

## 127. Young Women Struggling with Pornography with Madi Davis



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Sara Brewer**

## 127. Young Women Struggling with Pornography with Madi Davis

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 this week. This week I am interviewing Madi Davis. I am sharing my interview with you from her. She is a 19 year old girl whose mission is to talk to girls who struggle with pornography. I love her mission. We don't talk about this nearly enough and she is going to share her story.

We talk about what her experience was like coming out and talking to people about it, what a beautiful experience that was for her. What to do if you don't have that experience with a religious leader. We talk about women's sexuality. We talk about sex education and we just talk about a really great message of hope for girls who are struggling with porn.

I love Madi. I love her mission. This is a great one to listen to if you have daughters. It's also a great one to listen to if you are a girl struggling with porn. Okay, you guys, enjoy this interview.

Sara: Hey, you guys. Welcome to the podcast this week. This week I'm really excited to have Madi Davis on. Madi, you want to say hey?

Madi: Hey.

Sara: Madi, I was introduced to her. I was speaking at BYU and she came up and talked to me and shared some of her story. And it's a great story and I want to talk about it here on the podcast.

Madi has done a number of speaking gigs, podcast gigs talking about pornography, specifically women and what the struggle is like for women struggling with porn. Is that correct?

Madi: Yeah. Yep, exactly.

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Sara: Cool. Start by just telling us maybe where you're from and then tell us your story.

Madi: Okay, for sure. So I grew up in Logan, Utah. Moved to Riverton at 14 and now I'm living in Provo for BYU. So I've lived in Utah my whole life. I'm 19, a freshman at BYU right now, hoping to go into entrepreneurial management.

Sara: So I have to tell you, you told me that you were doing that.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: My husband did that.

Madi: Really?

Sara: Yeah. So we both did the Marriott school. I was doing therapeutic rec there, I don't even think it's a thing anymore. I don't know if you've heard me say that.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: But my husband did entrepreneurial management and loved it. But he didn't end up graduating, surprise, surprise, entrepreneur. Sorry, this is so random. This is such a tangent, but whatever. He wanted to do engineering and did a bunch, like two years of just engineering classes. Knew that's what he was going to do, didn't even do any generals. He's like, I'm going to save my generals for the end so that I can just get into grad school. Two years of engineering was like, hell no, I am not doing this.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: And he's like, I found out the only reason I wanted to do engineering is because I wanted to be someone's boss and I just wanted to be in charge and I wanted to have my own engineering firm. It's like why don't I

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just do entrepreneurship? And so we have had quite the entrepreneur journey. We love it.

We started doing barn doors. And we sold belts. Now we don't have a business together because we don't work well together and this is what I love to do and he has his own business. He owns Axial Knives for any listeners who are into the knife world and all the knife stuff. That's what he does.

So anyways, entrepreneurial management is great. We love it.

Madi: That's so cool. I'm so happy to hear it. And it looks like it's worked out quite well for you, that's awesome.

Sara: We love it.

Madi: Yeah, so I love, love just all the entrepreneurial stuff. I'm part of, I think you've spoken at the Un-Along Club, Sara.

Sara: Yeah.

Madi: But I'm part of the presidency of that.

Sara: Oh, nice.

Madi: It's so fun. That is like the best club ever. But yeah, I come from a family of five, an older brother, and a younger sister. I love weightlifting, hiking, playing guitar, and singing. I don't know, I do a lot of stuff. I feel like I have a new hobby every week but I think that just goes along with the ADD, but I love it.

Anyway, I first found pornography at 13 years old. And at the time I had never in my life heard of any other girls struggling with that or even, honestly, ever having those sexual feelings, especially at 13. So I was like, I'm actually disgusting. I felt like I was the worst person ever and I just felt like I was unforgivable and there had to be something wrong with me.

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And so, Sara, I love all the things that you talk about regarding identity because I go look back at my own journey and it makes so much sense to me. Because at 13 I mean, look at any 13 year old girl, what are they struggling with? Body image and self-esteem issues. And so I was struggling with those things and then I found pornography.

