

## 35. Why We Desire



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Sara Brewer**

## 35. Why We Desire

You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 35, why we desire.

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 the podcast episode this week. I'm so glad that you are here. Today is a fun day, I'm recording while my kids are at home. And so you might hear them in the background a little bit.

I don't know, my podcast team is really awesome, they're really, really great so they might be able to get a lot of it out of the background. But if they aren't I'm not too worried about it, this is just kind of where we're at. Well, this is where we're at this week. And little baby screams are okay with me.

So, welcome to the podcast episode this week, welcome to *Overcome Pornography for Good*. You guys, I'm so grateful for you, I'm so glad that you're here. This last month we had quite a bump in downloads. It seems like we've been having a bit of a trend of a couple extra thousand downloads these past couple of months. So we passed 10,000 downloads for the month of August, which is so awesome.

Thank you for sharing this podcast with your friends and with people that you think would benefit from it. Thank you for leaving me reviews on Apple Podcasts, that is one of the best things that you can do to help me get the message out, help the podcast grow, help continue to support me. So I really, really appreciate it.

In fact, I just want to share a review that I got on my podcast this week. This rating, it says, "Most of my life I've struggled with porn, followed by empty efforts of changing. Even after my wife found out I still found that I could not stop.

This podcast was life changing. It's not about willpower, it's about knowledge of what's happening to your body when we get urges. MY urges

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disappeared overnight when I changed my mindset from “I can’t” to I choose,” which is on episode 32. It all made sense to me, it just clicked. I actually listen to these podcasts when I work out, I feel it’s very motivating to hear that you have to feel pain to grow.”

Awesome, I love it. Thank you, thank you so much for this. And I got a lot of really great feedback from a handful of you who have reached out to me after that podcast episode, from I can’t, to I choose and how. Like, “Whoa, what? That makes so much sense. that’s so helpful. That’s helped me so much.”

And then I also have gotten one message from someone who was like, “Hey, I just tell myself I choose not to, and it doesn’t do anything. The dopamine in my body, that’s not doing it for me. I kind of appreciate that advice, but just saying I choose not to, that’s not helping me at all.”

So I want to talk a little bit about that today. Because some of these episodes are really going to resonate with you, some of them might not resonate with you yet. But in order to get to this place where you’re like, “I’m choosing not to view,” you really have to understand what’s going on in your brain.

You have to understand how to manage your urges. You have to understand, kind of like this review said how to not use willpower, all of these good things. And so I want to take a couple of episodes actually to talk about what’s happening in your brain.

And specifically today to talk about why we desire pornography. We’ll talk about the reward system, we’ll talk about the dopamine in your brain. Just like a really simple, basic understanding of why you want porn. And it’s going to be so good. It’s going to be such an important thing for you to understand. It’s really going to help you understand what’s going on. And once you understand what’s going on, the easier it is to change.

So the biggest thing, like I want you just to keep this in mind as we talk about why we desire porn, is that you don’t desire porn because there’s something wrong with your brain or because you’ve broken your brain. You

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desire porn because your brain is working correctly. And that's how it's been set up to work.

And that doesn't mean that you have to watch porn forever or you have to struggle with porn forever. But it's just that one part of your brain that we're going to talk about today that's working correctly.

So, first thing too that I want to mention is that we all have sexual desires because we are human. And those are never going to go away. I mean, people like experience different levels of sexual desire and have different experiences there. But that just happens because we're human and those are good things.

But this over-desire that many of you experience, this strong desire for pornography, that is learned. And that's something that since it was learned, it can be unlearned. So sexual desires, sexual urges are all good and normal. But this over-desire, these very strong, maybe even compulsive desires for pornography is something that's learned.

Many of us think that desire is innate. That it's something that we don't have a choice on. We either desire our spouse or we don't. We either desire porn or we don't. And we don't really have a choice, it just happens to us. But this isn't true. Desire is not innate, desire is learned. And I want you to think of this like learning a language.

