

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.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 05 Aug 2011 07:31

Sober 5 months, today, thank G-d.

We had some new neighbors move into our building. Somehow, one of thier kids got lost in the shuffle and ended up at our house while his parents were at their old place. He was with us until very late. My wife was out, and all our own kids went to sleep already.

I had stuff I wanted to do, but had this really guilty feeling--how can I just leave this kid all alone, ignore him, leave him unsupervised.

He was stuck in our house just long enough until I realized...

Wait a second! Why don't I have this feeling towards my own wife and kids? Why do I feel okay to walk off and use the computer, to leave them alone, to ignore them!

So, this is something I need to work on more.

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by silentbattle - 05 Aug 2011 09:20

Wow! Good point!

As I recall, didn't one of the lost nametags say "jerusalem sex addict?" ;D I seem to remember that was even more difficult to explain than "holy man"!

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Dov - 05 Aug 2011 18:33

[Eye.nonymous wrote on 05 Aug 2011 07:31:](#)

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--Elyah

Mazel Tov on the five months! Whatever you have been doing for about 5 months, feel free to keep doing it more and more one day at a time b'kamus ub'eichus, or else I'll come over and tickle you with a black jelly bean.

What you wrote strikes me as a real important recovery thought there. Playing house, playing adult, playing father, husband, yeshiva guy, etc. We get too comfortable convinced that we are exactly what everybody else has *assumed* we are. We slip behind a very comforting mask we ourselves may have created. Then we harbor resentments and lusts that distract us from real life - and we become *other than we appear*.

That is the story of 90% of the guys here on GYE, if you ask me. Nothing at all to be ashamed of or guilty about. Just something to face and admit freely and do something about.

The shakran took 20 years to build - and we expect the right-sized, sane, and sober me will take 90 days?! Who are we fooling? It takes real time to have real change. And we *need* to remain clean one day at a time, or nothing really happens. And patient for the real changes that take months and years to really take hold.

It's a good deal, in the end. We get 60 or 70 *years* of sober and sane good living out of the deal.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by silentbattle - 07 Aug 2011 03:30

Um...(raising hand emoticon)...can you elaborate, Dov?

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Dov - 07 Aug 2011 05:24

I was referring to a typical path of addicts working the steps one at a time.

We begin to discover that we do not really have a basic lust problem, after all. We have a **living** problem. Life either scares the heck out of us, frustrates, or angers us for various reasons, ad k'dei kach that it really does become unlivable without a little lust to 'take the edge off'. Our lusting and masturbating were actually a symptom of our problem. *Lusting* wasn't our problem, **sobriety** was! Life as it is for us inside us, is intolerable:

"Living (playing husband) with *this woman* is tolerable - as long as I can play with the virtual shikshas in the porn (they can be depended on to respect and adore me)";

"...being *stuck* as a 'regular guy' among so *many* idiots in my shul, family, yeshivah, or business, is tolerable - as long as I have my fantasy life (I'm kind of like James Bond alone with the big secret)";

"...being a loser because of all my past, present and future failures in my life (in yiddishkeit, business, or any other aspect I can compare myself to others in) is tolerable - if I can feel like 'The Man' in my secret masturbation in the bathroom whenever I want to (I always felt at the center of a big self-pleasuring adventure in there); Etc., etc..."

But in sobriety, it takes just a few months to discover that we don't use *only* porn or sex with ourselves (masturbation) to make life tolerable. We *also* use rage, resentment, overeating, spending money, overworking or 'overlearning' escape from humanity behind a sefer (at a sheva brachos with our wife and friends sitting nearby!!?)....to cope. We begin to see our withdrawal from our private little societies in our real lives as an abdication of G-d's greatest gift to us: real life itself.

Accepting the **3rd** step mainly means *we begin to see the life G-d has made for us as an expression of His Will for us....*even if we do not like it very much. Once we admit that, our approach to life becomes unacceptable and has to go. That is what the **4th** step is for.

People who are forced to work the 4th step sequence (like me) come face to face with their real character defects. So...

Instead of *playing* husband, we may admit we are just too selfish to live with our families. We need Hashem to help us give that up and be a part *of* - not apart *from*. Boruch Hashem there are **steps 5-9**;

...we may admit that we have so much pride, that others must be idiots, unworthy of our trouble, and unfairly demanding on us. We need desperately to learn how to *connect* and be *useful*, rather than see everyone else as 'competition';

...we may admit that the main reason we feel we are such failures in past, present and future, is because (in our pride) we cannot accept that **we are in fact mediocre in many ways!** We put expectations on ourselves that Hashem never intended - then we find we cannot live with ourselves - cuz we are living as someone else! We cannot get comfortable in our *own* skin, because we insist on wearing someone else's! Perhaps we heard a mussar schmooze - and misused it, got yelled at by a raging parent and internalized it, whatever. Oohh, those things may be hard to die. We'd rather blame *ourselves* for moshiach not coming yet, for our parents' marriages falling apart, for our wives unhappiness, for not being an *outstanding* guy in the beis midrash or the respected talmid chochom we 'should be already' or the posek ha'ir yet... We'd rather fantasize that we really should be those things or that we have all that power, livro olamos ulhacharivon...*just* what the nochosh tempted us with back in the garden. Nu.

Pride destroys us on the inside - and they told us we needed **more self-esteem** to 'feel better'. How wrong. What we needed was to get **right-sized**. To really accept Hashem's Will for us (step 3). Our biggest obstacle was and is our *pride*, not our failures themselves. Hashem forgives aveiros and mistakes - He does not have much sympathy for pride, as the sforim tell us. Many of us have pride in spades, and we do not even know it. And for prideful people like me, there is no pleasure like the pleasure of **getting right-sized**, and knowing who I really am and being reasonably sure about what Hashem really expects from me today.