I found it on social media and it made me feel good about myself. Very temporarily, but it made me feel good. And it was kind of like this whole new world. And I mean, I was kind of curious. I had never really heard of that before.

So, obviously, when you see those images that you've never seen before, and for me it was like the reading stuff. So when I read those things that I had never read before, I'm like, oh, these are weird new feelings. Yeah, of course, I'm going to go explore it because I didn't know what it was.

And so anyway, it grew and it got worse and worse to where I was more dependent on it. And I realized that I was kind of avoiding my friends and family to view pornography. And it was multiple times a week and sometimes multiple times a day. And it just felt like that was kind of controlling my life. And at 13 or 14 I did not understand the brain science of the whole dopamine cycle and how my dopamine baseline had just gone down and down and down.

And so by 14 or 15, I was literally chemically depressed because of that, because that was something that I was so reliant on. But it's interesting looking back, again, with the identity thing. I think a lot of times we say things like, oh yeah, they're struggling with pornography. That actually is rarely ever the case. They're struggling with something regarding their identity. They're struggling with some type of relationship that they have with someone else or with themselves or body image issues, or whatever it is.

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It's always something that's trying to pose as the solution, but it's never going to work in the long run.

Sara: That's such a good point. Sorry, I'm just going to stop you for a second.

Madi: Yeah, go for it.

Sara: I'm going to interrupt you here and there because I don't want to forget. But that's such a good point because I say that all the time, struggle with pornography. But no, that's not the struggle. The struggle is the stuff that's going on underneath the surface that's creating the porn use.

Madi: It's so true. It's so true. Because it's always, I mean, it's always just trying to pose as the solution. And when you don't have any education otherwise, you feel like it works. Pretty temporarily, but it works. Because it did make me feel good about myself and it did raise those happiness, those dopamine levels very temporarily.

I compared it to a while ago, you know those baby toys where you're trying to fit the blocks, the shape blocks into the different holes? It's like if you're trying to put the triangle in the square, it might fit, but it's never going to fully satisfy the problem.

And so, yeah, so I knew that it felt good. And I feel like a lot of times we don't like to acknowledge that part of pornography. We're just like, oh yeah, that's bad. But yeah, of course there's a reason why you keep doing it.

Sara: Yeah, I mean those are pleasure areas in our body. They're meant to give us pleasure. They're really beautiful God-given parts of our body.

Madi: 100%.

Sara: And to pretend like it doesn't feel good is not true.

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Madi: Right. Exactly, exactly. Like we all just talk about like, oh, porn is bad. And then when you're in the midst of it you're like, wait, was everyone lying to me? I'm actually enjoying this.

Sara: You're like, it doesn't feel bad. They're lying to me.

Madi: Yeah. But I always would have, like I would feel really guilty and really bad after. And I knew that it felt wrong for me for where my value system was. And part of that was because growing up I really wasn't educated about just women being sexual beings at all. At all. I never knew that that was a thing. Like you hear like, oh, boys will be boys. And of course it didn't feel super normalized where I stood in my value system, but it felt a lot weirder to struggle with it as well.

Sara: Well, and you're probably hearing at church and stuff pornography lessons for the boys.

Madi: Yeah. And I mean, I would have these – So I'm a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and I would have these young women's lessons and they would say, "Hey, we're having a lesson about pornography. We know that you guys don't struggle with it, but just listen so you can help your future spouse."

Sara: So many things about that.

Madi: I know.

Sara: So many things about that that I just –

Madi: I know. And, you know what? Honestly, I don't hold any grudges against my young women's leaders, because I think that they just grew up in a generation where they were not constantly bombarded by these messages and they don't understand what exactly that's like. So I really don't fault them for that.

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Sara: Well, and there's not just a lack of sex education in girls growing up, but it's also in a lot of adults too. And so there's a lot of that happening too.

