

202. It's Not Weakness: The Real Reason Behind Unwanted Pornography Use



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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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.

All right, welcome, you guys, to our podcast live today. This is a brand new thing that I'm doing that I'm really excited about. We've done over 200 podcast episodes, and as amazing as they are, I just have found myself wishing that I could be a little bit more interactive. That would make it a little bit more fun for me instead of just talking to my microphone by myself.

And so, I'm really excited about doing these new podcast lives. If you guys hear little meows in the background, this is why. We have a little kitty. We just got a kitty last weekend, and she was sleeping sound asleep in the other room before I hopped on. But then right before I started it, she wanted to come sit in my lap. So, she might be a little in and out, but welcome, welcome.

So, today we have a couple of topics we're going to cover. Like I said, this is my first time using this live streaming service. And so, if you have comments, hopefully I see them. I'm pretty sure I'll be able to see any comments that come in or questions, but let's just dive into it.

So, first off, welcome. If you're new and you don't know who I am, I'm Sara Brewer. I am the host of the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast. I'm also the founder and CEO of the Center for Overcoming, where we have coaching programs and podcasts and tons of free resources to help people who want to quit viewing porn in a shame-free and sex-positive light.

Now, before we hop in, just a couple of resources that I'll also mention at the end. We have free classes that you're always welcome to go and watch. And what we do in those free classes is we take this whole process of quitting unwanted porn use and shrink it down into like the most important things. It's kind of a fire hose of information, but it's really helpful. You can go to centerforovercoming.com, I think it's called forward slash

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masterclass. I'm not sure, but if you just go to the website, you'll see it on the top. It'll say free class or masterclass. You can sign up for that for free.

We also have a podcast roadmap because there are so many podcast episodes. And we have over one and a half million downloads on the podcast. We have over 600 five-star reviews. It's a really amazing resource, but there's so many of them.

And so the podcast roadmap, it takes the most important episodes for you that will help you the most and breaks it down into like the first 12. And so you can download that for free. It is centerforovercoming.com/podcastroadmap.

So let's dive into our topic today. This first topic is it's not weakness and the real reason behind unwanted pornography use. Now, these first couple of lives, they're going to be kind of basic concepts that you have to understand in order for us to go into a little bit more deeper stuff. And so this first one we're going to talk about is this idea of unwanted porn use. If you're struggling with porn, it's because you don't have a moral compass or because you lack self-control, and that's not.

This is probably the messaging that you've received around this, specifically if you grew up in maybe a home that was very uncomfortable talking about sex and maybe shaming around sex, or in a church environment with a lot of purity culture symptoms, kind of shaming around sex, right? Where if you're struggling with porn, it's just because you don't know how bad it is or because you're not quite righteous enough. You don't really have quite the moral compass you should. Or if you're struggling with porn, it's because you're too weak and you just need to be stronger.

Now, that stuff is not true. And if you've heard that, I'm really, really sorry. That has a lot of repercussions that we'll talk about today. So if we're to let that go, that we struggle with porn because it's a lack of moral compass or a lack of strength, if we're to let that go, what is it then? Why do I struggle

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with porn? Well, one main reason is because pornography is often an escape from emotion.

So this is a term that I use called buffering. If you've followed me for a while, you've probably heard me use this term before, but buffering is any action that we take to escape negative emotion. For example, maybe you're feeling stressed and you watch TV to escape stress, or you binge eat to escape stress, or you view porn to escape stress.

Maybe it's feelings of anger, annoyance, guilt, grief, boredom, any emotion that you're like, I don't like that emotion. Buffering is an activity that we take to escape that emotion. It could be overeating, over drinking, scrolling social media, binge watching Netflix, over video gaming, over shopping. There are tons of examples of these buffering activities.

And what we want to be careful of, and I'm going to get into this in a minute, but we don't want to shame ourselves for buffering. So as we're looking at this, I want us to look at this with the lens of, oh, my body is buffering and my body is wise. What can I learn from this? What's going on? How can I love this part of me? Instead of, oh my gosh, I'm so dumb for buffering, right? Or what's wrong with me for buffering?

