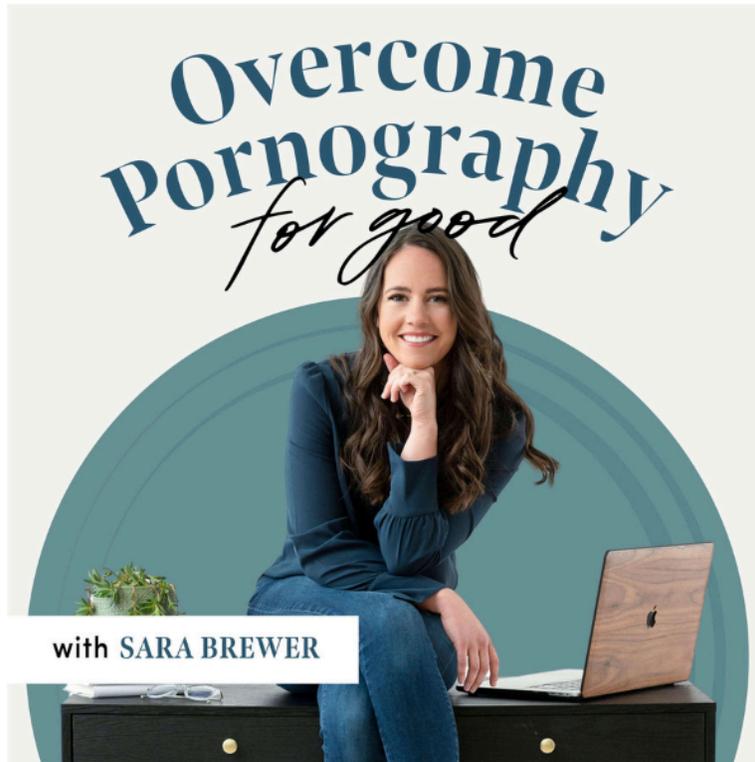


260. What Progress Really Looks Like When Quitting Porn



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 260.

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 *Overcome Pornography for Good*. In today's episode, I'm revisiting a topic that I believe will offer you so many insights, some amazing takeaways, no matter where you are in your journey. I hope you find it as impactful as when it first aired. It's always an amazing thing to revisit some of these topics that we need to hear multiple times. Or if you haven't heard it before, I'm excited for you to hear this. So, welcome, and let's dive in.

Hello! Welcome. Welcome, welcome, welcome to the podcast episode this week. I'm so glad you're here. I know I say that every week, but I am. And just take a minute, I want you to take a minute and say to yourself, "Hey, thanks for showing up today. Thanks for listening to this podcast today. Thanks, me. Thanks, self, for doing this and putting myself first here."

What I've learned about celebration and gratitude, whenever we celebrate ourselves for doing something that is good and that we want to do more of, that always leads to more of what we're celebrating. So if you're grateful for yourself for showing up for yourself, you will show up for yourself more often. Does that make sense? Celebrate and be grateful, and you'll find more things to celebrate and more things to be grateful for.

So, I want to start off the podcast again today, just by sharing another amazing review that one of you left me. This one says, "Sara is one of the most inspirational coaches I've ever listened to. The way she explains and brings up topics such as pornography is absolutely perfect and real. I know with her help, you will be able to overcome anything. Seriously worth the listen if you or someone you know is struggling with pornography."

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And I love in here that she said, and I saw this in a couple of these reviews that I was reading through, is this is really helpful for you if you know someone who's struggling with pornography, even if it's not something that you struggle with yourself. So thank you for pointing that out. Thank you, you guys.

Again, thank you so much for showing up for me by leaving reviews and leaving ratings. It really helps people who need this podcast. It helps me get it out to them. And if you haven't done it yet, I would invite you to go and just take a minute and leave a review on this podcast.

So today, let's get into the topic today. Today, I want to talk about all-or-nothing thinking, this growth mindset stuff. We hear about it in a lot of different areas of life, but we don't usually hear it when it comes to pornography. In fact, with pornography, it's usually the opposite. The message that you're taught is usually the opposite of growth mindset, all or nothing.

Here's what I mean by that. What all-or-nothing mindset looks like when it comes to quitting pornography is thoughts like, "I already looked today, so I might as well keep looking. I already messed up this week, so let's just start again next week. I'm just going to give myself a break, going to keep looking this week, and we'll try again on Monday."

All or nothing looks like counting days and counting progress based on number of days sober, and then if you mess up, it's back to square one. And like I said, this is going to blow your mind because most of you count progress this way. Most of you count progress by counting how many days you've gone without it. And this is how most programs teach you how to count your progress.

