

130. Unshaming with David Bedrick



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 130, Unshaming with David Bedrick.

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 today's podcast episode. I'm really excited to share this conversation I had with David Bedrick. He is, ah, if you follow me on Instagram, you probably see that I share his stuff often because I love him and I love what he talks about. And I love his approach, too, unshaming and de-shaming.

So a few things with this episode. First, this is going to be an explicit episode because there is some swearing, which if that bugs you it might be one to skip. But if not, I'm just so excited for you to hear him and hear his take on things. We talk shame, we talk boundaries, it's just a really great conversation. So please enjoy this conversation with David Bedrick.

Sara: Hey, you guys, welcome to today's podcast episode. Today we have an awesome guest with us, his name is David Bedrick. David, do you want to say hi?

David: Sure. Hey everybody, it's good to be here with you and Sara.

Sara: Yeah, thank you. I'm just so thrilled to have you. If you follow me on Instagram, you see that I share his stuff to my story all the time. I'm like, oh, this is so good. Look at this, look at this. So David is, and I'll let you introduce yourself a little bit more too, but I was introduced to him through like a business marketing person who did a class with David around shame and unshaming.

And David is an author, he has a number of books written, he was an attorney, then a therapist, is that correct?

David: Yeah.

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Sara: You'll have to tell us your story in just a minute. But a lot of his work is around shame and unshaming and healing. And it just, like it just speaks to my heart and soul and our mission. And I think he's got a lot of great stuff to share with us, especially around porn, which we talk about so often on the podcast all the shame around it. And he just has some really good insights for us.

So do you want to introduce yourself a little bit?

David: What should I say? Let's see, what needs to be said? I've been thinking about psychology and justice and social justice and writing about both of those and shame for about 35 years. My second book, I've been working on my fourth, is called Revisioning Activists, which is mostly a focus on social justice, sexism, anti-semitism, racism, and stuff of that sort, these social biases. So that's a big part of my interest.

When I was a child, my father said, "David, you're a dreamer," which was a criticism. That didn't mean, wow, you're a dreamer, you know? You're not MLK, I have a dream. You're more unrealistic. And my mother used to say, "Stop trying to change the world, you can't try to change the world." That was her thing. And later, in my adult life, I became a dream analyst.

Sara: Oh wow.

David: And I became an activist. So it was really interesting that the things that my parents criticized in me hit the right spot. They weren't supportive, but it's interesting. I realized later that they put their fingers right on spots. I didn't know I was going to become a dream analyst, you know? And my father called me a dreamer, he didn't mean I studied nighttime dreams, but my life went that way and my life became very involved in activism.

So sometimes parents, I call it negatively support you. Meaning they're against things, but it's the exact right thing.

Sara: That's so good. I love it. I love it. I'm going to be thinking about that for a little bit because I'm sure there's some stuff that I'm going to apply

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there. So good. Cool. And tell us a little bit about the work that you're doing right now and what you're doing right now in the world.

David: I worked with people one on one for 30-some-odd years. In the last year, year and a half, I've always been teaching at Florida University for eight, nine years. And I taught at a place called the Process Work Institute, which is a psychological school. But most of my work has been around understanding what shame is.

And I have a very specific idea about that, that's different than common parlance for studying that. And I teach therapists and coaches how to work with people in a new way. In a way, I think that is most valuable. I should think that, it's my way, right? But other ways are also good, but I have my way.

And so I teach therapists and coaches and then I teach programs around shame for people to think about their individual development working with trauma and abuse, working with their inner life and difficult feelings and things like that.

Sara: Really good. Cool. Well, let's dive into it then. Tell us a little bit about your approach to shame and your thoughts about shame.

David: Yeah, I'm going to use my own personal story for two reasons. One, it's an easy way for me to frame in a story what I'm talking about. But also, I have a viewpoint that says people who are teaching or leading or whatever we call those words, ought to be more transparent about their own lives and a little bit less, "This is the answer, I have found the truth and I don't have difficulties." But more genuinely humble. Humble doesn't mean putting oneself down. "I'm really not that smart," that's not humble. If you're smart you're smart. Humble means you're connected to yourself.

So let me tell a quick story. When I was a child, for some reason I'm talking about my childhood today, I grew up in a Jewish family. And first, my parents were first-generation post-Holocaust and I'm the first child generation, and my father was kind of brutal.

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The reason why I mentioned Jewish is because in family dynamics brutality is not usually only of that family. In other words, the parent initiates the violence, right? If you have a parent who hurts you, they're responsible, no bypass, somebody should be held accountable, et cetera. And that violence is usually connected to stories that happened before that moment.

So it's not a dismissal. It's not like, oh, I understand, so therefore I shouldn't be upset. It's not that. It's just a bigger understanding. And diversity is a big part, internalized oppression is a big part of that. So that's why I mentioned the Jewish story.

But my father was brutal, he used fists and belts to express his rage. And my mother was incredibly and somewhat typical for her generation – I'm 67 years old – disempowered. And what that means is that she was unable to do anything about that, to even say, this is not okay. Or even to say to me, that happens, right? So she did something that I sometimes call denial, dismissal, and blame.

Denial means it really didn't happen. It didn't happen the way you think. Why are you making that up, Sara? You're exaggerating things, right? That kind of mentality. She didn't say that to you, she said it to me, but people have that.