So we want to be careful not to look at it from that lens. We want to look at it from an unshaming lens, okay? Now, if you understand this concept of buffering, this really is game-changing when we can understand this concept of buffering, and you realize you're not just a bad person, you're a normal human, and we can learn what to do. And this gives us a good solution instead of just, well, I just need to be stronger.

Okay, so as tempting as buffering is, it's not a long-term solution, like you know. Using actions to escape negative emotion doesn't typically give us the results that we want in life. In fact, it usually leads to a net negative result. And so if you're stressed and you view porn to escape the stress, your body, your brain is like, yes, relief. Oh, I don't have to feel stressed for a minute.

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Same with scrolling on Netflix or scrolling on Instagram or something, right? Oh, relief. The only problem is that that relief doesn't last long. What happens when we're done? The stress comes back. If you're stressed about work, let's say it's a work event you're stressed about, you escape it for a minute with porn. And then after the porn, that stress is still there around the work event.

That's still on your mind. Plus the added stress of whatever is coming up around your porn use, the wasted time viewing porn, the wasted money viewing porn, or if there's that moral incongruence, that shame that, oh, now I have to wrestle with this thing that I did that I believe is immoral. And that brings a lot of stress.

So buffering typically has a net negative effect. Buffering is super common. So I want to be careful that we're not shaming this and all of us need to numb out every now and then. All of us need to escape for a minute. So that's okay, but buffering especially might be common if you grew up with a lot of societal pressures to avoid emotion.

This is something I see in men a lot. What's the conditioning that men receive around emotion? It's weak to cry. It's weak to be vulnerable. It's more manly to be stoic, to not show any emotion on our face, right? But when we do that, what happens when we're alone? What happens when we aren't just putting on a face for everyone else and we don't have healthy tools to cope with these emotions? It's typically going to result in buffering or other self-destructive behaviors.

So healing and quitting pornography is going to be a practice in dropping those cultural expectations, allowing yourself to feel emotion, reworking that conditioning that you might've received, especially if you're a man growing up. And instead of it's weak to have negative emotion, it's weak to feel negative emotion, it's strong to feel negative emotion. It's healthy. It's safe to feel negative emotions. All of it, all of it is okay.

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And, man, if I could do one thing, I would love to just infuse this image of, instead of I am a healthy man and I am stoic and I am strong. It's like, I am a healthy man because I allow myself to have the full range of human experience. I am a healthy human and I let myself experience everything. And that is strength. All right, kitty is scratching on my leg. She wants to come back up.

All right, let's keep going. I am taking questions, but I'm going to take them here at the end of my teaching. How I see this going is I'm going to teach for seven to 10 minutes, we'll try to keep it into a short snippet, and then I'll answer questions, but keep putting your things in here. I love it.

One of you is saying, "This is awesome. Thank you. Thank you for what you do." Yes. "The beach ball analogy really resonates." Yeah, that's a good one. We'll talk about that one, I don't know if we'll talk about it here, but we'll talk about it soon. "I've learned so much from your podcast roadmap content as well as your podcast. Thanks so much for what you do." Yay, thank you so much!

"I'm a Bishop and I've successfully used your principles many times in counseling men and boys." Yeah. "One thing I struggle with is how to help 12 to 16 year olds. Do you have advice for this age group?" Yes, I do. That's a whole thing I could go into.

Before I keep going in the content, let me address that. So with this age, how we address this is much, much more important than whether or not they're viewing porn or masturbating. I really want you to be careful not to shame or preach against masturbation. And I know that depending on the religious views around that, that might be kind of tricky to grapple with.

I have a whole podcast episode specifically around masturbation, but honestly, issues arise not from boys masturbating. Issues arrive from the shaming around the masturbation. So I would avoid, if I were you, just like preaching abstinence and I would teach healthy sexuality and I would

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encourage the parents to teach healthy sexuality. That doesn't just look like abstinence and not ever having sexual feelings.