Madi: Yeah, it's true. And I feel like that generation, it's like you have the two, one and done. Like you have, at least from what I've heard from some people in the LDS church, you have the two one and done. You have the talk, you know, birds and the bees when you're like eight to 10 or whatever or eight to 12. And then you have a talk right before you get married and they're like, "Okay, this is what's going to happen. Good luck. Okay, we're not going to talk about it again."

Sara: Oh my gosh, that is so funny. Yeah, for me, I think I was as old as 12. And after some church activity, my mom put me in the car and gave a big sigh. And she started driving up the canyon and he's like, "We have to talk." And I was like, "Oh no." I just knew what it was. That's the only time I ever heard sex in my life and the only talk we ever had.

And then I'm about to get married and then get a call out of the blue, right? Because I grew up and I didn't have sex before I was married. And so I got a call from my mom. She's like, "I feel like we have to have a talk." I'm like, "Mom, no, we're okay. I'm getting married in like literally five days. I promise you we're okay." So that's funny you say that because that was exactly my experience.

Madi: That is really funny. I mean, it's such a common experience and it's like, no, it shouldn't be the talk. It should be a continual conversation. So anyway, that's so funny that that's your experience.

Sara: Yeah, I feel like there's a shift, at least that I'm seeing, maybe I just see it because I'm in this space all the time. But there's a big shift in having a lot of healthy sexual talks with your kids. Especially in the religious sphere, it's like how healthy it is. And it's not going to have your kids acting out sexually to talk about porn, which I kind of want to bring up with you.

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Do you feel like maybe the lack of sex education was something that originally pushed the porn use when you were young?

Madi: Yeah. Yeah, and, I mean, I never went into viewing porn like, oh, man, I need to go read this to be educated about sex. No, not at all. But it definitely was, because that was such uncharted territory for me, that was a way for my brain to discover those things. And I think a lot of times, like I've heard parents say, "Well, if you start having these talks about pornography super early on, aren't they just going to get curious and go find it?"

And even if that does happen, even if that does happen, wouldn't you rather have them find it and then know what to do about it rather than just find it, you know? And I really don't think, like I haven't heard accounts, and maybe I'm biased, but I haven't heard accounts of people having those conversations with their kids and then their kids go and find it and it just turns into this big problem.

No, it's always like it works as a prevention if you're having those conversations because they need to get educated one way or another. Don't let pornography be that way because that is the worst way, I promise.

Sara: Yeah. And I mean this isn't even just your experience talking, it's research-proven. My friend, Meg, is a researcher around sex and specifically pornography and that's what she says.

She says the research shows if you want to protect your kids from porn, the number one way to protect them is to have consistent sex talks with them and help them make sure that they're educated and that they know about their bodies and they know what their bodies do. And they know about sex and they know about pleasure, and they know about these things. And the more they know about those things, the more protected they're going to be against more explicit material.

Madi: Yeah. Yeah, I 100% agree. And I think that's a hard bridge to, like what's the phrase?

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Sara: Scruff?

Madi: Yeah, maybe. Anyway, it's kind of hard to start those conversations, I guess is what I'm trying to say. And when parents ask me, my biggest tip is don't make it like this big, like you were saying, take a big sigh, we need to talk like. It doesn't have to be that big, scary conversation. And you can actually mold how that dialogue is going to happen.

If you make it a huge, huge deal, then your kids are going to be scared and it's going to be a huge, huge deal. But just bring it up, like people say do it in a car ride or on a hike or something where you're not face to face having to make eye contact. But it's just like, hey. And kind of asking the question.

Like I was just talking to this parent the other day and she was like, "Well, how do I do this?" And I was like, maybe bring it up in this way. Say, hey, so on social media it's almost impossible. Actually, I would say impossible, like truly impossible to not see pornography. It doesn't matter if you are following every single church account, every single one, you know? It's just there. It's unavoidable.

