

192. 5 Biggest Mistakes When Quitting Porn



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 192, 5 Biggest Mistakes When Quitting Porn.

Welcome to the *Overcome Pornography For Good* podcast where we take a research-based, trauma informed and results focused approach to quitting porn. This approach has been revolutionary and changed thousands and thousands of lives. I'm your host, Sara Brewer.

Hey everyone, welcome to today's podcast episode. So before we hop into the content, I want to let you know we have a new free live class coming up this Thursday. So this episode is released on Monday, and on Thursday is our free live class. Now it's called The New Revolutionary Way to Overcome Pornography for Good. And this is a shame-free, sex-positive methodology that is guaranteed to help you quit porn for good.

And it's a combination of all these things that I've taught. It's okay, when we boil it down, what really is the system and the way, as simple, as easy as possible. And why does this work so well? Why do we have hundreds and hundreds of testimonials and clients who have made such amazing progress? Why are some of the things that we hear over and over and over again, "I've tried everything and this is the only thing that works. Why is that?"

And so I'm going to really be teaching that in depth in this free class. You're not going to want to miss it if you're someone who wants to quit viewing porn. Especially if you're someone who's maybe tried for a while. Maybe it's been a long time or you've tried all of the 12-step stuff or the addiction recovery, or Sexaholics Anonymous, whatever that is, you're really not going to want to miss this class. And so you can go and sign up, it's totally free.

So our domain has changed a couple of times. It was sarabrewer.com, then it was centerforovercomingpornography.com. If you use any of those domains, it'll still take you to the right place. Just use the forward slash free live class. So centerforovercoming.com/freeliveclass. We'll also link that here in the show notes.

Another reason you're really going to want to come to this class is I am teaching it live. And so I don't do a lot of live events. If you're in the

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program, you'll work with me a couple of times a month live. I'm there often live. But for just my broader audience, the opportunities to communicate with me and talk to me one-on-one or live or for me to answer questions here, this is really the time to do it.

And I always do, I stay until every single question is answered. And so that's my commitment with these live events is that I stay until the very end until all questions are answered. So I would love to have you there again, Thursday.

Now, let's hop into our content today, which is the five biggest mistakes that people make when they're trying to quit porn. Okay, so first of all, if you've used these tactics in the past and they haven't worked, like I really want to make sure that you understand that it's not your fault. It's not your fault. These mistakes, they're not like a mistake on your end. It's a mistake in the systems that have taught you that this is the way to quit viewing porn.

So as I go through these, be really careful not to fall into any like self-blame or self-shame attitudes. Instead, I want us to approach it with curiosity because especially if you've tried things, and I mentioned this just a minute ago, but especially if you've tried things like 12 steps, sexaholics anonymous, addiction recovery, praying it away, willpower, blocking software apps.

I mean, if you've listened to all of my research episodes, you'll know my opinion on these types of modalities to treat unwanted pornography use. And you'll know that they don't seem to work for most people. And there's a lot of reasons for that and there's just a lot better ways to go about this. And so some of these things might have been things that you've tried using some of those perspectives or modalities. And I want to talk about those, why they might not have worked for you and what to do instead.

Okay, so number one, the first thing, the first mistake that a lot of people make is all or nothing. So say you're trying to quit porn, you've got to go 30 days without porn. And if you slip up, you're all the way back to square one. Now why the hell is this a thing? I'm sorry. I'm sorry, why the hell is even a thing in the pornography world, that if you're going to quit, you've got to go 30 days, 60. You have these milestones, but if you slip up on day 59 of 60, you're going all the way back to the beginning.

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It's just, oh, I see that cause a lot of harm and even increase unwanted pornography use. It can lead to bingeing. It can lead to really extreme cold turkey type approaches that what it does is it just creates this feedback loop for you that you are addicted and you'll never be able to quit. All it seems to do is create more distrust with yourself and more pornography use. Because you slip up and you're like, okay, well I better get it all out of my system before I try again because once I try again, I can't slip up ever again, right? So it creates bingeing attitudes.

And it's not even, I mean, it's, it's not even helpful. It really isn't. Because if you've listened to me for a while you'll know, you've heard me say this before, but counting days as a measurement of your success is not accurate. It is not an accurate measurement of success. And that's actually mistake number three. We'll talk a little bit more in depth, but seeing how many days you can willpower without allowing any slip ups or mistakes, it doesn't equal success. It's just a really bad way of measuring success.