Desire is learned just like you learn a language. So you learn a language by repetition. If you want to learn Spanish, you learn it by speaking a lot of Spanish and by repeating a lot of words and repeating a lot of conversations. Pretty soon, speaking Spanish becomes natural and you don't have to think about it, you just know Spanish.

And it's the same thing with desire. You've practiced and repeated it enough times that it feels very natural, and it feels very innate. And it feels involuntary, like it just happens, right?

How many of you experience maybe, or in the past have experienced, just desire automatically at certain times of the day? Maybe you have a

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witching hour, an hour between, I don't know, 10 and 11, or whenever that is for you, where it just seems like you have desire all of a sudden for pornography.

It's because that's something that you've repeated enough times and it becomes pretty natural. Just like if someone asked you a question in Spanish and you knew Spanish, you practiced Spanish, you would involuntarily answer in Spanish.

So this is so important to understand and be open to believing because it shows us that we're not out of control, we're just programmed to desire. And I know with pornography it's something that a big message around is that we're out of control. We're out of control. We don't have control here. But that's just not true. You're not out of control, you're just programmed to desire. It's something that you've programmed yourself to do.

And if you don't understand this, it can seem very, very, very, very scary. So scary. This is when I hear teenagers saying that they're addicted to pornography because they want it. Or others preparing for missions and they're just terrified that they've messed themselves up because they're struggling with porn.

A lot of worry and fear. Worry, fear that something is wrong, that we're out of control, that we've totally messed up. If you don't understand this, that's when it gets really scary. But you're not out of control, you're just programmed for desire.

And I'll dive into this a little bit more in depth, but the good news is that just how we programmed ourselves for desire, we can learn to program ourselves out of desire.

So here's how you programmed your brain to desire porn. First thing is that your brain, all of our brains, they have a reward system. And this reward system is really, really important. It helps us stay alive, it helps us prioritize things that are important to our survival.

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It helps us make sure that we're eating, drinking, that we have warmth, that we have accomplishment, that we have connection, that we have sex and repopulate our species and that we don't just die off. And when we do these things, when we get these things, our brain gives us a dose of dopamine.

So we have these things that are important for us to stay alive. And when we do them, our brain gets dopamine. Now, dopamine is a chemical in your body. Dopamine is the pleasure chemical. So we really, really like dopamine. Dopamine is that chemical in your body that makes you feel good and have pleasure. And it's just your reward. It's your reward for doing these things.

And so your reward system in your brain gives you a dopamine shot as a reward for the things that perpetuate our survival. This was really, really important, especially when we were cavemen or when we were pioneers, and we were living in the elements.

We ate meat and potatoes, and we would get dopamine from that. And then our brain remembers the dopamine and it likes the dopamine. And so it reminds us to eat, and it reminds us to fuel our bodies so that we can get more of that reward.

When we sit by a warm fire, we get dopamine. And our brain is like, "Great, we want more dopamine. And so we're going to make sure to prioritize staying warm and comfortable so we can get more dopamine. And this is important for our survival, this is a good thing."

And then we have sex, and we get dopamine. And it's really important that we get rewarded for this. It's important that our brain learns to enjoy sex. It's important to repopulate our species and to just create connection with our person. So this dopamine was received, and it taught us what was important. And it helped our brains remember to do the important things so that we could stay alive, and so that we could thrive.

And what's really important to remember about dopamine is that your brain seeks it out. And it remembers where and when it gets dopamine. And like I

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said, this was a really good thing, it kept us alive. It remembered that we got dopamine when we ate that food, and that we got dopamine when we sat by the fire, that we got dopamine when we had sex kept us alive. It kept us thriving, it kept our population going.

But here's when it became a problem in our world, in our modern world, we don't have the same dangers that we used to have. Many of us have plenty of food. At least those of us who are in positions where we are so blessed to have plenty of food, we don't have to worry about starving. And we have shelter, we don't have to worry about freezing to death. And we aren't going to die off if we stop having sex, there are plenty of people here.

