

## 78. Automatic Sexual Thoughts



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Sara Brewer**

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 78, Automatic Sexual Thoughts.

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, you guys, welcome to the podcast episode this week. Before we dive into the content I want to make sure that we share a few wins. Sometimes I forget and I try to remember every single time because the more we share wins and the more we celebrate wins, the more we create wins.

And so if you're focusing on everything that you're doing wrong, you're going to create more of that. If you're focusing on wins and successes, even if they're small, you will create more of that. That's one of the most beautiful things we can do for ourselves, is get in the habit of gratitude. And celebrating wins is a form of gratitude. So here are a few I want to share from clients in *Overcome Pornography For Good*.

So this one, they say, "My win for this week actually came last week. I'm almost to 100 urges processed and last Saturday after working with my bishop I was able to baptize my wife, something I've been working towards for years. It feels so good to be on the right path. I still struggle some days, but I've never been this close to overcoming pornography." So good, I love it. It's such a huge milestone when you can get to 100 urges processed. Congratulations.

And this other one says, and I thought this was so good, this was such a great realization and I thought it would help you, so I wanted to share this one. It says, "I just had a realization today, this is my win. I keep thinking I can't overcome pornography because I like it too much. I haven't been trying to process the urges when they come, I say I want them, so I have to view.

I've been trying to use this program to get rid of my desire, lower the desire, or get around the desire, but that isn't the issue. The issue is I'm telling

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myself I can't overcome something that I like. That's like saying I can't fast on Sunday because I like food. So a belief I'm going to adopt is I can like pornography and overcome it."

I love that, I can like this, and I still not look at it. I can like this and still quit. And when you accept that, and these are my notes now, this is me speaking now. But when you can accept that you can gain a lot more power over it and you can notice, oh, these feelings and these desires don't mean that I have to have something.

This is something that we've been conditioned to believe and think, especially around sexuality is if we have urges, if we want something sexually we're either entitled to it or we have to have it in order to make it go away, or it's something that we can't just sit with. And really, think about all of the conditioning that we hear in the world around sexuality.

That's all you see in movies, is someone has an urge and then they're immediately acting on it. There's hardly ever waiting, or sitting with it, or being okay with just feeling it. But that is the truth and that's something we can do with our bodies and with our lives, is we can learn to sit with urges to want something, to like something and not indulge in it. And that's such a powerful place to get to. So good.

And that actually ties in a bit with our content today. Our topic is automatic sexual thoughts. And what this is, what this means is maybe you are out in public, and you have a thought, or an urge, a sexual thought or a sexual urge come up automatically. Maybe after seeing someone, seeing someone in a swimming suit, or in tight clothes, or whatever it is, you just have these automatic sexual thoughts that pop into your mind.

Now, a mistake that a lot of people make is that they kind of freak out or they think that they've done something wrong, or the demonize it and they say what's wrong with me for having that thought? Or they blame other people for those sexual thoughts. What's wrong with that person for wearing that swimming suit that causing me to have these thoughts?

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And I hear this from clients often where they get to a point where when they're alone and they're having urges they are able to manage them really well and they don't freak out about them. But sometimes when they go out in public they're really anxious about going out in public, really afraid of the urges when they go out in public.

Or really afraid of seeing other people, or being around other people, or going to the beach, or going to the gym, or whatever because they're afraid of these urges that are going to come up, these automatic sexual thoughts. And so that's what I want to focus on today.

Like I said, the mistake that most people make is they freak out and they avoid it, and they resist it, and they think they've done something wrong, or they blame other people for those thoughts. What that is doing is that is just resistance.

So I've talked about this before, it's like holding a beach ball underwater. What happens when we hold a beach ball underwater? It pops up, right? It explodes out of the water. And when we resist our feelings, that's what happens too.

When we resist our automatic sexual thoughts and we resist them and hold them down under the water, they're going to pop up. They're going to become bigger than they really are. They're going to become much more scary, they're going to have a more explosive reaction because you're resisting it.

It makes it worse. It makes it a bigger problem and it makes you afraid of yourself and afraid of your life. It is not a fun way to live when you're afraid to go out in public because you're afraid of having automatic sexual thoughts, automatic sexual urges. And there's a better way to handle this. There's a better way to handle these automatic sexual thoughts.

So instead of that, instead of resisting it, there are three things I want you to focus on. Number one is acceptance. Recognize that it's normal and it's just a part of living in a hyper sexualized society. There's nothing wrong

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with you. Your brain and your body are just responding to the way that you grew up and the way that you were conditioned.

And as I say this, as I say accept it and recognize that it's normal, I'm not saying, well, okay, now we're just going to be okay with objectifying everyone that we see, and this is just something I have to deal with forever. That's not what I'm saying, we can uncondition our brains to do this.