Like I said, we'll talk more about that in step number three, I'll talk about what to do instead. But really this all or nothing mindset, it's harmful. It's harmful. And it really messes with your relationship with yourself. So instead of that, we want to start using slip ups to gather data. And instead of these being as failures that set us back, we want to learn to use them as opportunities to push us forward. Stepping stones, right?

So, oh, now instead of this failure being the thing that is keeping me from quitting porn, this failure is now how I see the way to quit porn. Now a great example of this, I mean, you can see this in a lot of areas, right? So if you're solving a really big math problem and you're not getting it, you're not getting it, you're not getting it, all of those little moments where you're not getting it or you're going the wrong way or doing the wrong thing, it's not failures. It's you learning what the right way is and it's teaching you more.

I love this quote from Thomas Edison in the 1920s when a journalist asked him how it felt to fail a thousand times in his attempt to create the light bulb, right? Because he tried a thousand times and he couldn't figure it out. What he said, he said, I didn't fail a thousand times. I just learned a thousand ways not to create a light bulb, or something along those lines. I don't know if that's the exact quote, but that's the idea, right? So I didn't fail a thousand times. I needed all of those little things to teach me how to create the light bulb.

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I also use the example of Super Mario Brothers when I'm talking about this concept. In order to get really good at Super Mario Brothers, you have to play the game a lot. And what that means is dying a lot and, you know, getting killed by the turtle shell or the ghost fish or whatever that is. Then you go back to your checkpoint, you keep trying, keep trying, keep trying.

But the way that you get good and you figure out how to be a master is not by avoiding failing. It's just by playing over and over and over and over again and learning, learning, learning, learning. So it's the same thing. This is how we want to approach our unwanted pornography use.

Okay, mistake number two that a lot of people make is using willpower. Willpower is their main modality of trying to work through urges. So you feel an urge and you push it away, push it away, push it away. And what happens when you push it away, right? It's like holding a beach ball underwater and it just explodes. When you hold a beach ball underwater, it pops up.

And the deeper you hold that beach ball under the water, the further it's going to pop up and the more power it's going to have. And so I know a lot of you have experienced this where you're trying not to feel the urge, pushing it away, pushing it away, pushing it away. And then what happens?

It just explodes and you swing back into giving in and to watching porn. And it's like this pendulum back and forth and back and forth of willpower, willpower, willpower until we can't anymore. Swing over to give in. And then we give in and then we get ourselves back into willpower and swing in. And so that does not work.

And instead, what I want you to do is to learn these proven mindfulness techniques that can make quitting porn so, so, so much easier. Now, this is what research shows. One of the things that research shows is the most effective in helping you quit porn long-term is mindfulness techniques. And so what that means is instead of pushing it away, pushing that urge away, that desire, that feeling away, you're going to allow it to be there and not respond to it.

And so that means you're going to feel it, breathe into it, allow it to be there. Instead of saying you are awful, evil, and I need you to leave, trying to distract yourself. You're going to allow it and not respond to it, which means

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and not do what it says. I'll talk more about how to do this in that free class if you guys are coming. Please come and we can talk more in depth about it.

But this is one of those skills that, you know, my clients have said, once I learned this, it's like a light bulb switched in my head and everything was so much easier, right? No more of that willpower pendulum, it's just exhausting. It's exhausting. So mindfulness tools, mindfulness tools.

Okay, mistake number three that a lot of people make when quitting porn is that they count days as their measurement of success. Now, the reason that counting days as success doesn't work is because we're not tracking what we're actually doing and the changes that we're actually making in our brain to decrease urges or to decrease compulsions for pornography.

So you can willpower yourself for 30 days, 60 days. That doesn't mean that there's actual change going on in the background in your brain. So I've used the example of Pavlov's dogs when explaining this before where Pavlov, he was able to train his dogs to salivate at the sound of the bell. He would ring the bell, give him a treat, ring the bell, give him a treat, ring the bell, give him a treat.

Many of us have heard this before by taking any basic psychology courses. What this teaches us is that our brain can be conditioned with external stimuli to desire or want something. So even though the treat wasn't right directly in front of them, when they heard the bell, they would start to salivate because they started to associate the sound of the bell with getting the treat. Okay, is this making sense?

In The Office, Jim does this to Dwight. He dings his computer, gives him a mint. Dings his computer, gives him a mint. Dings his computer, gives him a mint. And then after weeks of this or whatever, he dings his computer and Dwight just sticks out his hand for a mint just automatically. And Jim says to him, what are you doing? And Dwight says, oh, I don't know. Oh my gosh, my mouth, it's so dry all of a sudden. It's conditioned this sound to correlate with the pleasure of having a treat or of having a mint.

