19:02

Despite my progress with m* and p* (gives new meaning to "The Star-Spangled Banner"), I feel I have not changed much with shmiras eineim. I have recently noticed that it seems to be getting worse. I'm less concerned if someone should catch me staring. I'm becoming increasingly compulsive with looking.

I was reading through the White book a bit, and a few ideas came to mind.

I have always considered looking at women as harmful because of what it leads to, or because it must be I'm doing it because, behind it all, I'm really interested in something harmful. It's a second-degree lust activity, but it's not REALLY lust.

It struck me though, just recently, looking at women IS, ALL BY ITSELF, a sexual activity, even if it doesn't seem to have any immediate effect on any part of my anatomy. (Duh! Only an addict can take 2 years, or more like 30 years, to come to this realization). And, the goal is TOTAL SEXUAL SOBRIETY. Not just partial sobriety.

"Progressive illness" doesn't necessarily mean you start out looking, and in a year or two you end up with marital infidelity. It could mean you start out looking, and you keep on doing the same thing more often and with less caution. Yes, eventually it could lead to behaviors that are obviously more harmful, but you can see the progression, the illness getting worse, within one activity as it becomes more frequent and more intense. I crave it, more and more, and I see it more clearly now than ever before. It's a sickness.

And, I know "the first sip" is the one that starts all the trouble. This might not be correct, but I thought of a way to understand this which is more meaningful to me. The first sip could also be, not a single action, but a phase. That dabbling in lust, "I'm just looking, and what's wrong with that," all together, this PHASE of the addiction, or this LEVEL of the addiction, is "just taking a sip." And, without help, a decline is inevitable.

Any comments would be appreciated.

--Eye.

=====
=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by Dov - 25 May 2011 21:52

Yup.

(does that contitute a 'comment'?)

=====
=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 26 May 2011 06:16

[dov wrote on 25 May 2011 21:52:](#)

Yup.

(does that contitute a 'comment'?)

Yup

=====
=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by ur-a-jew - 26 May 2011 14:11

Dov your insights are breathtaking.

=====
=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by Dov - 27 May 2011 19:22

Huh?

(I'm trying to statistically balance my posts to an average of 50 words or less with these tiny ones...oops, blew this on already. Dang!)

=====
=====

Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by ur-a-jew - 27 May 2011 20:38

After reading the post you wrote elsewhere today it will take about a month of one word posts to get that average.

=====

=====