

My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness

Posted by grateful4life - 19 Apr 2018 00:50

Hi Everyone

Yesterday, by the grace of Hashem and the help of the SA fellowship and GYE, I celebrated 600 days of sobriety! Thank you Hashem!!

I've been on GYE for almost a year now, mostly in the chat rooms, and seeing that I've chatted with dozens of people here (even acquiring 2 sponsees through GYE recently), I figured I should properly introduce myself and give over my ESH (Experience, Strength and Hope) *letoeles harabim*, for whatever it's worth.

I'm a grateful recovering sex/lust addict, with a mainstream yeshiva background, married for almost 17 years with a bunch of kids BH, living on the east coast, USA.

My lust addiction manifested itself into extreme binges of porn, movies in general, sexual fantasy, voyeurism along with compulsive masturbation.

I was a "late bloomer" and only started masturbating 3 years into my marriage. It was a particularly stressful time in our marriage and after I acted out once I was drawn in and from then on, I was totally consumed by the urge and the enjoyment that it brought.

I was a "periodic" - on and off of sobriety all the time. Would go act out for a week then try to stop which would last 3 weeks, then fall and binge for 5 days and stop for a week and the cycle continued. Other than Elul and Tishrei, I basically could not go a whole month without having a serious acting out binge. Usually, I would start off with innocent pics or innocent movies or after an extended period it was just a "second look" that progressed and spiraled downward rapidly and then would continue to be obsessed for days till the wee hours of the morning, until it was no longer enjoyable. I would often have a dvd player, a laptop and a phone running at the same time and browsing for the "good parts" (even risking my life to watch while driving long distances). Then, when I finally had enough or came to my senses temporarily I always went through the following ritual - I would go to immerse myself in a mikvah and I would try to stop, usually by telling or begging G-d that this would/should be the last time I watch this stuff. Sometimes I was sober for a couple of days and many times it lasted a few weeks and then the depressing cycle would start all over again.

I travel a lot for work and in my acting out days I would often disappear for days at a time and park my car in some random parking lot, stock up on DVD's, also watch movies online and of course porn for entire days without stop, along with masturbating many times a day. I would watch until my eyes closed, sleeping in my car in less than desirable neighborhoods, and then wake up in the morning and start all over again. This happened numerous times. I was completely disconnected from society and although I'm by nature very sociable, even attending a social function, like a wedding or bar mitzvah and coming in contact with the outside world was uncomfortable for me.

I just couldn't stop. The only thing I thought I enjoyed and the only thing I craved was to watch movies, porn and masturbate.

I couldn't work normally for years. I thought my life was somewhat manageable because my abilities enabled me to compensate and "get by" but it really wasn't manageable. About 5 years ago I started my current job which was my 4th job/business opportunity in a period of 5 years. I have a lot of skill, business acumen and talent but I just couldn't focus and keep a steady work ethic. Prior to my current position I had landed a great business opportunity and became CEO and partner of a large business with 200 employees. I started strong but eventually caved in to my addiction and my business went to hell within 18 months. I was left with tremendous debt, losses of several hundred thousand dollars, shame and financial ruin.

As time progressed into my addiction I was progressively finding ways to make the acting out more enjoyable. Just the hours of time I spent searching for specific fantasies that would get me my fix, was insanity in and of itself, as being a responsible father and bread winner. **But I was a Sex Drunk and the urge for my fix was soooo powerful!**

I wanted to stop, or I wanted to want to stop many times so I would get filters on my internet devices that I used regularly but either I'd find ways around it or I'd have other devices within reach that were unfiltered so whenever I was weak or tempted slightly I would always cave. I always left "lust bottles" (SA equivalent of leaving bottles of alcohol) hidden around the house/office.

I even tried some drastic measures like fasting for 40 days in a row, TWICE within 2 years, hoping that in the merit of this kind of repentance and sacrifice, Heaven would grant me the strength and divine intervention I needed to stop - but nothing helped!

Eventually I went to a sex addiction therapist and he wasn't of much help for me either except that he suggested that I start going to SA (Sexaholics Anonymous) meetings. So on Thursday Aug. 25th, 2016 I went to my first SA meeting and thankfully, one day at a time with the help of Hashem, I have been sober ever since.

Today, I'm a grateful recovering sexaholic. I (and countless others) find SA and the 12 step program to be an incredible way of life, not just a method of breaking the cycle of addiction. I'm

now able to be "grateful for life", to enjoy even the little things in life, to accept myself and love myself with all my weaknesses and defects of character and to have a real and constant relationship with my Loving Creator.