And in fact, the less we resist it and the more we accept it, it's just this crazy paradox where the more we accept it, the more power we have over it and the less it is controlling our lives and controlling our thoughts. But in order to accept it, we need to recognize that we're just responding to the way that we were conditioned.

First off thinking about how the world just, especially our Western culture, sexualizes everything. It sexualizes especially women's bodies. And especially if you grew up thinking that seeing legs, and shoulders, or certain clothes, or certain body parts were supposed to be covered and sexualizing those body parts, when you see them you're just conditioned to have these automatic sexual thoughts, and that's okay.

When we are so obsessed with women and with girls covering parts of their bodies, what we unintentionally do is we sexualize those parts of their bodies. And we teach them that they need to be covered because thoughts can't be controlled when they show their shoulders or when they show too much skin in this area.

And so it's this funny two-sided coin that I was actually talking about with one of my coach friends recently. It's a two-sided coin when we think that we're teaching modesty, the other side of that, when we teach it, like you have to cover your bodies because these parts are sexual. The other side of that is we also teach them that if these parts of your bodies aren't covered, then you're responsible for men's thoughts or other people's thoughts.

And we also teach that to men too, subconsciously, that if their bodies aren't covered you're going to have thoughts and you can't control them.

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But it's interesting, right, because you go to other countries and other communities and there are breastfeeding moms and it's super normal. And it's not weird and it's not sexualized at all because in that community they don't sexualize that.

So this is a problem, and this is something that we need to stop teaching girls, is that it's their responsibility to control other people's thoughts by the way they dress. Because when we teach girls that, we also teach men and boys that it's girls responsibility for their thoughts by how they dress.

And that's what creates these automatic sexual thoughts that every time you go out and you see someone in a swimming suit, or you see someone in tight clothes at the gym, you're conditioned to have these automatic sexual thoughts about it. So that's how we can work on this in the future, this is how we can help our kids.

But if you're experiencing this right now, one, just accept it and notice it, and recognize that it's how you were conditioned and that's okay. You grew up in a very hyper sexualized culture. A culture very afraid of sexual response, very afraid of bodies and so of course you're going to have automatic sexual thoughts and that's okay. And it's okay and you are okay, and it's actually not a problem.

And this leads us to point number two, right, number one is acceptance. Number two is don't be angry at it and don't demonize it. When we demonize these automatic sexual thoughts, they become stronger, and they stay around longer. When we tell ourselves it's a problem that we're feeling these things and it's a problem that we have these automatic thoughts that are conditioned, it makes them stay around longer and it actually creates a problem.

Okay, this is the same thing that happens when we demonize sugar. And when I say demonize I'm talking about like when we make it inherently evil, right? So these automatic sexual thoughts that we have, they're just evil and terrible and bad and we need to get rid of them. It's the same thing when we demonize sugar.

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What happens when we demonize sugar? Sugar is bad, sugar is evil, I shouldn't want sugar. Then you want sugar more. It's again, that beach ball under the water example. What happens when you hold it under the water, no, no, no? It just pops up, you want it more. And demonizing it makes us feel scared and powerless towards it.

So with sugar you're scared to have sugar in the house, you're scared to be around sugar, you're scared that you're going to overeat, you're always focusing on not eating the sugar. You're giving the sugar so much more power than it actually has. In fact, sugar doesn't even have any power. But you give it power because of the way you think about it and the way you demonize it.

And it's the same thing with automatic sexual thoughts and feelings. They do not have any power. You have all the power. And I know so many of you were taught to think about it differently. You were taught to think that these automatic sexual thoughts are dangerous, and you are powerless to them, and you have to avoid them at all costs, but that's just not true.

These automatic thoughts that just pop into our head because of the way that we were conditioned have no power over you. And the reason that they felt powerful is because you were taught to give them that power by demonizing them, and by trying to resist them, and by telling yourself over and over again, "No, no, no, this is bad, bad, bad, bad, bad. Don't think about it, don't think about it, don't think about it."

It's like me saying don't think about an elephant. What do you think about? You think about an elephant, right? We give it more power when we resist it, when we demonize it, and when we're angry at it.

And the thing about demonizing things is that it makes it more desirable, and this is especially true with sex. And in this realm of sexuality, forbidden things become desirable. And so again, this beach ball example, no, no, no, this is terrible, don't. It makes those thoughts come more, it makes it come up over and over and over again.

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So again, these two steps so far is number one, acceptance. And the great paradox is that the more we accept these thoughts, the less power they have over us. Number two don't be angry at it and don't demonize it. And then lastly, number three, don't internalize it and then move on.