And so bringing it up in that way and then asking, so I'm wondering when was the last time that you encountered something like that? And just making it super casual and super curious and approaching it with a smile. Because another thing is I feel like you hear a lot of times like, oh my gosh, did you hear about that? Their marriage was ruined because of his or her pornography use.

And when we approach it from that dialogue, especially if your kid is coming to you or your spouse is coming to you, and they're like, hey, I've struggled with pornography, they already have that dialogue in their heads. They're already expecting, well, my marriage, my relationship is ruined.

And so as the supporter, again, I know this is a hard ask. This is for sure a hard ask and will take time, but you can be patient with yourself with it. But it's like you have to flip that script for them and actually be a message of

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hope and someone that takes that shame out of it. Like I love that you say shame-free, sex positive. And just kind of flipping the script and saying, oh, actually change is possible and we're going to get through it.

Because it's really hard if you have both the parent and the child or both the two spouses and they're both thinking that, yeah, this is going to ruin our marriage. Because if you both go into that with that mindset, then it's kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

So, anyway, sorry, I kind of got on a tangent.

Sara: No, I love it. Thank you for sharing that. So you were saying you – Anyways, keep going.

Madi: Yeah, okay, with my story. So, I found it at 13. And then I was 14 or 15 when I finally decided to talk about it. And I decided to send a text to my religious leader. And I was just like, "Hey, we need to meet." And I remember I sent that text on a Wednesday or Thursday. And the four or five days leading up to that, the most stressful days of my life. And it was crazy because I felt like I was being extra, extra tempted to view pornography.

And that buildup of the feelings of shame and guilt, and you need to hide this. Like there's no way you're going to go in there and tell him. But I did. So I set the meeting for like 30 minutes after church and I didn't let myself leave the building until I met with him.

So I'm sitting outside of his office and I just remember sitting outside versus coming out was like night and day. Like it was crazy the mindset switch that I had in those 10 or 15 minutes. And it was interesting because looking back at what he told me, it all tied back to my identity. Because I didn't go in there and he didn't tell me, hey, you know that this is wrong. You know that what you've been doing is wrong, right? This is not good, This is destructive to your mind.

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I knew those things and I promise I was carrying enough shame and guilt and feeling like I needed to hide for the both of us, like I could take it up. And so I went in there and he told me three things. He told me that I was still a daughter of God. He told me that I was still just as loved. And he told me that I was still just as valued. And, again, that totally tied back to my identity. And so it was so cool.

So then I left and everything seemed brighter. I don't even say this is a metaphor, but like the sky was blue, but it was like bluer. And the trees were green and the grass was green, but they were greener. And it was really cool because I felt this huge just power kind of enter my life because I had a better understanding of who I was and my purpose. And that I actually was redeemable and able to be forgiven for these things.

Sara: Yeah, that's beautiful. That's so awesome. And what a blessing that you had a leader like that.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: Not everyone is that lucky.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: What would you say to someone who goes in, whether that's confession or whether that's just a meeting, and they come out and it's the opposite?

Madi: Yeah. And I've heard so many stories like that and it's so sad. So to that person, I think I would say, first off, I'm sorry because I know that those experiences happen a lot. And I think it's so hard because I think in any religion you have, and even outside of religion, you have good people in leadership and you have bad people in leadership and people that make good decisions and bad decisions. And we really don't have control over that.

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And I'm super grateful that I had an awesome experience. But I know that that is not the case for a lot of people. And a lot of times that kind of scares people away from going and meeting with them. And so if anyone is in that position, before you go and talk to that religious leader or whoever I would just make sure you –

It doesn't necessarily have to be a religious leader that you tell first. Like make sure that it is someone. You can tell your friend, you can tell your husband, you can tell your parents. Just whoever you trust and trust that they will have a good response. But I would also say that you really can't control their response. And it takes a lot of courage and I can't promise you that it's going to be a good experience.

