

86. You Are Not Your Thoughts



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With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 86, You Are Not Your 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. I am excited for our topic today and it's a little bit, like I was writing the outline while I was on a walk and just, it's kind of like I just barfed up all of these thoughts. And so I tried to organize it the best that I could, but just so much came to me.

I want to talk about thoughts today and I want to talk about how you are not your thoughts. And this is so powerful, if you can understand this. And we're just going to see where it goes. And there might be a lot of good things for you to take away from today.

Before we hop in I want to just say, hey, thank you so much for those of you who have left me a review and rating on my podcast. Thank you, it really helps me get my message out to people. I want to share just a few of them as a form of me saying thank you and to celebrate you guys and the changes that you're making in your life.

So this one says, "I've been struggling with porn for over 45 years. For most of these years I've been actively trying to find a way to put this behind me, whether it was spiritual leadership, prayer, counseling, or recovery groups, I've had no long-term and very few short-term success, let alone hope for the future.

I am 23 sessions into this podcast and I have a hope through your teachings. Thank you for that. Looking forward to listening to all your sessions, and then starting again and listening again. You are making a difference." Yeah, thank you so much for sharing that.

And I don't know, if you're 23 sessions in I'm not sure if you've heard our interview with Quinn yet. I love pointing people to his interview because he

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quit porn after struggling with it for 50 years. It changed his life so much, he actually became a coach did some coach training and now he works as a contract coach in my program.

And right now he's doing support groups twice a month. And he is such an amazing asset and has, oh my gosh, such a cool story. So make sure you listen to his story if you haven't yet. There is so much hope for the future. Unfortunately we just haven't been taught a lot about pornography and like the best way to, the most effective way to quit it.

We've been told, like you've heard me talk about so many times, we've been taught to use all or nothing thinking, to quit cold turkey, to use willpower, to just stop. We've been taught addiction mindset. We've been taught shame, all these things that actually make it harder to quit viewing porn.

And I just had a call with a researcher who is doing his thesis on this and he reached out to me and I'm going to have him on the podcast here in a few weeks, so I'm really looking forward to you guys hearing from him. But on the call with him he talked about how all the research is catching up to what we talk about here on the podcast.

All the research is showing that shame makes it worse, that moral incongruence creates more distress with pornography use. And we'll talk about what that means and also the research around addiction and how they stopped classifying it in the ICD11 as an addictive issue and started classifying it as a compulsive sexual behavior disorder. And I've talked about that in depth in other episodes that you can go and listen to.

But anyways, okay, little rant, little rant about that. I'm excited for you guys to hear his episode. And I was going to read just a few more but we're already four minutes in. I'll just read them really quick.

I love this one, it says, "Grateful counselor." I'm assuming the person who wrote this as a grateful counselor, that's what they're saying. "I appreciate Sara's positive and welcoming demeanor while talking about a sensitive

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and vulnerable topic. She explains the complexity in a way that is simple to follow and understand.”

Thank you so much for these reviews. There's another one here that says, “Lifelong battle. I have been struggling with a porn habit for over 40 years, this podcast has completely changed how I view this issue. Thank you for stepping out to deal with this incredibly vulnerable topic.” Thank you. And congrats, you guys, for making progress and experiencing these belief shifts and these transformations.

And I hope to continue to support you as you are trying to make the lifelong changes that you want to make. This podcast is, I put so much heart and soul into it and it's the best free resource I have. For those of you who want and are interested in a little bit more in depth help where you get lots of individual support and things really laid out in a clear concise way, that's what my program is for and you're always welcome to come and join us, sarabrewer.com/work with me.

Also, when this podcast episode is released we might still have a few extra spots for one on one coaching. I'm not totally sure if we'll still have spots. If we do have spots, there will be just a handful left. And so you can go and apply for one on one coaching and see all of the details for that, so it's sarabrewer.com/private_coaching.

If you are already in the program you get about \$2,000 off of that. So if you're in the program it'll be a different link and you can reach out to us and we'll send that to you.

Okay, so you are not your thoughts. I recently heard a story and I loved it and it just has stuck with me and I've been thinking about it so much. This woman was talking about going to a meditation retreat, it was like a 10 day silent retreat. Someday I'm going to do that, but that sounds pretty daunting to me. 10 days of a silent meditation retreat.

And what she noticed is that she kept thinking the same things over and over and over again. And so the point of meditation isn't necessarily to stop all thinking, but it's to notice when you're thinking and learn the discipline to

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bring it back to what you want to focus on. Observe the thoughts without really diving into them, right?

So she noticed how her brain kept going to what am I going to wear tomorrow? What am I going to wear tomorrow? What am I going to wear tomorrow? And it just kept coming back to her, what am I going to wear tomorrow? What am I going to wear tomorrow? And then she went home, had a great experience, decided to do another one a couple of years later.

She said this time I'm just going to take one outfit. One outfit so that I don't have to think what am I going to wear tomorrow, I'll already have that chosen out and it's not going to be an issue. And then I'll be able to see what else comes up other than that thought about what I'm going to wear.