You can have this automatic thought without internalizing it, noticing it, and then just moving on from it. I love this example of observing our brain like we're on a hill observing traffic.

So imagine that you're up on a hill and you look down and you see all this traffic. And you see one's going this way, one lane of traffic is going this way, one lane of traffic is going that way. Over here it's really fast. Over here there's a traffic jam and you're just watching it.

You're not hopping in any of the cars and driving with it. You're not getting into the car crash, into the middle of the car crash and trying to fix it. You're just noticing what's going on and observing it. And then you notice that those cars continue to move past. So you see that green car and then pretty soon it's gone, you watched it leave. And then you see a blue car and you watch the blue car leaving and you just watch it.

We can do that with our brain and with thoughts in our brain. So, oh look, there's a sexual thought. I was out at the beach, and I had an automatic sexual thought, that's normal. And then you watch it. You just watch it go and you don't internalize it.

You don't make it mean something about you. Like oh no, I'm the worst person ever. What's wrong with me? Why can't I just get rid of these thoughts?" You don't jump in the car with that and follow it and continue to think about it. You just notice it and you watch it go on.

The truth is, is that as humans with human brains, in a society full of humans, we all have automatic and even intrusive thoughts. We all have that, right? Sometimes we're driving down the road and we just have this thought popped into our head like, "Hmm, I wonder what it would be like to crash into that barrier." Or, "What if I just chucked this plant outside of my window?"

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We just have random weird thoughts, and we need to normalize those as humans. You don't have that thought and then make it mean, oh my gosh, what's wrong with me? I'm such a crazy person. I'm someone who wants to crash into barriers. You're like oh, that's funny, no, I just had a random intrusive thought that sometimes happens when you're driving. It means nothing about me, it just means that I have a brain and maybe I've been watching too much Fast and Furious.

You don't need to internalize it, you don't need to make it a part of your identity. You just move on. You notice it and you move on. And it's normal, these automatic sexual thoughts are normal because we grew up in a hyper sexualized world. And if you were taught that girls need to cover their bodies so you don't have sexual thoughts, of course you're going to experience those sexual thoughts when you see a girl not covering their body like you were taught they should.

And like I said, I'm going to say it again, when we teach girls they need to cover their bodies so that other people don't have sexual thoughts, the flip side of that is that we teach boys that their sexual thoughts, they can't control them because of what someone's wearing. And that's just not true.

And even if you have those automatic sexual thoughts, it's because of our world, how you were conditioned. And that still doesn't mean that there's something wrong with you. And it doesn't mean that you're going to act out. And it doesn't mean that you're messed up. You can just notice it and move on. Just like we notice traffic and watch it continue. Notice and move on.

When you get fearful, and when you get angry at it, and when you demonize it, that's when you're like holding onto it and jumping in that car and actually making it a big deal. And we don't need to do that. Okay?

And there's so much hope for reconditioning. And I see this with my clients all the time. I just recently had a client who said he was noticing himself watching a movie. And after being into the movie for an hour or so he noticed that he wasn't objectifying the actress like he had before. He's been

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doing program work really consistently for about six months and he noticed that that was changing.

Thinking of another client who was at the beach and instead of looking around and being afraid of these automatic sexual thoughts and objectifying people, he noticed himself noticing this beautiful person and then moving on and being like, "Oh yes, that is a beautiful body," and then moving on and staying connected with what he's doing. And it wasn't difficult, and it didn't feel like willpower, and it wasn't scary. And it wasn't something that he was hyper focused on or hyper fixated on.

And so there is so much hope for reconditioning. Our brains are extremely malleable. And just like you conditioned yourself to be very afraid of urges and to hyper focus on things sexually, you can train your brain to do the opposite, okay? But what we have to do is we have to be mindful, and we have to stop ignoring and pushing things away. We can't shame ourselves for having these automatic sexual thoughts. We can't demonize these sexual thoughts.

And the more we're able to accept it and to notice it and move on, the more freedom we'll have in our life and the quicker you'll be able to recondition that part of you. But again, and I know I've said this twice already, but I'm going to say it again. The paradox is that the more you accept yourself and accept those thoughts, the easier it is to change. The more able you are to change.

And it's just an acceptance of, oh yes, this is how I was conditioned and it's fine and it's not a big deal. And we're moving on. And here it comes again, oh yeah, I'm still working on that. I'm not going to be angry at myself. This is normal and move on. And here it comes again, oh, yeah, that's normal, that's okay. Breathing and move on. And you do that over and over and over and over again.

Okay, that's all I have for you guys today, have a great week. We'll talk to you next week, bye bye.

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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).