Sara: Yeah, that's beautiful and I totally agree. If you're going into meetings with people and you're coming out with a lot of shame, you don't have to keep talking to them about it.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: Even if they're your religious leader. We still have a responsibility to ourselves to make sure that we're helping ourselves. And so if talking to that religious leader isn't helping you, you get to make that decision for you and you don't have to do it. I give you permission. Sara gives you permission to not talk to anyone who's actually making it harder for you to quit and creating more shame in your life.

Madi: Exactly.

Sara: Even if it's your religious leader.

Madi: Yep. Amen. Yep. And, yeah, I mean, it makes me so sad because I've heard so many. Like my brother, I have permission from him to share about this. But there was one time he was struggling with pornography and he went in and the bishop, our religious leader, told him that he couldn't

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take the sacrament, which is like a super kind of sacred thing that we do in our church to kind of remind us of the promises that we make to God.

He told him that he couldn't take the sacrament for three months. And then my brother slipped up once, and he pushed it to six months. And I just think it's so sad because that creates such a, I mean, what way of thinking does that force him to think?

Sara: Right.

Madi: He's like, well, this is just all or nothing. And that's such a damaging way of thinking. And so, yeah, I mean, again, I can't promise that you'll have a good experience, and I wish I could.

Sara: Yeah. And I think what you're saying too, is there's an aspect of that where talking about it is so freeing.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: And talking about it with someone who you trust and who you love and who's going to help you with that shame, oh my gosh. That's how shame dies, is we bring stuff to light.

Madi: Oh yeah. And I mean, I love I always quote this quote, it's given in like a TED talk about addiction. It says the opposite of addiction is not sobriety, the opposite of addiction is human connection. I think that is so important. And I mean, I can personally testify to that. Over the past couple months, just talking to someone literally every day about either my own personal stuff or about their stuff has just been huge for me because it does have to be such a constant thing.

And I promise that taking the first step, that will be the hardest part. And then after you get it out for that first time, it gets so much easier.

Sara: Yeah. Yeah, and it's such a beautiful part and a beautiful step, is talking to someone about it that you trust.

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Madi: Yeah.

Sara: And that is going to respond in a good way. And like you said, you don't always know how people are going to respond. So if they respond badly, try someone else.

Madi: Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

Sara: Wait until you find someone who's going to help you with that shame. I love it. So good. Okay, so tell us what happened next.

Madi: Yeah. So I met with him. And then I was, I don't like saying the word clean or whatever, but I didn't view pornography for like a year after. Because I was kind of just riding on that. And I knew all of the darkness that it had brought into my life and I knew that I didn't want that back.

But I was kind of white knuckling it. And I was kind of just feeling like, well, I can't do that again. I'm never going to think about that again. I'm never going to have a thought about sex ever again until I get married. And it turns out that willpower is super finite and I ran out.

Sara: It doesn't work.

Madi: Yeah. And so at 16 I remember I slipped up once. And I was like, are you kidding? I was so mad at myself. But I think it was actually super important that that happened, because it did teach me that willpower is finite. And it also taught me that relapses or slip-ups, or whatever you want to call them, don't take you back to step one. It's a continual journey and that growth isn't linear by any means.

And so yeah, I did have a relapse. And I kind of entered into those same routines and stuff again, until I got back and I talked to someone and it was that same religious leader. And again, he was just so forgiving. And he's like, okay, well, here's what we're going to do moving forward. And I just, I think that's super important because he didn't focus a ton on what had

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happened and didn't ask me details or anything. He was just like, okay, here's what we're going to do moving forward.

Sara: Which, by the way, is the appropriate response. Your church leader should not be asking you details.

Madi: Right. Right, I know. So yeah, so that was super cool. And then, so I'm 19 now, and honestly, 17 to 19 is super blurry. I know that I was kind of on and off, but one thing that is super concrete is actually as I was getting into – So the reason why I'm doing all this stuff and why I'm on podcasts and stuff telling my story is starting in June 2022, so about what month is it?