The pain that we experience now in our world, it isn't usually life threatening. And we have a lot of manmade substances that have about two times the amount of dopamine that other natural man made substances have.

So what that means is, we used to be able to eat something that would give us a small reward, you know, like a grape. We'd get a small dopamine reward from that grape and that would motivate us to want to do it again.

But those little rewards that kept us alive, they've become a problem because we've taken them, and we concentrated them, and they have way more dopamine now than they used to have. So think about sugar, we have that little dopamine from grape, and then we have very concentrated sugary treats, or alcohol, or drugs.

Think about porn, right? So instead of having sex with one person one time and getting that dopamine release, we can now watch hours of porn and get a huge dopamine release. And instead of eating steak and veggies and getting that small dopamine release, we can eat deep fried burgers and fries and a shake and get a huge dopamine release.

And your brain, how your brain interprets all this extra dopamine is it's like, "Hey, more dopamine means it's more important, right?" Our brain, it's like, oh yeah, we're set up to love dopamine. And to prioritize getting dopamine. Dopamine is really important.



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So if there's more dopamine in the substance, that means it's more important, right? So it prioritizes these big rewards over the smaller rewards. And it creates more desire for these big rewards than the smaller rewards. That's why your brain craves porn more than that sexual connection with your spouse. At least that one part of your brain does.

This part of the brain that has this reward system and prioritizes this dopamine, we call it your lower brain. And that's all that we're referring to in this podcast. In another episode, the next episode next week, we'll talk about your higher brain.

So I want you to be careful as you're listening to me describe this, I don't want you just to think, "Oh, well, if this is just how my brain works, then this is just how my brain works and all hope is lost," because it's not. This is one part of your brain that is so important to understand what's going on here.

So the more you get these big doses of dopamine, the more you feel like you need those big doses of dopamine. If you're used to eating a lot of sugar, what happens when you stop eating sugar? You feel sad for a little bit, you feel like you're missing out. Your brain is like, "Wait, I don't have all this dopamine, something's wrong."

And then after a few days or a few weeks you get used to that lower level of dopamine and it doesn't seem so bad. How many of you have done this? You've gone off sugar or you've changed your eating habits and it was miserable for a while. But then it gets really easy, and it becomes your new normal. It's like you regulate to these more natural levels of dopamine.

Did you guys learn about this in school with drugs? It's like you start taking drugs and you only need one. But then you get used to that and then in order to get the same high, you need more. In order to get that same high, you need more and more and more.

I always say to my clients, the more you look at porn, the more you want porn. It's the same thing here. Okay? It's the same with porn. You stop viewing and you feel bummed out, and you feel like you're missing out. And



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you aren't getting the same satisfaction and your life just feels like, "Oh, I'm not getting the same amount of pleasure that I was getting."

And this is why this is so important, you guys, this is why replacing something with porn doesn't work. I have clients who come, and they say, "Okay, well, I really, really have a lot of urges to view porn, and I want it really, really bad. What can I replace this with so that this goes away?"

And my answer is always, "You can't. You can't replace this with anything. You have to go through this period of not having pleasure until you start to re-regulate your dopamine levels." And that's not as fun, right? It's not as fun because we're like, "But I just want to feel good. And I just want to feel pleasure. And I don't want to feel crappy all of a sudden." But there is a period of time where that's required to re-regulate.

And the great news here that I really want you to take away from this episode is that desire is learned. And so if desire is learned, that means that we can unlearn it.

You learned by you had an experience where you viewed porn, you got dopamine. Your brain remembers where, when, and how it gets dopamine. So the next time that experience happened, let's say it was a certain time of the day, maybe it was when you were tired. It was when you were feeling a certain emotion it was when you were bored.

So the next time you have that experience, the urge to get more dopamine via porn will come up. Because your brain is like, "Oh, remember? Remember, it's 11 o'clock at night. That's when we got dopamine last time." And so it'll just remind you with this little urge and this little desire, "Hey, remember, we need dopamine, it's that time of day."