So she goes to this meditation retreat, this 10 day silent meditation retreat, and what keeps popping up? What am I going to wear tomorrow? What am I going to wear tomorrow? What am I going to wear tomorrow? She kept noticing these thoughts that would still come about what she was going to wear the next day. And she's like, "What? I thought I got rid of that."

And what she realized with that, well, we'll talk about a few key lessons here from this story. But she just thought it was really fascinating that her brain kept thinking that even though it wasn't actually an issue and she didn't even have any other options for what to wear.

And her point in telling this story was she was talking about getting rid of the fear of other people's opinions. And how we've all heard that to get rid of other people's opinions affecting us, we have to realize that other people's thoughts about us don't really matter.

And she was talking about how this experience helped her see that even her own thoughts, when she was able to see that her own thoughts don't really matter and aren't as significant and are based off of conditioning and thinking things that don't matter, like what am I going to wear tomorrow, when she doesn't even have a choice. Seeing that with her own brain helped her be able to apply that to thoughts about what other people think about her.

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So I love that story. And I was thinking about this throughout the rest of the day and really in this state for the next couple of days of just observing my thoughts and being curious with this story in the back of my mind. And I noticed something very similar.

I noticed that I had about three or four topics that I think about on repeat. And it's like the same thoughts. What am I going to do about this? What am I going to do about this? Here's this issue, here's this issue. And it just cycles, cycles, cycles, cycles, until I'm really deliberate in not just letting it cycle and actually coming up with a solution.

So it's just interesting to me how my brain was doing the same thing, it would repeat itself a lot. And what this teaches us, I have a few thoughts here that I want to share, and we'll talk about how this is really relevant to quitting porn.

But one of the first things this teaches us is that our thoughts aren't super unique. They aren't. And so when we notice thoughts, we don't necessarily have to jump into them and try to figure them out and like jump on the train of these thoughts. We can just chill, and sit back, and breathe instead of always trying to figure things out in our brain.

It teaches us that when we get out of our heads and observe our heads, we're able to be at a lot more peace than if we're always believing our thoughts, jumping into our thoughts, and identifying as our thoughts. This also teaches us the skill that I've talked about before in the podcast, the skill, which is being the observer. Learning to recognize our thoughts, watch our thoughts without just diving into them.

The Headspace app, a meditation app talks about this like sitting on a hill and observing traffic. You can sit on the hill and observe traffic and see how quickly the traffic is, how slow the traffic is, see if there are any car wrecks, notice what's going on without jumping into the cars and going where it takes you. You can just watch.

And the more we can learn to do that with our thoughts, the more control we have over our thoughts. And if you haven't learned this from my podcast

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yet, I really got to, I really need to do my work, but our problems in our life stem from how we're thinking. And we really learn how to gain control over our life and create really amazing things once we learn how to harness the power of our thoughts.

A lot of people think it's we have to harness willpower and we have to take more action. And, and yeah, there's a part of that. But if you're only focusing on action, you're not going to make the same life changes that you would if you focused on thoughts. Thoughts create feelings, which drive actions. Your actions will change much quicker if you're focused on changing your thoughts before you're focused on changing your actions. When I first learned that it was mind blowing to me.

But back to observing our thoughts. We learn to be the observer, to recognize our thoughts without diving into them. And then we can really stop believing everything we think, which allows us a lot more peace because we start disconnecting us and our worth and our self-worth from our thoughts. Okay, that's what I called this podcast, you are not your thoughts.

When you become the observer and you watch your thoughts, you recognize that you are not your thoughts and you don't have to be controlled by your thoughts. And just like this girl's example, a lot of our thoughts that keep popping into our head because we've practiced them over and over and over and over again.

So in her case there wasn't actually a problem that needed to be solved, there wasn't actually an outfit to choose. There wasn't any other option for her to wear, but because she had thought that and practiced thinking that and that was a common thought in her head, what am I going to wear? What am I going to wear? What am I going to wear? It still came to mind, even though there wasn't actually a problem.

Okay, we experience that a lot, especially with thoughts like, what is wrong with me? What is wrong with me? What is wrong with me? What is wrong with me? Now, this is a lot of the work we do in coaching calls, but we can

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look at the specifics of your life and the facts of your life and start noticing that there really isn't anything wrong with you. But you're thinking that because you've practiced thinking that for a long time.

And so the solution here isn't to change all these things that you think are wrong with you. The solution is to stop believing that there's something wrong with you and to change that thought. And once you start changing that thought, changing that thought pattern, you'll be able to make the behavioral changes that you want to in your life.

Thoughts about pornography, I want pornography, I want pornography, I want pornography. A lot of my clients get to the point where they're like, "I really don't. And I don't really have much of a desire for porn, but I keep thinking it. Like I'll just have random times throughout the day where my brain is like, hey, we should go view porn. And I sometimes do it just because I thought that."