I don't know, like nine months ago I started getting these promptings and these feelings that I had some kind of work to do in helping young girls who were struggling with pornography. And I was like, yeah, I don't know if I can. I don't know if I can take that on. But I finally did start kind of acting on those. And I started just sharing my story on podcasts.

But before that I was researching a lot on pornography and on the effects of pornography. And I was just kind of surrounded by that word all day. And it was just like running through my head. And I hadn't really viewed pornography for quite a while. But then as I was getting back into it again, it was like confusing, weird feelings. And I actually relapsed three, maybe four months ago.

And I was like, well, yeah, that's it. There's no way I can take this on, because how am I supposed to go tell my story if I'm only able to say, yeah, it's been what, like two months? But I also think that that was so important because I think that there's even more strength that comes from that.

And I run a podcast where I have young women come and share their stories. And as I've had young women come on, they've had those same feelings. They're like, I don't know if I can do this. I'm not that far in. I wish I could be able to say I'm five or 10 years sober and this is how I've

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overcome it. But I think there's so much power in just saying like, hey, I'm still fighting this every single day. And this is how I'm fighting it, is through connecting with people.

And so that kind of brings us to now, I guess. I'm curious what questions you have.

Sara: Yeah, so I just think that's really interesting, too. If we maybe reframe what it means to overcome pornography. It's a whole conversation. That doesn't necessarily mean we never have sexual feelings again and we don't experience normal, healthy sexuality and we never have slip ups. Overcome can just mean it's not ruling our life anymore.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: And we're not worried about it all day. We're not filled with shame anymore. We're not looking at it all the time. It's not taking over our life. I think that's a really beautiful way to describe overcoming pornography, especially in teenagers and girls. And as you're growing and as you have these normal sexuality responses and experiences, it's okay to normalize it a little bit.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: And realize that overcoming is just that it's not taking over my life and that I'm not letting it ruin things for me.

Madi: I love it. And yeah, I feel like I am at a point where I can say, yeah, I have overcome that. But I think it's so important to redefine that. A lot of people when they first come to the Un-Along Club meetings, they're super thrilled. And they're like, I'm getting this out of my life for good for my wife and for my kids. And I'm like, well, heck yeah, I'm all in for that. But I also think it's super important to understand, okay, how exactly do we do that?

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Because the reason why I'm able to say that I've overcome it and do all these things, is because I'm actually super conscious about it. And I love what you say about when you get those urges, like I'm no longer just either immediately reacting to them or immediately pushing them away. I'm just kind of just asking myself. And I love practicing radical acceptance and extreme mindfulness.

And so I'm just like, okay, where am I right now? Why am I experiencing these thoughts? Why is this coming to me right now? And that has been huge. And so it's not like, again, like you said, it's not like I don't have any of those feelings or urges anymore. It's just I have the tools now to understand them. And they have actually come less and less as I have just accepted them and moved on.

Sara: Yeah. I love it. And I also love this idea, too, of just being curious about it. So in a world where a lot of women, and it's changing, but a lot of women have repressed their sexuality and there's a lot of trauma around sexuality, for you to be able to be curious with it and be like, hey, this is actually my friend. This is my buddy. And there's this part of me that experiences pleasure in this sexual part of me.

What can I learn from it? Almost like, what can I learn about this sexuality? And that doesn't mean I have to act out on it. And that doesn't mean that I am going to go and view or read a bunch of porn. But this makes me excited. This triggers my sexuality and this is a beautiful thing, hmm, interesting.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: It's something you can take into your life that can really serve you as you grow. And whether that's getting married or having relationships where you are ready to experience that, that's something you can bring with you instead of just shaming it and thinking that it's bad.

Madi: Yeah, I love it. So good.

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Sara: So tell us like specifically for girls, because I know you want to help girls, right?

Madi: Yeah, that's kind of my thing.

Sara: What are some of the big challenges for girls with pornography that might be unique to them?

