

80. Past Vs. Future Focus



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 80, Past Vs. Future Focus.

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. I'm so glad that you are here. Let's start off by sharing a few wins that we've had this last week. Let's see, this one is from someone in the program. They said, "A big win I had this week is that I started to move away from my belief that I'm not good enough and I'm really digging into the belief that I am good enough to overcome pornography for good." So good, I love that.

Sometimes we think our wins have to be, well I didn't look at porn this day and this day, or I didn't look at porn for a week or whatever, or I haven't looked at porn for six months or whatever, right? But really, before we get there we really have to step into these beliefs that we can do it and that we are good enough to do it. And those belief changes will make a much bigger difference than just focusing on not looking at porn. We're going to talk about that a little bit today and how to do that.

And then this other win I wanted to share, they are also in the program, they say, "I am now understanding more what is causing my urges. I have gone from mindlessly scrolling Instagram looking for things to look at, to be aware of something that could cause a trigger. I have also been able to process several urges a day and in the middle of the night and understand what is going on."

So first off, congrats. That's amazing, especially those night ones. Those can be tricky, so great job. Congrats, that's a big win. They go on to say, "For over 20 years I always thought that I just suffered from lust more than most. And what I know now is that I have just trained my mind to seek dopamine more than others may have." Yeah, so good. I love this.

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And I also wanted just to offer a different way of thinking of this last sentence too. They say that I've just trained my mind to seek dopamine more than others may have, maybe. But also maybe you just look for dopamine in different ways than others have. Okay? Sometimes we think, oh, there's something wrong with me. I really messed myself up. I escape emotions and no one else does. The truth is most of the world does.

Most of the world does and most of the world needs these tools. And that's why I also get so many reviews on this podcast that are like this is changing my life, even though I don't struggle with porn. Everyone needs to hear this, this isn't just for people who view porn, it's everything.

So maybe you don't seek more dopamine than other people, you just seek dopamine through porn. Other people seek dopamine through over eating, or drinking, or overspending, or over video gaming, or over Netflixing. That might be a helpful way for you to look at it too. This isn't any different than an overeating habit. Someone who's been overeating for 20 years, someone who's been over shopping for 20 years, et cetera, et cetera.

Okay, let's hop into our topic today, we're talking about past versus future focus. This will really allow you to create the success that you want to have, especially in regards to quitting porn if you can implement this.

So past versus future focus, there are two ways that we can be focused in our life. We can be focused on the past, or we can be focused on the future. And often what we do as adults is we look to the past for validation that we are capable, right? Well, in the past I was able to do X, Y, or Z and so I know that in the future I can do X, Y, or Z.

But the problem is, is that this only works if we are trying to accomplish something that we've already done, right? If you're looking to the past for validation that you're capable of something, that works great, but only if you're trying to do things that you've done in the past. It doesn't work if you're trying to do things that you've never accomplished in the past.

So some specific examples of this might be, well I know I was able to make this amount of money in the past. So I should be able to find a job that

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makes this amount of money, maybe even a little bit more money. But just a little bit, like got to be realistic here, right? Or I know that in the past I was able to run this many miles and so in the future I know that I can get to that same point. I know that I was able to get a B average last year and so this year I can expect to also be able to reach that B average.

This shows up with porn too. In the past I've been able to go three or four weeks without viewing porn, so I know I can probably do that again for three or four weeks. This, like I said just barely, this doesn't work if we're trying to do something that we've never done before.

I want you to think about a baby who is learning how to walk. Babies don't use their past to look for validation that they're capable of walking because that wouldn't work, and they wouldn't have any validation that they are capable of walking because they've never walked before. So they get up and they start walking, they take a few steps, and they fall down. And they get up and they take a couple more steps and they fall down.

And they don't say to themselves, well, yesterday I was able to walk three steps. So I know I can probably walk three steps forever, right? No, they just keep getting up and keep going. They're focused on their goal of walking. Like they see their siblings walk or they see their parents walk, that's what they're going to do. They're not looking to their past to see what they can do.

In fact, their past doesn't define what they're going to be able to do at all. They're not looking and saying, oh, I was only able to walk three steps yesterday, I'm never going to be able to figure this out. I've been trying for like four months and I haven't been able to figure this out. Four months is a long time when you're a baby. Four months is like half of your life.