And so a lot of us do that unintentionally with pornography. So let's say it's 7 PM, 7 PM, 7 PM and you view porn and your brain is getting that extra rush of dopamine with the pornography. Your brain is going to start

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associating 7 PM with pornography. We do this with sugar as well. If you eat sugar after a meal, you're going to eat a meal and then immediately have a craving for sugar. That's a common one, right?

And so if we want to start conditioning our brain out of these compulsions for pornography, if that's where you're at is it feels compulsive or even like automatic, what we have to do is not just, you know, not listen to the bell for 30 days. That's not going to do the training out of it, right? If Pavlov were to just avoid the bell with his dogs, you know, weeks, months, years later, he would ring the bell and they would still salivate even if it had been a long time because they hadn't deconditioned their brain into hearing the bell and not getting the treat.

And so, oh, I think I missed that part. So let me explain. Pavlov was also able to condition his dogs to not salivate at the sound of the bell. And what he did is he rang the bell and didn't give him the treat, rang the bell and didn't give them the treat. When we understand this, it can be really, really powerful and help us see, guess what? We do not want to be counting days as a measure of success because what's underneath, what's going on underneath the surface of you not viewing porn is way more important in showing us what our long-term success is going to be.

If we're processing urges mindfully, that's the same as hearing the bell and not getting the treat. And so it'll start to decondition your brain from those compulsions. Also, we want to be tracking are we buffering? Are we escaping emotion? There's a lot of things to track underneath the surface. Instead of just not viewing porn, like what are you doing instead? And how are you handling these when they come up and how are you healing?

How are you healing? That's what it really comes down to. And I'm not talking about healing just as in deconditioning your brain out of compulsive urges, but I mean, are we healing the sexual shame? Are we healing the need to escape our lives? Are we healing our relationship with ourself and with others? That's such a better measure of progress than how many days has it been? That's just, don't do that anymore. It's just not, it's not valuable, okay?

I mean, there is some value maybe that you can find in counting days just to see how your success is going, but measuring that as this is success

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and if we slip up on day 29, we go back to square one. Anyways, you've already heard my rant on that. Not helpful.

Okay, mistake number four that a lot of people make is not understanding why you view porn, which leads to hopelessness. Like what is wrong with me? Why am I doing this? And then maybe you're told things like, well, sorry, you're addicted. Once an addict, always an addict. This isn't something you'll ever be able to control and it just happens. Oh, that's not true. That's not true.

And so instead of not understanding and feeling hopeless, you want to learn why. Why are you viewing porn? Specifically you, why? And typically a lot of it comes from escaping emotion. It can also come from shame spirals. There's a bunch of different things under the surface here that we can look at, but if we boil it down to one thing, it's typically escaping emotion.

So what's that for you specifically? What emotion are you specifically escaping here? And then we can get out of the hopelessness stuff because if we know the reason why, and then we have the tools to heal that, this is no longer a once an addict, always an addict thing.

Again, we're getting deeper below the surface than you might've gone before, but it doesn't feel heavy. It feels empowering and relieving and like clarifying. And so we want to figure out why you're viewing porn and get rid of the hopelessness.

And then once you do that, when you discover what that is, what do we do now instead? What do we do exactly when we have this negative emotion so that we don't go and view pornography? And there are ways to handle that emotion that are going to be really helpful and healthy. And there's going to be ways to handle that emotion that isn't.

One of those ways that isn't healthy is just trying to replace it, trying not to feel it. And so again, this is where these mindfulness techniques come in and can be really helpful. And also coaching, coaching, coaching. Talking to someone through it, trying to heal whatever that is that's coming up.

Okay, and then lastly, the last big mistake that a lot of people make when they're trying to quit porn is shame and fear tactics. How many of you have

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heard these before? If you don't quit, your life will be ruined. There's something gross and wrong with porn users. Don't you know how bad porn is for society? Let me remind you.

What that tends to do, and you can go and look on our research page. There's so much amazing research and data that we found out there that really shows that the effects of these fear and shame techniques make pornography use worse. It's not just like a neutral thing that makes you feel bad, but it actually can really create more unwanted porn use.

So instead, what we want to do is we want to heal shame. We want to decrease pressure. There's nothing wrong with you. You are a human with a sexual body, of course it likes porn. Changing this mindset will give you the effect of a quicker, much quicker and long lasting success, I promise you. And one of those reasons that I haven't mentioned yet is because it also gets you out of that shame spiral. When you're in the shame spiral, you end up viewing a lot more pornography.