I've heard of programs that when you slip up, you start all over. And if you're in a program like that, I just want you to watch out for that because it can be a dangerous mindset to have, and I'm going to explain why, okay? Because the truth is, when you slip up, you don't go back to square one.

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If you don't look at pornography for three months and then you look at it, you don't go all the way back to square one. I want you to think of this like a video game, like Super Mario Brothers. I don't know about you, but the hardest part of Super Mario Brothers for me is always whenever we come across water, like a body of water that you have to swim in.

So I want you to imagine that you're playing Super Mario Brothers, you come across this water, you start swimming, and then one of those ghost fish come and finds you, and you die. What if when you died, you went all the way back to square one in Super Mario Brothers? Like world one, level one. Let's say you make it past the first six worlds, you're on the last level, and you slip up, and you go all the way back. Can you imagine how ridiculous that would be?

When in reality, no, that's not how it works at all. Actually, going through and being killed by that ghost fish teaches you, and it helps you get better. And that's how you make it through Super Mario Brothers, is by playing levels and dying, and then you get better because you die. You get better because things attack you. You get better because of the obstacles and you get better when you mess up. And then you go back to the beginning of the level and you try again. Right?

And maybe you have to do that certain part, that certain swimming part, or whatever it is that's hard. Maybe you have to do that four different times before you finally learn how to do it. But you don't go back to square one. That's actually how you beat the video game, is you die and you learn from it. You go, and you play again, you make another mistake, and a mushroom guy comes and gets you, you die. You learn from it, but you don't go back to square one.

Yet so many of you think, "Oh, I went 30 days without porn, and then I slipped up, and now I'm back to square one." What if quitting pornography, quitting any habit, anything that you're trying to change in your life, but especially pornography, what if it wasn't like that at all? What if it was like a video game? What if slipping up doesn't actually put you back to square

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one, but it just teaches you so that when you come across this again, you just get better and better at handling these situations that come up? Okay?

This all-or-nothing mindset is what causes a lot of hate binging because you hate yourself for slipping up, binging because you don't even care, binging because you don't think you can do it.

And what if we did this with school? What if you failed a test and then went all the way back to freshman year because you failed a test your junior year? Or learning how to ski? What if every time you fell, you went back to square one? This is just not how life works. It's not how humans work. And that's true when it comes to pornography, too, okay?

Failure here isn't a big deal. It just shows us what we need to work on. Okay? Do you hear me? Failing doesn't mean everything's gone to pot. It just shows us what we need to work on. When you fail when you ski, your legs get stronger. When you fall when you ski, you learn how to go around the moguls better, or whatever, right? Falling doesn't make you worse; it makes you better.

It's the same with school. When you fail, that doesn't mean you're back to square one. It just shows you what you need to learn and what you need to learn better. It's the exact same with pornography. It's not all or nothing. We learn, we fail, we learn from the failure, then we do good again, and we fail and we learn again, over and over and over again until we master it, just as if you were mastering any other skill, just as if you were mastering Super Mario Brothers. You master Super Mario Brothers by spending a lot of time in the game and failing, not making the failure mean anything about you. Right?

If you made failure mean, "Oh, I'm just the worst video game player in the world," of course, you wouldn't want to keep playing. You'd want to just give up. That's what's happening with so many of you with the pornography, is you try, you fail, and then you just get out of the game. You just don't even

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want to try anymore because you're making it mean something about yourself.

Quitting pornography is a process of learning new skills. It's a process of learning how to become someone different. And in order to learn the skill of quitting pornography, learning the skill of anything, you have to try new things, and you have to be okay with the possibility of not doing it right, with the possibility of messing up.

And do you see, this isn't justification. This isn't just justifying and saying, "Oh, I can do whatever I want, and I know that this isn't the life I want to live, but I'm going to justify it anyways." No, this is how you learn and how you grow. It's the opposite of justification. It's being in the right mindset so that you can quit for good.

Because when you're okay with the possibility of messing up, then those mess-ups, they stop being barriers and they start to become stepping stones. So I want you to imagine that in your mind. Instead of messing up is all of a sudden, "Oh, back to square one," or all of a sudden, a big barrier in your path. No, those mess-ups aren't a barrier anymore. They become stepping stones. They show you what you need to do. They show you what you need to practice and what you need to change.

Just like in Super Mario Brothers, when you mess up by the ghost fish, you learn, "Oh, hey, there's a ghost fish there. I need to work on avoiding the ghost fish."

