

91. Reward System and Over-Desire



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 91, Reward System and Over-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, you guys, welcome to the podcast episode this week. I hope you guys have had a great week. It's been really great over here. We got back from California. My husband and I are both entrepreneurs and are toying with living a little bit more on the road and working from on the road.

And so that's what we did while we were in California. We unplugged a little bit just because it's been our only family vacation this year. But just kind of playing with the idea of what it would be like to work and travel at the same time, and it was really fun.

And then I am actually going to France on Saturday. Those of you who have heard the interviews I've done with Lindsay Poelman or if you're in the program and do the coaching calls with Lindsay Poelman, I'm going to France to see her because she lives in France. And she's doing a little retreat for those of us who went through her trauma coaching certification.

And jeez, you guys, I don't know if I've talked much about that certification here on this podcast, but it completely changed my life. Learning about trauma, learning about body stuff, learning about the nervous system, the model, the brain stuff, completely changed my life. And then we've just added in this really beautiful element of being trauma informed and trauma aware and aware of your body.

You've probably heard me talk about it quite a bit in my podcast episodes these last six months. But I'm so excited to go and do that. I'm going to go down to the south of France and then go to Paris and then stop in Leon to see an old foreign exchange student. So that's going to be really fun, I'm excited. I love the fall time, I typically do quite a bit of traveling in the fall time and then hunker down in the winter.

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So let's dive into the podcast this week. I want to, first, just thank those of you who have left me a review, I've gotten quite a few new ones. And just thank you so much. It really helps me get out this message to more people, the more reviews that I get.

And so if you haven't yet, I would love it if you would leave me one. You can just do it very quickly in simply at the bottom of this podcast, of the Apple Podcast app, or you can do it on Spotify too.

This review, it's a little bit of a review of the program too. But it says, "Best program I've invested in." This is a recent one. It says, "I've always thought that quitting porn was the real work, but my eyes have been opened to a new perspective of focusing on changing my beliefs of myself. I realized how much my belief systems need work. Worth every time and money spent in her program. Thanks for all you do."

Yeah, thank you so much, I really appreciate that.

And then there's another one, it says, "I've listened to about 60 episodes now and I'm so grateful for the content in this podcast. Sara is truly inspired to offer these teachings for free, she has a great gift of explaining concepts in simple and understandable ways. I've been searching for something like this for years and years, and now I have found it. I'm excited to see where I go from here."

Yes, I love it, thank you so much. Again, thank you. If you haven't left me a review or rating, I would really appreciate that. Or maybe share it with someone that you know might need something like this. Well at least make sure that they've told you that they struggle with porn. If they haven't told you and you just randomly send them the podcast episodes, that might be a little awkward.

Okay, let's hop into the content today. Let's see how this goes, there's a lot to talk about and I do try to keep things simple. I think that is one of my strengths, is that I can take things and make them into patterns and make them simple and explain things simply. So I want to make sure I do that

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here. And so we might have to split this into two episodes, we'll just kind of see how it goes.

But I want to talk about our reward system and over-desire. So we're going to talk a little bit about the brain today. I got this question this last week in my program when I was doing the coaching call. Oh, which by the way, I think I should just talk about that really, really quick for those of you who haven't heard about the program.

It is lifetime access. You get my whole milestone system and the whole program system to work through on your own. And then you get weekly coaching calls with me or another coach in the program every single week forever.

Honestly, you're not going to be able to find a program that gives this much value, like we do when we give coaching calls every single week forever. Lifetime access, you pay once or if you want to do monthly payment plans. But you just get that first payment all completed and then you have access to it forever, including weekly live coaching calls forever.

This means if you slip up three years down the road, you can just hop on a call, and I'll help you. There really is no pressure. It's not like I have to hurry and quit porn because I paid for this, and I only have access to it for six months. No, you get access to it forever, it's to help decrease a lot of that stress and anxiety over the timeframe.

And really my goal here, and I hope you feel this in the podcast, my goal is always to over deliver. So I try to just give and give more. And I joke that that's like my business plan, is that I over deliver, and I just give people what they want and then I try to over deliver. And so that's what the program does.

That's why we give you lifetime access to everything. Lifetime access to all the calls, lifetime access to the replays, lifetime access to the content, lifetime access to all the bonus material that you've heard about. And lifetime access to whatever we have going on in the future.

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So right now we have support groups with Quinn twice a month. We have monthly marriage calls once a month with Lindsay Poelman, your spouse is invited to attend those. And she really specializes on that relationship side of things. We have a number of coaches who really specialize there.

But you get lifetime access to anything else that's added in the program. It's really if you want to quit porn it's the best place to be. It's the best container that I could come up with to help you. So come and join us there if you're interested.