Growing up I never had any normal or healthy relationships with my parents or siblings for various reasons and naturally my marriage was in shambles prior to recovery. After a few months of sobriety I disclosed to my wife and our relationship has turned around 180 degrees! My relationships with my kids is also improving on a steady basis. My work ethic has come a long way and my finances are in order more or less BH.

I still have plenty of challenges in my life BH that I now see as realistic opportunities for growth but the emotional pain and hopelessness that I constantly felt during my acting out years has completely slipped away.

FELLOWSHIP. I don't know of anyone who is not in a fellowship that knows the true definition of real friendship. I used to love social gatherings and mingling with friends and different people and thrive on that type of environment (probably was another form of escaping real life for me) but today those gatherings are no longer really enjoyable due to the fact that the relationships and friendships from those encounters are all fake or just on the surface. In contrast I love my SA friends. We all know about each other through and through and support each other through thick and thin. I can share with them the darkest secrets without being judged and they can tell me and sense when I'm not in a good place.

My recovery work helps me to stay spiritually fit to the point where I no longer need to battle with the urges and temptations on a daily basis, unlike in the past. I speak to my sponsor on a regular basis and I have 5 sponsees that I work with, who help keep me spiritually connected. My dedication to Torah and mitzvos has also improved through the 12 step program. On the irregular occasions that lust urges do creep in, with the help of my Loving Higher Power (aka the Ribono Shel Olam), I am able to address them immediately, surrender them to Him and move on very quickly.

These days I go to about 5 live meetings per week and spend 2-3 hours in daily actions of recovery (i.e. phone calls, step work, GYE chat, fellowship, prayer/meditation, DSR etc.).

I started frequenting GYE once I was already sober for about a year and I keep coming back here to practice my 12th step - to carry forward the messages of 12-step living and to give back and help others to recover.

I spend a lot of time with SA guys and through GYE - with people all over the globe. Through the GYE chat rooms I've had many inspirational and fascinating conversations with Jews and non-Jews from Australia, Portugal, France, Sweden, India, Chile, Israel and all across the USA.

Several weeks ago I met with a GYE member while visiting the west coast which was his first face-to-face meeting with someone in recovery and yesterday I had a long conversation by phone with a GYE member in the UK that is going through a rough patch.

Above all, the most gratifying GYE story for me so far happened just 10 days ago. I was schmoozing with some guys after an SA meeting at my local home group and somehow I mentioned about my having tried to fast for 40 days twice etc. Suddenly a relative newcomer to SA who had overheard my conversation, turns around and asks me if I frequent GYE? After answering in the affirmative he tells me that he is sure that he chatted with me on GYE about 10 weeks ago (I had mentioned about this exact measure of fasting in our conversation then) and that because of that conversation he became inspired to make a serious commitment to recovery and joined SA. Now he is sober for 75 days for the first time in his adult life, he is working the steps with a sponsor and with the help of Hashem he is on his way to a happy and free life that he never dreamed possible!

Finally, if you think my ESH may be able to help you in some way please feel free to reach out (don't be shy) and send me a PM here or chat with me in the GYE chat rooms - I look forward to it!

Thank you for reading my story and may Hashem bless all those on GYE and in the greater recovering community with the strength to live a life of spirituality, healing and recovery!!!

Very Truly Yours,

Grateful4Life

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by grateful4life - 19 Apr 2018 00:51

P.S. I'm not worthy enough to feel like I have a recipe for success but I can tell you my recovery method that's worked for me, which I've broken down into "12 Steps".

1. Waking up and focusing on getting through today. Putting program first before work, family and anything that was a high priority for me in the past.
2. Prayer, prayer, prayer (verbally and meditation throughout the day).

- 3. Being brutally honest when it's hard/embarrassing. Looking for ways to humble myself.
- 4. Make at least 5 meetings per week on average.
- 5. Phone calls and surrendering when feeling deregulated for any reason. Lust is never a good option.
- 6. Hourly alarm reminders on my phone to think about connection to God.
- 7. Working through the steps, doing a thorough DSR and reading and reviewing all SA related books.
- 8. Fellowship. Hanging out and interacting with the fellows in person and in chat.
- 9. Staying away from major triggers. Consciously not looking when out in public. No movies by myself other than cartoons or completely kosher.
- 10. Steer away from getting any highs - in order to avoid the lows that follow (including intense religious practices or intense praying).
- 11. Helping sponsees and in general looking for acts of service, in program and out.
- 12. Recognizing the goodness of God, the miracles of the program and the joys of life and sharing them publicly.