Or "Remember, whenever we feel lonely like this, we get that dopamine." And so you feel lonely like that again and your brain like pipes up and it's like, "Hey, remember," it gives you these urges, "we need to go get that dopamine." Or you feel bored, or you feel tired, or whatever it is. And it's different for everyone, right?

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Whatever the experience is that you've had with pornography, whenever you've been used to looking at it, whatever you've trained your brain to look at pornography to either escape or just at certain times of the day, whatever that is, your brain is going to pipe up and be like, "Hey, dopamine is really important. Remember, we got to get that. Here's this urge. Here's this urge to go and push you to go and get that."

And, you guys, you were not born wanting porn, which means that you can learn to not want it again. And remember, what I'm not saying here is that you can learn to not have any sexual feelings or any sexual desire. But this over-desire to always want pornography at certain times of the day or with certain emotions, or certain experiences, or just consistently throughout your week, you can learn how to not have that.

And what it takes is it takes learning to manage urges so that you know what to do with those urges when they show up. That's not just willpower, "Go away, go away, go away." It takes learning emotional wellness, how to stop buffering. How to stop running away from your emotions, so that when you do feel lonely or when you do feel stressed you don't just need to make it go away.

It takes identity shifts, learning how to see yourself as someone who can quit porn. And learning to see yourself as someone who doesn't have porn as a part of their life. And it takes learning how to stay committed throughout the process.

A lot of people want just a quick fix. Well, can't I just replace this with a song in my head? Can't I just replace this with working out? Can't I just replace this with a real relationship? And you guys, those things never work long term. And they're great things and they're things we want to start doing in our life, right? But they don't work to get rid of the porn because it's not retraining your brain out of this desire.

And all these things that I've mentioned, we really dive into in my program, Overcome Pornography For Good. And I give you a lot of access to me and

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access to other coaches in that program so that you can get some personalized help with all of it.

But the best news, and what I just want you to start playing with in your mind is that you do not have to just learn to deal with this forever. Brains are malleable. You taught yourself to desire porn, you can teach yourself to not desire porn. People do this all the time with other stuff and with pornography.

Some of you might have had experiences doing this with sugar, or with alcohol, or with Mountain Dew, or something that had a lot of dopamine in it that you went through the process and now you don't really like it anymore or care about it anymore. It's absolutely possible. It's absolutely doable.

If you remember me talking about Pavlov's dogs and that whole experiment, I think I talk about it, is it in Episode Three, or Episode Two? It might be in episode two. If you remember me talking about that, that just proves we can train our brains to stop having all of this over desire for this dopamine. We can totally do that.

And this part that we've talked about today, it's just one part of your brain. It's just that lower part of your brain, that animal part of your brain. It's not even the most powerful part of your brain, you guys. We also have a higher brain that's so much more powerful. And right now you just might be more used to listening to that lower part of your brain.

And that's okay. It's not a problem. But we can learn to listen to that higher part of your brain. It's so much more powerful. And it's actually what decides what you want in your life.

There's a difference between us and animals. There's a reason that humans have created so much abundance, and that humans have done such amazing things. It's because we have this higher part of our brain.

And I'm going to teach you about that and talk about it in next week's episode, how to access that, what it is, how to start making decisions from that higher part of your brain instead of just this lower part of your brain

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that's addicted to dopamine. I want dopamine, I want dopamine, I want dopamine. We don't just have to listen to that forever.

Okay, All right, you guys, have a great week. I'm excited for next week's episode. We'll talk to you then. Bye bye.

I want to invite you to come and listen to my free training called How to Quit Viewing Pornography Even if You've Tried in the Past. If you like the podcast, you will love this free training. We talk about, number one, how to not rely on willpower or phone filters so that you can actually stop wanting pornography.

Number two, how to guarantee that you won't fail no matter how many times you've tried in the past. And number three, how to feel good about yourself while becoming someone who doesn't struggle with pornography. You can access this training at [sarabrewer.com/masterclass](http://sarabrewer.com/masterclass).