But I got this question in the program this last week. I was doing the coaching call and the person who asked the question said, "I don't know what I'm buffering from. I'm not really aware of what I'm buffering from. Is it possible that this can just be a habit and not necessarily a buffer every time?"

And my answer to him was, "Well, actually, yeah." And we talked about it and, you know, we want to make sure that we're aware of our emotions and aware if we are buffering, but yes. So I want to talk about the reward system in our brains. Because the reason that we have habits and the reason that our brain craves this dopamine in our bodies, it craves the dopamine from the pornography is because of the reward system in our brain.

So the reward system is something that has kept us healthy, and safe, and alive, and it's a really beautiful thing. If you think about how humans used to live, we used to live in a very dangerous world. Think cavemen or even think pioneers, okay? You're out in the elements, there's danger all around you, you're just trying to survive. We needed food, drink, shelter to live, and we needed sex to keep our species going so that we didn't just die off.

Our reward system is built into our brain to help us stay alive and help us thrive and help us to survive this dangerous world, okay? So that's the goal of the reward system. And how the reward system works is that it uses dopamine to motivate us.

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Our brains love dopamine. Dopamine is a chemical that our brains will give us, and our reward system is set up to give us dopamine when we do things that are supposed to help us survive, okay?

So we're cavemen or pioneers and we eat some food, and our brain gives us a little hit of dopamine, okay? And your brain gets that dopamine hit. And it thinks, "Yes, this is important. I want this, I want more dopamine. So I'm going to remember that I get dopamine when I eat food. And so I'm going to be motivated to go and find food and eat food because I get dopamine."

You have sex and you get dopamine, and your brain says, "Yes, this is important. I'm going to go seek out sex so that I get more dopamine." Okay, and remember, sex is so important because if we didn't have it, we would have died off as a species. Or you sit by a warm fire and your brain gets dopamine.

And this reward system is giving you dopamine when you're doing these things to help motivate you to continue to find shelter, and sit by a fire, and eat food, and have sex so that we thrive and so that we stay alive and all these beautiful, good things that are really important. Okay? So, so good. Such a good, beautiful thing kept us going, kept us healthy, kept us motivated.

When it became a problem is a little bit more of a modern day problem, okay? We are not in immediate danger, most of us aren't. Most of us, we've got shelter, we've got food, we're able to find these things. It's a lot easier to live and survive than it was when we were cavemen.

Most of us listening are not starving and not out of shelter. We have what we need to stay alive, okay? But our brain still has this reward system, and it still seeks out dopamine. It still thinks that dopamine is the most important thing. And it still thinks that dopamine, like when we're getting dopamine, we're doing things that are really, really important.

So the problem is that now with our advanced society, we also have a lot of manmade substances with extra dopamine in them. We created things that

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were even more pleasurable than eating or sitting by a warm fire. And these things gave us extra hits of dopamine, for example, sugar, okay?

Think about, you know, if you've gone without sugar for a while and you're just used to eating fruit and used to eating grapes and like some more natural food, and then you have something sugary. Holy cow, is that a hit, right? That is different. Like when you haven't had sugar for a while and then you eat a cupcake, you are sitting there at that cupcake and you are like, "Dang, this is a good freaking cupcake." It has all this extra dopamine in it, it is much more pleasurable to us.

Alcohol also has more dopamine in it. Pornography has this extra dopamine in it. I think it's about two times the amount of dopamine that you might get from more natural sources, right? We have these man made substances with extra dopamine, about two times the amount of dopamine, okay?

So you have these substances, you partake in these substances, and you get a rush, you get a dopamine hit after these. And your brain still thinks that this dopamine is incredibly important. It thinks it's the most important thing ever.

Your brain doesn't understand, "Oh look, we have a whole pantry full of food, we don't need this cupcake." It just sees the dopamine from that cupcake and it's like, "We need that because whatever has more dopamine in it is more important." We always need to seek out the thing with more dopamine, that's what your lower brain thinks.

And your brain doesn't just think dopamine is important and seek out dopamine, but it remembers where and when you get dopamine, okay? A great example of this is after I eat dinner, I always crave sugar. And I always have this little thing that pushes me to go and get some sugar.

And the reason for that is because I have had a habit for years, I would eat something sweet after eating dinner. And so my brain, it didn't just think, "Oh, it's really good for you to get that dopamine and we want to seek out that dopamine." But it remembered, "Remember, you get this dopamine, a

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lot of dopamine after you eat dinner. You get it at this time at night, you get it after you eat dinner, and you get it when you're in the kitchen."