Another concept here that could be its own sixth thing, but a mistake a lot of people make is viewing masturbation as something that should never, ever, ever be done. And here's the reason that's really harmful, because I see a lot of similarities between people who have unhealthy mindsets and create eating disorder type behavior and people with a very abstinence only, never, ever, ever masturbate view or masturbation is bad.

And so we also really want to neutralize that. That's something I've gone way in depth on in previous podcast episodes. If you just look up masturbation, Sara Brewer, that's so funny to me. Oh my gosh, that is such a funny search term. But if you look that up, you'll be able to see and find the podcast episode where I go into depth on that. And that's a really important thing that we want to work on here as well.

And just lastly, I just want to, you know, really help give you some hope here because this has worked for over a thousand of my clients. That many people. Dan struggled for four decades, and within six months he was able to completely transform his relationship with porn. Josh struggled for 19 years and after joining and working through these things, he experienced freedom from porn within just a few months. And this is again after, you know, probably you have a similar story where he had tried everything, every other program. Addiction recovery, 12 steps.

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Steve, and I think we just redid his What's Possible interview last week. I think it was Steve's. But he struggled with porn since a young teenage age and way into late adult life. He had a really pivotal moment with his wife, when his wife found him viewing porn. And then he was able to quit in a few months without pressure and willpower and shame.

James had a lifelong struggle with porn and was able to quit and find freedom within just nine months or so, despite thinking that he had an addiction his whole life. How many of you are kind of stuck in that? Well, it's an addiction. Use that terminology if it's helpful, but if it's keeping you stuck, you're very free to question it. We always, always question that, we never assume addiction because not everyone who views porn is addicted. It's probably like very, very, very, very few people that I would say actually fit that bill of addiction, if any.

So, and then there's Jeff who is 75 years old and he struggled with porn for 60 years and was able to quit within a year of working through this stuff. He said what seemed impossible is now my reality and it's a deep inner change, not a band-aid solution.

So I say this and I bring up these things to hopefully give you some hope. You're not alone. And also some encouragement, like if you are struggling, come on, let's get it done. Let's heal all of that inner stuff. Let's commit. And we can do it in a way, I think a lot of times people hold off on committing to coming in and doing the work because they're scared it's going to be really hard or it's going to be really heavy or there's going to be a lot of pressure. We can do it without that.

So many people come into the program and they just watch one video or one module, one milestone, do one worksheet and it changes everything for them, everything for them. This does not have to be a huge pressure-filled thing. This can be something that relieves pressure, that is easy.

And if you're feeling, you know, I'm bringing this up now because I really believe in our program. And so if you're someone who's kind of been feeling drawn towards it, come and let us help you. Let us help you. We're going to take you by the hand, we're going to hold your hand and we're going to help you.

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You don't have to do this alone anymore. You don't have to carry that pressure by yourself. The pressure of quitting. You don't have to carry that by yourself. Come to the program and let us hold your hand and walk you through it and be with you every single step of the way. And we do it with tons of love. There is not any shame or fear or any of those tactics.

In fact, we don't even have, I've explained this in other podcast episodes and I also explained this in the welcome video of the program, but like we don't have a goal for you. Some of our clients come in and they're like, I just want to decrease my porn use. I don't want to quit. We're like, great.

Some people come in and they say, I want to quit. And we're like, great. Other people come in and say, I don't know what I want to do. All I know is that I feel crappy and I think my relationship with my sexual self is really bad. And we're like, great, let's just heal that relationship and you can decide what to do later as we're going through this process.

So we don't have agendas. There's no pressure coming from us. We just want you to do what it is that your heart calls you to do. And so we can help you discover that and we can coach you through how to create that. So we'd love to have you. If you want to come and join us centerforovercoming.com/workwithme. So glad to have you guys here. So fun to talk to you today. Have a great rest of your week and we will talk to you next week. Bye bye.

I want to invite you to come and listen to my free class, How To Overcome Pornography For Good Without Using Willpower. We talk about how to stop giving in to urges without pure willpower or relying on phone filters so that you can actually stop wanting pornography.

We talk about how to stop giving up after a few weeks or months. And spoiler alert, the answer isn't have more willpower. And then lastly, we talk about how to make a life without porn easily sustainable and permanent.

If you're trying to quit porn, this class is a game changer. So you can go and sign up at Sarabrewer.com/masterclass, and it is totally free.