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
 Posted by holykosher - 19 Apr 2018 01:53

your doing great, keep it up you will make it i love your positive style

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
 Posted by cordnoy - 19 Apr 2018 02:06

[grateful4life wrote on 19 Apr 2018 00:50:](#)

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We should see this post in a chizuk email pretty soon.

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by Hashem Help Me - 19 Apr 2018 04:17

grateful4life, this post is truly awesome and inspiring. Mazel tov on your accomplishments. May Hashem give you the ability to continue living life to the fullest and assisting others in their journeys to menuchas hanefesh. Ashreichem!

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by Highroller - 19 Apr 2018 11:36

Thanks for sharing, what an inspiring post. Mazel tov on 600 days and may you go from one strength to the next and continue to be able to help others.

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by Gettinghelp2 - 19 Apr 2018 15:22

so incredibly on the mark!! I am blown away by your story,very very inspiring!!!! Please may HASHEM bless us to continue with our recovery with unlimited success with help from HASHEM.

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by yechidah - 22 Apr 2018 22:10

Mazal tov on your 600 days!!

very proud of you-what an inspiration!!!

May Hashem bless you with goodness, peace of mind & endless blessing!!

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by Chaim2009 - 26 Apr 2018 23:14

Wow wow

I have no words. You are an amazing power.

I chatted with you and rarely can I find such a humble person like you.

keep it up, your chizuk means a lot.

And lastly ??? ??? ??? ???

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by iampowerless - 02 May 2018 15:03

Wow! It just goes to show it doesn't matter how bad you feel your personal situation is you could get clean! There is hope if you just hop into the recovery train and take recovery serious..... i'm very inspired now!!!!

Lots of love Yankel!

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by dd - 22 May 2018 17:35

Wow Just read this thread!!!

What an inspiration!!!

Keep up the good work and keep on sharing with the oilam we need guys like you to keep em' rolling!!!

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by lomed - 23 May 2018 05:59

Wow!

Tfs! Amazing amazing amazing! Real inspiration!!

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by MikeSmith - 27 May 2018 05:38

Wow!

We've chatted before in the past & I was really impressed by your calm demeanor & insight Bh. I have so much more respect & admiration for you.

May Hashem bless you with all good & help you continue growing & shedding your light onto others. Much hatzlacha & Mazal Tov

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by grateful4life - 20 Jun 2018 04:18

Hey Chevra

I hope everyone is doing well and enjoying the warmer weather (for GYE members in the northern hemisphere).

I had the opportunity to answer an interesting question today, posed by a GYE member, that I thought might give a measure of strength and hope to some of you so I figured it would be worth a share. Additionally, it's important for me to recognize and share G-d's miracles publicly so here goes:

GYE Member: I've been thinking about our conversation from yesterday morning. I'm trying to understand what you said about "walking around in the summer" and how "it doesn't bother you anymore..." I so badly want to be there. I don't really understand though... you haven't killed your yetzer hara (evil inclination). You are still male and still human! So how will it ever change from being a "candy store where you can't have any candy"??

Me: I think the best way to explain it is as follows:

Before I started my recovery through SA each lustful scene on the street had so much power over me that I just couldn't ignore it. Imagine if someone stabbed you in the leg with a long knife you wouldn't be able to control yourself and naturally you would scream out in pain, right? But what if someone pinched you, not that hard, would you feel the need to let out a shriek or would you be able to control yourself and stay calm??

Today these things (lust hits) feel like a soft pinch or a small cut. Of course I feel it but i can deal with it calmly and treat it, thereby allowing me to move on and live normally. It doesn't overpower me like it used to and i have the proper medicine to treat it with so I'm not anxious or nervous about the whole situation anymore.

This is the miracle of my 12 step program. When I work my program daily I have some serious spiritual armor so the "stabs" only feel like small cuts or pinches. No big deal. No constant struggle. No more feeling of hopelessness in the Summer months. I can actually go into triggering places (weddings, walking on Shabbos, supermarkets, amusement parks, malls etc.) and not look at the scenery. And if I happen to see something, I deal with it quickly (i.e. surrender, call/text someone, pray for and de-objectify the female child of G-d etc.) and move on. Simple. BH!! A true miracle!!

"It works if you work it".

With Blessings,

G4L

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Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by cordnoy - 20 Jun 2018 04:27

[grateful4life wrote on 20 Jun 2018 04:18:](#)

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"It works if you work it".

With Blessings,

G4L

How true.

Fantasies don't linger.

Looks don't last.

Thoughts don't fester.

Needs don't demand.

Life goes on.

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