Madi: Yeah. I mean, I think it's so hard because there's a lower percentage of girls that struggle with it. And so already, I mean, you think of pornography, it's so isolating. Like you have to isolate yourself physically. You actually have to isolate your thoughts. Like, I can't be thinking about God or I can't be thinking about my friends or family, so you have to isolate that.

And so you're already in a place of so much isolation, and then to be in the minority and not know that there are other women struggling, I think that just adds an extra layer of shame. Not to take away from the guy's side. The guy's side is just as valid and just as hard, but I think there's an extra added layer of shame struggling with it as a girl because you just feel like you're dirty and you're, you know.

Sara: So isolating.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: Especially the conditioning around women and sexuality is a lot different than the conditioning for men and sexuality. Like you said, boys will be boys. And yeah, guys are just doing it all the time.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: For women it's like, really shameful.

Madi: Yeah.

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Sara: And it has been for years and years and years and years and centuries. It's like a horrible thing for women to experience sexual pleasure if you look into all the history around it. Anyways.

Madi: Yeah. No, it's, yeah, it's true. And I mean, I remember like you hear of the boys coming home from the dates and they're like, hey dad, I kissed her. And they give him a high five like, good job, buddy. And then the girls come home from their date and they're like, oh, he kissed me. And they're like, okay, what's his name? What's his address and everything?

We just have this subliminal kind of messaging that's like, oh yeah, that's not something that you're supposed to do or that's not something that you're supposed to feel. That's not something that should be exciting to you. So this is another thing that I don't think we talk a ton about, but women typically tend to enjoy written content more, versus the visual.

Sara: Totally.

Madi: And so I think for a while, especially as I was starting to tell my story, I was like, well, that was never really appealing to me, like the visual stuff. And I was like, am I fake?

Sara: You're a poser, you say you're struggling with porn but you're not.

Madi: Exactly. Saying it out loud sounds so dumb.

Sara: No it doesn't.

Sara: So anyway, so that was what was intriguing to me, was the written content. And so actually we had Jeff Stewart, we had him as a guest in the Un-Along Club a while ago and we're just doing like a Q&A. It was super interesting. I asked him, why is it different for women? Like, why don't I enjoy the visual stuff? And why don't most women enjoy the visual stuff? If you are a woman that does enjoy it, there's nothing wrong with you. It's just different things.

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And so I was curious about the brain science behind it. And he said that women's sexual response is more contextual. And so men go straight from stimulus to arousal, and then women go from arousal to stimulus.

Sara: Yes.

Madi: And I was like, wow, that's so interesting. So I think that is another kind of distinction that I don't think we tend to talk about more.

Sara: Yeah. Yeah, no, so good. And it kind of goes back to this idea of sex education, how that's so helpful. Because a lot of the shame, especially that you experience with porn is from lack of sex education. And especially with the women's stuff. Like I'm not looking, is this porn? I'm reading, right? And it's just some sex education that women, our bodies just typically, and not always, everyone's different, but it's not as visually stimulating as it is for men.

Madi: Yeah. And it's just interesting. And I actually feel like the written content is much easier to rationalize it and justify it and say, well, yeah, I'm not looking at images or videos, it's just words. But then when you, again with the sex education, when we do define porn as things that are created to entice those sexual feelings, then yeah, that does fit into the category. But I never knew that at 13.

Sara: Yeah, really good. Really good. Anything else that comes to mind like specific challenges for girls or women? Those are the big two, so I just don't want to move on unless there's something else that you had in mind.

Madi: Yeah, yeah, honestly, I would say those two are probably the biggest.

Sara: Okay. And so now I want you to think of little Madi. Little young woman Madi who is just perfect, and discovers her sexuality and starts viewing porn and it starts becoming a little bit of an isolating experience. Kind of a problem, something she doesn't want in her life, feeling a lot of

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shame. What would you go back and tell her or any other girls that might be in similar situations?

Madi: Yeah, this is such a good question, I would just, first off, I would tell her that you are not alone and you're not the only woman on the earth that has struggled with this. And also that there's nothing inherently wrong with you. I really thought that having those feelings just meant that there was something wrong with me.