With my clients, how we do this is I have a worksheet titled Learn and Move On. Every time they look at pornography, they go, and they answer the questions in this worksheet. And it helps them find and figure out what happened and what we need to do next time. It's a very literal process with my clients of, "Okay, you messed up today. Instead of judging yourself, we're going to be very curious instead." I say that a lot. We're changing judgment into curiosity.

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Answer these questions: "What happened? What were you feeling? What were you going through? What were the thoughts in your mind? What worked? What didn't work? What can we do next time? How are you getting stronger? How did this make you stronger?"

And here's another thing I want to teach you, is that this idea that if I go a certain amount of days without pornography, that's success, that's just a lie too. A lot of this all-or-nothing mindset comes from counting success when it comes to quitting pornography is going a certain number of days without it. But that doesn't even equal success.

And here's why, here's what I mean. How many of you have gone without porn for a couple of years? How many of you are returned missionaries who didn't look at it on your mission, but then a few years later, you came back to it? Okay, it doesn't matter how many days you go without it; that doesn't equal success. What equals success, now listen to me, what equals success is the number of urges that you process.

If you remember, I think it's episode two, where I talk about over-desire. Remember we talk about Pavlov's dogs and how he trained them to salivate at the sound of the bell. He did that. He would ring the bell, give him a treat, ring the bell, give him a treat, ring the bell, give him a treat. And he did that enough times that they started to salivate and to expect a treat every time they heard the bell.

And then he trained them to not want the treat at the sound of the bell, to not salivate at the sound of the bell, by ringing the bell and not giving him the treat, ringing the bell, not giving him the treat. And he did that enough times that eventually they stopped associating the bell with a treat. They didn't want the treat anymore when they heard the bell. We talk about how that's like you with your pornography habit. Go and listen to that episode if you haven't yet.

But what equals success here is the number of urges that you process. So what equaled success with Pavlov in training his dogs to not salivate at the

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sound of the bell wasn't how many days he went, his dogs went without salivating, because he could have not come and ring a bell. He could have just avoided a bell for a couple of years, but then a few years later, if they would have heard a bell, they still would have salivated because they would have still thought of treats when they heard the bell. What created success for him was ringing the bell a hundred times, more times, and after ringing it a certain amount of times, they didn't want it anymore.

So it's the same with you and your pornography habit. It doesn't matter the number of days, what matters is the number of urges that you process. The number of times that you want pornography and you let yourself sit with that wanting, and you don't give it to yourself.

It's the number of urges that you process and sit with, the number of times that you hear the bell without giving yourself the treat. And when you realize that, when you recognize that success isn't days, but success is urges that you process, like number of urges that you process, that gets rid of the, "Oh, well, I already looked this morning, so we'll just try again tomorrow."

No, it doesn't matter if you looked this morning, because that's not success. You looked this morning, and you'll probably have some more urges, and you can still be successful if you process your urges today, if you process two urges or three urges or whatever. You see, and then that moment in the morning where you looked at it, it becomes totally irrelevant because that doesn't even equal success anyways. You can process urges that day and be successful.

So watch out for that all-or-nothing thinking. Again, this is how it typically manifests, and we'll talk about some of these in ways to combat it, okay? So, as I just mentioned, "I already looked today, so I might as well keep looking," or "I already messed up this week. Let's try again." We combat that with, "Progress isn't measured by that mess-up today. Progress is measured by how many urges I count. And even though I looked earlier

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this week or this morning, I can still count my urges. I can still practice processing urges.”

And watch out too for the mindset, the all-or-nothing mindset that sounds like this, "I'm not all in, and so I can't do anything until I know that I can do this." You can start even if you're not all in or even if you're not totally confident that you can do this.

You don't start playing Mario, Super Mario Brothers, thinking, "Well, I'm not good enough to beat the final level yet, so I'm not going to go all in." No, you just start practicing where you are. You don't start learning how to snowboard until you're sure that you can do a double black diamond. No, you just start where you are. Okay, so even if you're not all in or not sure you can do it, you can start to practice processing an urge here and there, and that's going to add up over time.

So, a quick recap. All-or-nothing thinking keeps us from progressing. When you fail, you do not go back to square one. Your failures make you stronger, even here with the pornography, if you learn from it, if you let it make you stronger, if you don't take yourself out of the game. And lastly, success is not measured by days clean, but measured by urges processed.

All right, everyone. Love you guys. Have a great week and we'll talk to you next week.

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 in to 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." 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.

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You can go and sign up at SaraBrewer.com/masterclass, and it is totally free.