What I hear often is bishops or other religious leaders who come in and then they teach the concept that if you have any sexual feelings, push it away, push it away, push it away, push it away. It sounds like you've used some of my concepts before, so you probably understand why that's not helpful.

And so I would drop any pressure that you have to control them. I would teach healthy sexuality. And when it comes to pornography specifically, there's some things that we can teach. I do have a podcast episode on this too, it's called something and part of it is porn literacy. And so there's like some concepts that you want to teach them about what healthy sexuality looks like, what healthy sex looks like.

And so instead of focusing here on the porn, like if we're thinking of this as an iceberg, we're not addressing the porn necessarily with them. We're addressing all the things underneath, which might be like, let's actually talk about how are you doing? How is your home life? How is your family life? Do you feel like you have people to talk to? What's your confidence like? You know, at school, how are your friendships?

Do you understand healthy sexuality? Do you have questions about this? And you know, it's sticky because what role does a bishop have to teach healthy sexuality? I think that gets to really harsh places, but those are ideas that you can use for fifth Sunday lessons or with parents. And that's what I would recommend there.

And like I said, we can go way more in depth there and maybe we'll do a whole podcast live on that sometime. But another podcast I would recommend to you is I did an episode with Heather Frazier on parenting and porn use, and it's going to be really similar to that. So those are my short quick thoughts on that.

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All right, let's keep going. Talking about buffering, here's what we're not going to do, is we're not going to shame ourselves for buffering, right? Think that there's something bad about us for escaping emotion, especially with pornography. Now, the key here is that shame equals more pornography use.

Now, this is a concept that we always address first with clients, is after you view porn or when you're thinking about the main emotions you have around your pornography use, what are they? And if it's shame, we typically look at the shame cycle, which looks like, you view porn, you might think something like there's something wrong with me. When you think there's something wrong with me, you feel shame.

And it's not necessarily a thought. It can be any thought that brings shame. Shame is just this general sense of there is something wrong with me, not I did something wrong, right? That's guilt. I didn't do something that aligned with my moral compass. Shame is there is something wrong with me.

When you feel shame, like think about how shame feels. Shame is the lowest of the low vibrating emotions, in my opinion. It feels awful, right? When I think of shame, it makes my stomach kind of twist and it's just an emotion that I want to escape.

So if shame is such an awful emotion to feel, and what do we do when we feel awful emotion? What are you used to doing with negative emotion, especially a really icky one, is escaping it. How do you escape it? Through porn, you're very likely to say to yourself, well, you know, I suck already. Let's just go view some porn. The porn will make this escape for a minute. I'm already the worst.

So you view porn again, and then we continue the shame cycle, the shame cycle. So shame makes pornography use worse. It does, it truly does.

Now, shame is often a socially conditioned response. You weren't born with shame. It's influenced by family. It's influenced by culture. It's influenced by religious expectations. And so again, when we're looking at our shame, and

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not shaming myself for having shame, but approaching it with compassion, where did I learn this? Where did I learn to feel shame about this?

If it's shame for masturbating, where did I learn to feel shame for masturbating? If viewing porn isn't in my moral compass, if it isn't in my value, if I don't want to be viewing porn, why am I feeling so much shame about it instead of just guilt?

Clients will often talk about, let's say swearing. They also don't want to swear. Swearing isn't necessarily a good thing in their moral compass, in their moral frame. But when they swear, they don't feel nearly as much shame as they do when they view pornography. So why are we feeling so much shame around that?

Anyways, those are all things that we can explore in depth. I just want you to right now understand shame is a socially conditioned response. And as we start to explore where that came from, it can really, really help us when we're trying to quit porn.

And what we find over and over and over and over again, over and over again in all of our research and all of the thousands of clients we worked with, is we must heal shame to quit porn. We don't just take a shame-free approach because it feels good and because shame sucks. We take a shame-free approach because you cannot heal your unwanted pornography use if there are currents of shame underneath it, you can't.