So when I'm in the kitchen cleaning up dinner, it's after dinner, my brain remembers that and it gives me this little signal, "Hey, this is that time we usually get dopamine. You've gotten dopamine here before, you've gotten that sugar before. How about we go eat some chocolate? It's really important, we need to get that dopamine, let's go get that chocolate. Remember? Remember we get this dopamine, we get this chocolate here? Let's go. Go in the pantry and get some chocolate."

It's these urges, these nudges to go and find that dopamine. And the reason for that is because my brain remembers where and when it gets that dopamine. It's because of that reward system that used to work really, really well for me. But now it's not necessarily serving my life.

I want you to think of this reward system, it's like a software that hasn't really updated. It's this part of you that thinks this dopamine is really important, but it hasn't updated to our modern world, and it doesn't understand that dopamine exists everywhere. And that actually, when we have too much of it we become indulgent and we live lives full of seeking dopamine, instead of lives full of seeking wellness.

So this is the same with porn. Porn gives you a lot of dopamine. Your brain remembers where and when it gets that dopamine. So if every time you go on a trip you find yourself having urges, cravings, desire, pushes, nudges to go and view porn, it might be because the last time you were on a trip you viewed porn, and the time before that when you were on a trip, you viewed porn.

And so your brain is like, "Oh yeah, remember, we're on this trip. Here we are, we're in a hotel room. This is what we get when we're in a hotel room, we get this dopamine, remember?" Or whatever, fill in the blank with whatever the pattern is. If it's at night, if it's first thing in the morning, if it's after a specific emotion, right?

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And so the great and beautiful news, why I want to teach you this, why I want to teach you about your reward system is because I want you to understand that your brain isn't broken, okay? The reason you have cravings and desires for porn isn't because your brain is broken. It's because your brain is actually working how it's meant to work and the reward system in your brain is still working. And that's a beautiful thing.

Now, this pattern of seeking out dopamine and seeking out two times the amount of dopamine, this creates what I call and what I've referred to in the past as over-desire, right? There's this over-desire. We're seeking for more dopamine than we might be used to when we're seeking out more natural substances. We have habits and cravings and some over-desire for pornography that, I mean, a lot of you I'm sure experience and feel.

When we get in trouble is when we think this over-desire is normal or when we think this over-desire, we're just going to have to live with this over-desire for the rest of our lives. We don't. You have these automatic cravings for porn because of the reward system in your brain and because your brain is like, "Oh, but there's so much dopamine in porn. We really, really need that." That's why not because your brain is broken, and it's not something you have to live with forever.

Okay, this is also why you might struggle with porn and someone else might struggle with alcohol. Or you might struggle with porn and someone else might struggle with sugar, okay? It's not that you are a worse person. It's because you have trained your brain to look for the dopamine in porn, while other people have trained their brains to look for the dopamine in alcohol or in sugar. That's it.

This is really powerful to understand too, because then you start to recognize this is not any different than having urges for sugar and eating a lot of sugar. This isn't any different, at least in our brains, right? Like our brains aren't responding any differently than these other habits, okay? It can help decrease some of that shame.

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Sometimes I'll have people say to me, "Well, why does it have to be porn? Why does porn have to be the thing that I struggle with? Why do I have to want porn?" And this is the reason why, because you trained your brain to on porn. Because you viewed it, maybe you were buffering, trying to escape emotion, you viewed it and your brain remembered that.

And then you had a similar scenario and your brain reminded you, "Hey, we want this dopamine." And then you viewed it again and then another scenario that's similar and you viewed it again. And what this does is it creates over-desire. And the simple reality is that the more that you view pornography, the more that you want pornography.

It would be the same thing if it was alcohol, or sugar or whatever, okay? And the other good news here is that you are not at the mercy of your reward system. The reason that we are humans, and we are advanced in society and humans do amazing things is because we are not at the mercy of our rewards system.

We do not just have to accept that we're always going to want porn and we're always going to have this over-desire for porn. That's just not true. Just like we trained ourselves to want pornography by this over-desire, giving ourselves this dopamine, this extra dopamine and creating these responses because our brain wants that dopamine. We don't always have to experience that.

Just like you trained your brain to want porn, trained your brain to experience this over-desire, you can train your brain to not want pornography. And I'm going to talk about that more in next week's episode. This was a short, simple explanation of that reward system. And if nothing else, I hope it helps you decrease the shame, understand your brain a little bit better. And next week, we'll talk more about what to do next.

So now that we experienced this over-desire, how can we hack this reward system part and change it and flip it around so that we don't have over-desire for porn anymore? Okay, you guys, I'll talk to you next week, bye bye.

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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 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.