And I know in religion we talk a lot about an atonement and Jesus Christ will save you from all of your sins. And I would hear lessons about that and I'm like, man, what an awesome gift for everyone else. Like, of course that can't be for me because there's got to be something wrong with me. No one talks about this, I am the only one. So I've got to be the exception.

And again, saying these things out loud is like, what was I thinking? But those are very real thoughts. And so, yeah, I would just say there's something inherently wrong with you. And you weren't just made incorrectly. These are actually like God-given feelings and you just have to find a way to manage them.

And that's a long process and you just have to be patient and forgiving with yourself and allow yourself grace. And, yeah, just most importantly, you're not alone and you have people that are cheering you on and that do want to see you happy, like really genuinely happy. And especially just God loves you. And he loves you regardless of where you're at in your recovery journey. And he's thrilled when you talk to him about anything regarding your life, and when you bring your problems to him.

Yeah, that would probably be my advice.

Sara: I love it. Thank you. Thank you so much. There's one thing that I want to mention that is kind of coming up. For boys, we talk a lot about just healthy development. And it's almost normal to be like, yeah, part of healthy development is you're going to masturbate and you're going to see

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porn. And we're not going to keep watching porn, we're going to try to stay away from that. But like you said, it's just kind of a part of our world, we're always going to see it.

We're not going to over masturbate and we're going to be really careful and whatever your value system is, whatever your family is. But it is a normal part of development and that's something that we see. And so I want to be really careful that, especially when we talk to girls and women, that that can be very true too and it is very true too. And so there's not like a double standard where, yeah, it's super normal and a part of developmentally healthy boys that they discover masturbation and they experience that.

But that's also true with girls, too. And so be really careful that if this is you, recognizing that that is a part of growing up and that doesn't mean that you're just going to be stuck in it forever. But a lot of people experience that and discover that because, guess what? It's a part of your body, you're exploring your body and you discover stuff. Because I've just heard so many stories of girls who feel horrible because they had experienced masturbation and they didn't know that's what it was.

And then they found out that that's what it was, and then they felt horrible sinners, the worst, what have I done? And so I do just want to make sure that I mention if you've experienced that, that's normal. And you get to choose how that plays out in your life. A lot of people don't want to continue to do it. We want to be careful that it doesn't become a thing that controls our life, right? Blah, blah, blah, whatever. But it's part of human normal, healthy development to discover that.

Madi: Right. Yeah. Yeah, I agree. And just to add, I was having a conversation with my dad because he's, like my parents are really good with this stuff. And I also think that's super important to add, I even had parents that were really good with this stuff and I still struggled with it because it's just hard to talk to people about it.

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But we were talking a while ago and we were talking about how much shame there is around women either – Like you get married and I guess in this situation you're waiting to have sex until marriage. You get married, and then if you know what feels good for you, then you're worried that the guy is going to look at you and be like, well, how do you know that?

And then if you don't know, then you just live the rest of your life and sex is more of just a thing that's enjoyable for the guy because it's much harder for women to figure out. So anyway, it's important to understand that it's actually okay to know and kind of encouraged to know what you like.

Sara: Yeah, I mean, sex therapists that I've heard, even very religious ones, there's a big learning curve for a lot of women to figure that out. And so they'll recommend that you learn this. Even in our super religious experiences there's ways you've got to figure it out. That's going to probably include figuring it out without your spouse there sometimes so that you can teach your spouse what it feels like.

So, yeah, anyways, that's a whole other conversation.

Madi: Yeah.

Sara: Really good, I love it. Anything else you want to add or say to the girls?

Madi: Just, I'm cheering you on. I think you guys are awesome regardless of what point you're at in your recovery journey.

Sara: Yes, I love it. You've got such a great story and such a great voice. Thanks for coming on and sharing it with us.

Madi: Of course, thanks for having me.

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

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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. 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](https://Sarabrewer.com/masterclass), and it is totally free.