So instead of there's something wrong with me for wanting to buffer, we want to start to love ourselves. Love that part of us that wants to buffer, listen to it, understand it, even look for the wisdom in it. For example, back to our example of stress, instead of what is wrong with you for buffering when you feel stress, just stop feeling stress, just man up and do what you need to do. What is the stress telling me?

Oh, maybe it's telling me that I'm working a little bit too hard and my life is out of balance. Maybe it's telling me that this is really difficult for me and

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this is making me grow in a lot of ways and I need to offer myself a lot more compassion and a lot more space through this.

Maybe what you find is that there's underlying childhood wounds of I'm not good enough, I am bad. I am bad, I will never be good enough and I'm inherently a bad person. Those are all things that, again, pornography is the root of the iceberg. We're looking at all the undercurrents of what's going underneath. Those childhood wounds could be a big thing that we need to address and heal.

So we want to shift self-judgment into kindness and empathy here, okay? So the key takeaway from this part is that you do not view pornography because you're weak. You view pornography because you're escaping emotion and that's okay. And that's okay, we can't shame ourselves out of it. Instead, we must heal and love and understand these parts of us that want to buffer, like we would a child, like we would someone that needs nurturing.

It's not someone that just needs the hammer taken down on them. No, we really need to look at it and love it and heal it. That's going to create a lot longer lasting change.

All right, you guys, let's come over here to the chat and answer any questions, see what's going on here. Okay, can you also help spouses and adult children of compulsive porn users? If so, in what way? Right now we're working on a whole other program for spouses.

Oh, and let me mention for anyone who doesn't know. So if you want to come work with us a little bit more in depth where we have tons of coaching, you get unlimited coaching multiple times a week. The whole framework of here's the things you need to do and the things you need to learn. And we also have email coaching that you have unlimited access to. You can message a hundred times a day and we'll respond to you within, you know, as quickly as we can. It's usually a day or two.

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The program is called Overcome Pornography for Good. You can come and join anytime. We'd love to have you. And in the program, we do have support for spouses. And we have a monthly call for spouses that we offer for free to your spouse if you're in the program.

Adult children, what we can do too is we can coach you through what's coming up for your adult children, what's coming up for your spouse, and we can help you start to mend and build those relationships there.

Could also be a youth fireside topic. Oh yeah, regarding healthy sexuality. It could. It could be a youth fireside topic. Listen, I know an amazing person. Her name is Shame Free Chastity on Instagram. Her name is Meg Jankovich. So if you go to our website, we have a whole research page with tons of research that shows what works and what doesn't work and kind of the myths about pornography. And I would definitely recommend you go read that.

But she helped me with that project and she has an account called Shame Free Chastity. And I think she has a lot of templates for if you want to teach this in a way that also helps, you know, from like a faith lens or also work in how this can fit with the religious aspect. Her stuff is really great, so I'd recommend that.

All right, and then I realize now that during stressful moments or experiencing a stressful situation, my body or mind immediately resorts to ways to ease the pain. Why is porn the top of the list? This is such a great question. And this is going to lead us into our next topic, which I'm going to separate as a separate podcast episode and a separate YouTube video. But let me answer this question and then we'll go into our next topic.

But the reason that you do this is not because you're just a bad person. It's because that's what you subconsciously trained your brain to do. This is a question I get. Like, why did it have to be porn? Why couldn't it have been Instagram? Why couldn't it have been – And someone even went as far as to say, why couldn't it have been drugs? Which I don't think drugs are

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better. I think that's just awful, such a hard place to be in. But the reason is because you subconsciously trained your brain to go to pornography.

And I think with that, we'll just dive into our next topic. So thank you guys for being here. If you want to come to these lives, you can get on our list to get notification for these, and then you can come and ask questions yourself. I'll have it added to the show notes and to the bottom of the video description. Come join us in Overcome Pornography for Good if you would like some more professional help around this, and we'll 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.