OK, so that was an elaboration, no?

And anyone who thinks they can experience any of this stuff with just a few weeks of sobriety or even with years of sobriety but *alone*....I think they are sadly mistaken.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by ben durdayah - 07 Aug 2011 09:35

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by mechazek - 07 Aug 2011 12:14

wow!!!! gotta read that again.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by silentbattle - 07 Aug 2011 13:12

Thank you, Dov. That was very helpful, and I think that a lot of it applies to me, right now. Because of various failures and difficulties, I've been feeling like i just can't deal with life, and a lot of it might be that I'm using too much ego, trying to do it alone, and feeling too self-centered, among other things.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by an honest mouse - 08 Aug 2011 13:23

thanks dov, that was an extremely clear and insightful post - one to be referred to many times over!

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Back on Track - 08 Aug 2011 14:12

Quote:

"And anyone who thinks they can experience any of this stuff with just a few weeks of sobriety or even with years of sobriety but alone....I think they are sadly mistaken."

I know a guy who has not acted out for about 2 years. I myself am only about 100 days clean. But I will say, the chevra I established here has given me what I feel is a 'quality' in sobriety that I could not have otherwise achieved. There is a big difference between living sober and acting sober. Acting sober, while somewhat better than acting out, is still a cold counterfeit of what really living sober can offer us.

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Re: Eye.nonymous official count
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 09 Aug 2011 13:54

[Eye.nonymous wrote on 09 Jun 2011 06:23:](#)

Managed to feel much better before Shavuos.

BUT THEN, Shavuos was really difficult, very frustrating and disappointing.

I was lusting and didn't even realize it. My imagination came up with a new way to act out which is logical enough, and distant enough from lust, so that I didn't notice it. So, I think I can call it a serious slip. If it should happen again, it would have to be a fall.

--Eye.

I have re-evaluated this situation, not by myself in my own head, but with the help of an objective sponsor.

To be honest, I have to say it was really a fall.

--Elyah.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 09 Aug 2011 13:58

...61 days. 2 months. (Not 5 months plus).

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Back on Track - 09 Aug 2011 14:39

I'm not a counselour, but if u didn't mast* or have sex w/ a/o other than ur wife, ur sober. (I maintain that mast* even w/out being m'zl is a breach of sobriety, but machshava to me, even serious meditating on lust, doesn't make one need to reatrt the count.)

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Dov - 09 Aug 2011 18:51

Ooh, we are stepping into a nest of 'dvoirim now....

Back On Track seems to be expressing SA's sobriety definition. Now, there are some in SA (many old-timers are among them) who would say that straying after lust in any way is also evidence that a recovering addict needs to reset his or her sobriety date.

Now here we are in GYE-land....GYE is **not** SA. Correct me if wrong, but I know of no program called 'GYE'. It is a resource for Jews who want to get clean. Probably most of them are not addicts, at all. They come here to get help, chizzuk, to admit the truth and move on, whatever. All good.

If they see themselves as addicts, then 'clean' can only come **after** first being 'sober' - and GYE has links and friends who will help those folks into phone groups, SA, SLA, SAA, a shrink's office, to a good Rov, whatever it is they need, be"H.

But there is a reason that SA's founders (and members over the years) chose to name the fellowship Sexaholics Anonymous rather than *Lustaholics* Anonymous.

Though lust is certainly our drug, sex is the main way it is expressed - whether with ourselves or with another person. Like a tree - the root is not seen, but is the energy behind the entire plant - and *in our minds* a tree is the parts we see: A trunk, branches, and leaves. What does the
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In yiddishkeit, lust is another nisayon, just like sex is. But for addicts, lust is the root - work on it and refuah from it is essentially unseen. We take the actions of recovery (the 12 steps and the actions which derive directly from them, like: putting down the rock of shame by progressively opening up to others; progressively opening up to Hashem instead of hiding from Him; learning how to be honest with ourselves instead of just pleasing others; being progressively *given* to Hashem and his people (d'hainu, *all* people); letting go of our character defects which are mainly arrogance, pride, and self-centered fear of all kinds of silly things; learning how to love and thereby realizing how loved we are ourselves....and many other blessings of recovery, when we do the actual nitty gritty work).

The actions are not about sex, and often not at all about lust. But they hit the root and fix it by

Hashem's hand, not ours. And that makes all the difference - that we did not do it. That we winners, did not do the 'winning'.

So. Yes, if you want to say that your lusting is "a fall", I say that's great. If it works for you, then who is so arrogant as to argue? (me probably, but I won't ;D) But SA is still growing in this area, and discussions abound about what to consider a bout of lusting. It is not a cut and dry issue like sex with self or others is.

Personally, I feel that operating under the belief that if I lust at all it is considered a fall would actually be my *pride* at work, not recovery. My sponsor has guided me that way, and the way is up, one day at a time, so far.

Sure, those who feel themselves but do not come to zera levatola will eventually have to act out, and are just playing a game. I played the game of peeking at porn and listening to lust stuff 'just a tiny bit' in my first few years of recovery. I admitted it in every meeting. My sponsor spelled it out like it is: I can keep doing that, but will not stay sober for long that way. The counting the days game was poison for me. It's been a long time since then and I am still growing in freedom from the tyranny of lust in my life....slowly and day by day.

I am not a machine, not a mal'ach, and not dead. So I cannot make my own lines and have to borrow SA's for the time being. If I do not progress in freedom from lust, I will lose the sobriety c"v and will need to begin the count over again (if I survive it, which is not likely).

Dishonesty with self and others is a guarantee for acting out. And asking your sponsor was a very good idea, indeed. We should not be sole arbiters of this for ourselves.

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