My daughter started walking, she was pretty early, right? Eight months, she started walking at eight months, eight or nine months. Yeah, like I've been trying for half of my life to walk, and I haven't been able to do it. I'm never going to figure this out, right? Imagine if a baby said that to you, you'd be

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like, no, you're going to be fine. Of course you're going to learn how to walk, it's only four months.

But we do this with ourselves with porn. Like I've been trying for years, I'm not going to be able to figure it out in the future. Whereas if we were talking to ourselves, like the grand scheme of things with the eternities, or even just with the rest of our lives.

Like if you were to look at the end of your life, that person at the end of your life who has quit porn would look back and say, no, of course, you're going to be able to quit porn, right? You're only however old you are. You've only been training for this many years. Your past does not mean that you're not going to be able to do it in the future.

So back to this idea of past focus versus future focus. Sometime in early adulthood we start using our past to define our future. And this shows up in phrases like, I've never done it before so I'm not sure I can do it now. It's just not who I am. It hasn't worked before, so why should I do it now?

And that's such a funny excuse to me when I hear it. I've never done it before. Like, well duh you've never done it before. Of course, you've never done it before. Are we just supposed to go throughout our lives having done everything we want to do? Like why?

And it's just funny how we start to do that, we start to become so past focused, that when we get into early adulthood and later adulthood we say to ourselves, well, I've never done it before so I'm not going to be able to do it now. It's like, of course you've never done it before and why does that matter? Thinking about a baby learning how to walk, of course you've never walked before. That doesn't mean you're not going to learn how to do it now.

Being past focused looks like defining yourself from the past. Defining your life, defining who you are based off of things that you've done in the past and what you've accomplished in the past. Past focused looks like referencing the past often. It seems to have more of a victim mentality

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when you're past focused. And past focused also seems to be weighed down, you seem to feel very weighed down.

I think about those TV shows where there's the character who is still trying to live in his high school glory days. And they're kind of depressed, but they define themselves from their past, right? Napoleon Dynamite, the uncle, I was this great football player, and I could throw this football past those mountains, right?

They reference the past often. They have this victim mentality. If coach would have put me in in that last game we would have won the championship and everything would have been different, my whole life would have been different. It feels very weighed down.

Think about how you tend to do this with your porn habit. Maybe you define yourself as someone who struggles with porn because you did in the past. Maybe you talk about when you're talking about pornography with me, your coach, or with someone else you reference the past often. Well, I've struggled since I was 12 and then I quit for a little bit and then after a couple years it came back, and I've just struggled on and off my whole life.

When you're talking about porn you're not ever talking about your future. With porn you're always talking about your past with porn. Maybe you have some of this victim mentality. Or, and I say this in a really loving way because we all do this, or some self-pity. Well, if I didn't do this, then these bad things wouldn't have happened to me. And my whole life is ruined because I did start viewing porn. It just feels very weighed down, right? So that's past focused.

We can start to develop the skill of being future focused. Being future focused, it might be a little bit hard in the beginning if you're not used to it. That's okay, it's something you can practice and get good at. But when you're future focused, who you are is who you want to be.

So instead of always looking at the past and being like, this is who I was, this is who I am, this is what I've done. You're looking to the future, this is who I want to be in the future, and I am being that person right now. This

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future self that I love and that I want to become is who I am practicing being right now. I'm not living who I was, I'm living who I want to be.

You're focused on what you want to do and what you want to create, instead of being so focused on how you messed up or how things didn't go right. You recognize that you get to believe anything that you want about your future. And you get to define yourself by what you want to believe from your future.

So let me talk about this a little bit more in depth. You get to believe anything you want. A lot of us are afraid to believe really great, exciting things about our future because we're afraid we're not going to get them. All that does though is it keeps you stuck where you're at.

It's not like anyone is going to come up to you and be like, hey, what do you believe about your future? And you say, well, I believe that I'm going to quit porn, and then I'm going to have a great job and then I'm going to become a millionaire and all these things, right? No one can say, well, sorry, you can't believe that. People can say to you, that's not realistic, but no one can tell you what you can or can't believe.