Okay, so this is also where this comes in really, really handy, learning to be the observer. You can just notice that thought without making it mean that it's true, without making it mean anything about you. I have the thought I'm lazy. What's wrong with me, I'm lazy. Instead of just believing that, maybe it's like this girl's example where she's just having the thought because it's something that she's practiced but there's not actually a problem and I'm not actually lazy, I just need a little bit of a rest today.

Do you see how powerful this becomes? When we don't do this, when we are not observing our brain and when we're just believing everything that we think and when we just let thoughts run rampant in our mind, believing them and giving them all this power, thoughts become like a toddler with a Sharpie. Okay? I love this example, I think I heard it first from Jody Moore.

Imagine a toddler with a Sharpie, they are dangerous. And I will tell you from firsthand experience, they are dangerous. I cannot tell you how many, like our front door right now has Sharpie. Where people come in to walk in, our front door on the outside, there's Sharpie all over the door. It's a mess,

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it's the worst. Toddlers with Sharpies are very dangerous and they make big messes.

We want to make sure that our brains don't become toddlers with Sharpies, that we don't just let them run rampant with thoughts and believing all the thoughts that it throws to us. A lot of us give our thoughts a lot more power than they really have and we think that what we think is true. I had this thought, therefore it's true. I had this thought, therefore it means X, Y, or Z about me.

When in reality, I want us to start seeing thoughts just as traffic that comes and goes. And a lot of them come and go because of how you were conditioned as a child. A lot of them come and go because of the environments that you're putting into.

It doesn't mean that there's something wrong with you. You can choose which cars you're going to get in, what direction you're going to go, and that's going to require seeing all the other cars and intentionally choosing not to jump in those cars. You want to stop the pattern and redirect.

Gabby Bernstein talks about this, she talks about it, she calls it her choose again method, it's super simple. You notice the thought, number one, you notice it. Number two, you forgive the thought. And then number three, you choose again.

So let's say the thought I want porn, okay? Just keep it really simple. First you notice it. And you notice that it is a thought, that it doesn't mean anything about you, that it's just a thought, it's a passing card. You notice it. You don't make it mean anything about your identity. You don't make it mean anything about yourself. You don't give it more drama than it needs to. You don't add stuff like, oh, what is wrong with me for thinking I want porn? No, you don't do that, you just notice it.

Number two, you forgive it. You can say, this looks like treating it with love and respect. Hey, I notice this thought, I love you and I forgive you. I forgive you for showing up. I forgive you for being there. I forgive you for creating this desire in me.

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And then lastly, number three, you choose again. And I actually don't want porn, that's why I listen to this podcast. That's why I'm in Sara's program. There's that little part of me that wants porn, but my higher self doesn't want porn. And so I'm going to choose again to focus on thoughts like how much I love a life without porn.

And then you'll just repeat this cycle over and over and over again. And the more you repeat it, the more you'll see your thought patterns change. It's really, really powerful. So again, notice, forgive, and choose again, I noticed the thought there's something wrong with me. And I notice that it's a thought and I don't jump into it. Like I said, I don't make it mean that it's actually true just because I thought it.

Number two, I forgive it. Hey, I forgive you and I love you, thought. And then number three, we choose again, here are all the reasons that I am a great person. And I'm not going to let that inner bully give this dialog in my head that there's something wrong with me. Choosing again, and you do that over and over and over again.

These skills will totally change your life. I'm really excited for you to start implementing them. I was just talking to my sister the other day, who I love and adore. And I was talking to her about some of this stuff and specifically how once we learn how to stop hating ourselves, we're able to do so much more in the world.

And a lot of times we think that if we want to accomplish goals or do more things, we just have to like buck it up and do it and stop being lazy and do more stuff. But in reality, all that does is it leaves us in these cycles of not feeling good enough and not doing the stuff we want to do.

So instead, we need to start with really truly loving and accepting ourselves as we are. And the great paradox in life is that as we accept ourselves exactly how we are, we're able to change much easier and quicker and more efficiently.

And so I was talking to her about this and about how when we learn to stop hating ourselves and to stop disliking ourselves, everything changes, and

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it's work. And it's hard work and it takes a conscious decision where you say to yourself, I am done hating myself. And for years and years and years I've practiced these thoughts like you're too this, and you're too that, and people don't like you, and you're not likable.

And you've practiced those for years and so we're going to notice that they're going to come up, but we're done just believing them. And instead we're going to notice them, forgive them, choose again. And the more we choose again, the more we build the muscles of self-love and self-acceptance.

And then it becomes so much easier and almost natural for you to love yourself and feel good about yourself and all those things that you want to feel towards yourself that will help you make a big difference in the world.

So that's what I've got for you guys today. Have a great week. Again, come and check out, if you want, that private coaching experience, that one on one coaching experience, sarabrewer.com/private_coaching. If we still have spots open you'll be able to apply. Make sure you go and check it out because it won't open for another six months.

Okay. All right, you guys, have a great week, 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 into 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 talked 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.