And a lot of us get this with religion or spirituality, right? We get to choose what we believe, we get to believe anything we want to about religion and about God. You also get to believe anything that you want to believe about your future. You get to believe anything that you want to about your life and no one can ever take that away from you. It's just a decision.

I don't talk about this a lot on the podcast but my coaching business, it's done really well. It's done really well. And I'm part of a great mastermind full of other coaches who are building businesses. And one thing that someone asked me recently, they said, how have you had so much success? How did you have such a big year? How did you have such a big month? How have you helped so many people?

And I said to him, I said, honestly, I just decided. I just decided it was time. I just decided that's what I wanted. And the belief has been there for years now and it's just starting to manifest. But how that happened is I decided to

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believe that that's what I wanted, and I just decided that's what I'm going to get.

You can do the exact same thing with pornography. You can decide right now, I'm done, this isn't going to be a problem for the rest of my life. I am committed to working on it and when I do slip up and fail I'm going to learn from it. I'm not going to fall into those holes of self-pity and shame. I've decided I'm finished and I'm going to do everything I need to, everything that I can to be completely done.

You get to believe anything that you want about your future. And you look around in our world and at incredible things people are doing. Other people have your dream life. That dream life that you secretly want, they have it. And there's not a difference between them and you, except they just decided that they were going to have it.

The resources are out there, the opportunity is out there. I mean, for heaven's sake, we have Google, you can learn anything you want on Google. You just have to be willing to try and fail and try and fail and try and fail. But you truly can create anything that you want if you go for it and learn and never give up. You just have to decide that that's what you want. You just get to start believing that you're going to have what you want.

And so this is that skill of being future focused that, like I said, might take a little bit of work in the beginning. It might take some coaching in the beginning, and it might take that thought work and that intense belief work that we've talked about. But it'll change everything for you. Okay? And then you get to define yourself by what you believe from your future.

So listen to the difference. I'm someone who struggled with porn. I've been looking since I was 12 years old, and I'm working on quitting. Versus I'm becoming someone who doesn't struggle with porn. I'm working on creating these beautiful relationships in my life. Versus, right, past focused, which is I've struggled with my relationships forever and this is where I am, compared to I'm working on creating these beautiful relationships in my life.

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So it's this difference between defining yourself by your past and defining yourself by what you believe about your future, right? Like if you're a med student and you're going to school, you can say, I'm a student and this was my grade average last year, or I'm becoming a neurosurgeon. This is what I'm working towards, and this is what I'm becoming, and this is where I want to work. You have to start defining yourself by what you believe about your future, instead of about your past.

Another example might be, oh, well, I've kind of struggled to make ends meet, but I want to be different. And I have this low income job and I'm working through it. Versus I'm becoming a high earner. I'm becoming someone whose time and wisdom is worth a lot of money. I'm becoming someone who makes a big impact in the world.

So you can start defining yourself by that person before you even have that reality in front of you. And if you're struggling with this, I want to share this way to think about it that's a little bit woo-woo, but I think you'll appreciate it and I love to think about it this way. Sometimes people say, well, the past actually happened. Like it's proof, so how can I define myself by the future when the future hasn't actually happened?

Here's the thing, the past really only exists in your thoughts. Think about this, okay? Right now you have the present moment, that's it. That's all we have in this moment right now. This present moment where you're listening to this podcast, that's what we have. Everything else in the past, is in your thoughts, that's it. That's the only place that the past exists, is in thoughts.

Last year only exists in your thoughts, which means that you get to decide what you think about your past. And that's why everyone has different stories about the past. So for example, Christmas 1992, you, and your siblings talking about Christmas in 1992. All right, everyone remembers that Christmas differently. Some of you have great memories of it, some of you have horrible memories of it. So you're like, well, which one was it? Was it a great Christmas or a horrible Christmas?

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It just depends on the person's thoughts, right? It's the same with textbooks, and we know this. This is something we've heard a lot especially recently, is history is written by certain people which means the history that we have is certain people's thoughts about history. We get different history accounts if they're written by different people.

And so the past exists in your thoughts, which means that you get to decide what you think about your past. And this is why everyone has different stories about the past.

Another example I like to share with this is I remember I was talking to a friend that I used to play soccer with way back in high school. And this friend said to me, oh, do you remember our soccer days? It was so fun, I remember you were so fast. You were so fast. I can't believe you were so fast.

And I laughed. I looked at them and I laughed, and I said you must be thinking of someone else because I was so slow. I said, don't you remember, our coach when we were 12 called me a grandma because I was so slow? That's literally some trauma I have to work through, is getting called a grandma by my soccer coach.

And she said, no, I remember correctly because we would run, and we would do these couple of mile long runs and you would always be the first one to finish. And I was like, oh, that's so interesting because yeah, I was pretty good at the long distance stuff, and I would finish quickly with these long distance runs.

But with sprints I was slow as hell, I was so slow. And so we just started laughing because I was like, oh, I was looking at this specific part of the story with sprints, and you are looking at this specific part of the story with long distance runs, and we came to completely different conclusions. My conclusion is that I was slow, your conclusion is that I was fast, right?

Our past, we get to decide what we think about the past. And our story about the past can change depending on how we think about it, even if the facts never change. The facts don't have to change, you don't have to lie to

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yourself without changing your story about the past. From that moment I could decide to keep the story that I was slow, or I could look at different facts and decide to keep the story that I was fast, and I was really good.

This is similar with porn, right? You can keep the story that you are messed up and there is something wrong and you really got stuck in porn and there's something wrong with you because of it. Or you can look at it like I was one of the first people with internet. I didn't know how to handle my emotions, I wasn't taught about this, so of course I started looking at porn.

There's nothing wrong with me. My brain is actually working correctly, I trained it to want porn. And because I trained it to a porn I can train it to not want porn. Compared to the story that a lot of people have, which is, well I messed up my brain and now it's unfixable.

You can look at those two facts, we started looking at porn and we trained our brain to want porn. And you can make that mean, well, I'm never going to be able to train it to not want porn, very past focused. I trained my brain to want porn, that's all I can do. Versus future focused, now maybe I can train it to not want porn. Right? Do you see? So the past only exists in your thoughts and the future exists in your thoughts.

I think it's Dan Sullivan who says that the future is your property. I love that. I love that thought, the future is your property. So if the past exists in our thoughts and the future exists in our thoughts, it's really not that unrealistic to choose to live from the future compared to the past because they're both just thoughts, right? Like I said, a little woo-woo, but I love thinking about it this way.

So you get to decide which thoughts do I want to live from? Thoughts about your past or thoughts about your future? And maybe it's a lie that the past is more realistic because the past is just thoughts, and your future is just thoughts. So what thoughts are you going to live from?

And when it comes to porn, I promise you, you're going to get so much further if you choose the latter. If you choose to start believing and thinking about yourself in terms of the future, instead of the past. I think it's Einstein

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that says insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

Which might mean that if you're doing the same thing over and over and over again, if you're just trying to do it by yourself over and over and over again and it's not working. You're using the same tools over and over and over again with porn and it's not working, you might need to approach it in a different way.

In order to really become this future self that you want to become without porn use, you need to practice mindfulness, you need to learn about buffering, you need to practice a growth mindset instead of an addiction mindset. All the goodness that you're hearing here in the podcast, you need to stop using your slip ups as excuses to keep looking or as excuses that you're never going to quit. And instead look at your slip ups as data and as stepping stones and just something that you can learn from.

So for those of you who are really feeling called to start doing this and start acting from your future and want to jump in and dive in and do this work, I want to invite you to come and join us in Overcome Pornography For Good. There's all the content, all the exercises, all the information is on the work with me page on my website, and I think it's also linked here in the show notes.

You'll see all that information, you get lifetime access to it. You get lifetime access to coaching calls with me and other coaches in the program every single week. We work on this, it really is, if you want to become that future self and you're feeling stuck and you don't really know how to get there, you've got to come and join us and start doing the work with us. Okay? All right, you guys, the link for that, again, is in the show notes or you can go to sarabrewer.com/workwithme.

Let's practice this future mindset. Let's not live from our past anymore, it's not going to get us anywhere we want to go. Instead let's live from our future. It's going to change everything.

All right, have a great 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.