Or gaslighting, well, if you didn't do this, maybe you're just too sensitive. Why are you acting that way? You're so angry all the time. We should send you to therapy for anger management. That's gaslighting because let's say somebody gets hurt and that person gets angry. If people don't have the context of the story around that, then people think, oh, you have an anger problem, let's send you to therapy for anger.

They don't send you to therapy for having been injured or being in an abuse scene to help with that. They say you have a problem. And that orientation, you have a problem, that's why you're acting this way. That's shame. It doesn't mean you don't need help, you may need a ton of help, but the orientation that pathologizes, that means looks at you as if you were

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ill, as if you're a sickness, as if something is wrong with you, as opposed to something happened to you and you're suffering a lot.

Sara: Yes.

David: Does that make sense as a distinction?

Sara: Yeah.

David: If you punch me in the face and I get a black eye, you don't think "What's wrong with you, David?" You think, "Oh my gosh, you got hurt. Let me help your eye." And that's a very different attitude.

Sara: Yeah, with those more internal or emotional wounds that we experience, they're a lot easier to shame the anger, right, than to say, oh, there's some woundedness going on here.

David: That's right.

Sara: This is just reminding me of a year ago, two years ago, just like some trauma surfaced that just really, really was hard. And I was so angry and I felt a lot of gaslighting from the anger. Like so much and so many messages of don't be angry, don't be angry, don't be angry. It just made everything worse. It made everything worse.

And I remember I had to go on these runs to get it out. And I just remember one run, just like almost having a vision where the anger was this fire. It had this opportunity to destroy stuff, but it also had this really beautiful opportunity to like warm people and to create food and community and warmth and growth. Anyways, it was really powerful for me.

David: Great work. That's great work. Yeah, I call that unshaming work, meaning you're looking at this thing called anger in this case, that could be pathologized. What's wrong with you? You had anger problems, teach you to meditate so you don't have any more anger. Forgive so you don't have any more anger, whatever we're going to do to get rid of the anger as if it's a symptom of an illness.

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That's why I say pathology. It's a pathogen that's a sickness, as opposed to there's a great energy rising up in you, how will you be aware of it and discover how you're meant to interact with that and use that? Not so that you can go injure people, but so you can, as you say, create warmth, create food, that you can do something with that fire. Create a podcast.

Sara: Yeah. Yeah, thank you.

David: That's a good thing to do with fire.

Sara: Right. Yeah, so I wonder how does this apply to other emotions? And we'll talk about porn specifically here in a minute, but maybe anxiousness. Or let's see, some common stuff that comes up, you know, anxiousness, loneliness, stress.

David: Yeah. Oh, there's two zillion ways of treating feelings, but I'm going to make a distinction between two general orientations. One that treats feelings that disturb you, right? All of those, anxiousness, stress, it disturbs me. I'd rather not be stressed. I'd rather not be anxious. I'd rather not be insecure. I'd rather not be down or "depressed" feeling.

So whenever emotions like that come up most of us have a first inclination, which we've learned from the culture and family, which is, what the hell? What's wrong? How do I get rid of this so that I can be back to my normalized, comfortable state? I don't want to be insecure. I want to be here with you, Sara, and be like a very confident, older, wise person. But sometimes I'm a big mess.

In fact, all the time I'm at least a little bit of a mess, right? I'm not ever 100% that. So what do I do with my, I'll call it my insecurity that has lived in me since I was a youngster. Do I try to get rid of that so I can be really confident and really sure of myself so I can show up good? That's okay. That's sometimes just right. But that sometimes leads to shame.

What I mean by shame is I'm looking at my insecurity as, again, like a pathology. Something's wrong with me that should go away. And if I'm fighting with it, and then every time it comes up, I feel like something's

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wrong. What happened? What's wrong with me? Why am I still like this? How come I haven't gotten over my stuff?

And then can you hear the state that I'm in, in addition to the insecurity? Why am I like this? Oh, shit, I have to do the podcast in a few minutes. What should I do? I should have some tea. I'm exaggerating. What should I do? I should listen to some ocean waves. And people do that to themselves regularly. We've been trained to do that.

Another approach, what I call the unshaming approach, which we've talked about in your example of anger, would be to say, oh, insecurity. What's that like, David? What do you mean what's it like? It's a bad thing. I want to get rid of it. I know. I know you want to get rid of it, but what is it actually like? And then I would say, no one's ever asked me that. No one's ever asked, what is your anger actually like? Well, it's fire.

People almost never ask those questions. If I say I'm insecure when I go to most people for help, they'll help me get rid of my insecurity and they'll never say, "What's your insecurity like? Tell me more about it." That almost never happens. The assumptions come in. The "let me help you get rid of that" comes in very quickly.

So if you said to me, what's your insecurity like? I would say, "No, I'll do that in a quick moment. Now I'm feeling a little bit scared and I'm feeling a little small compared to my normal adult self. Is this going to be okay? Will I say the wrong thing?" And then I would say, "Go ahead and say the wrong thing." Well, then I would say things about my personal stories and people might evaluate me. Tell your personal stories too. Let people evaluate you. That's okay? Yeah, what else would you do? Well aren't those things vulnerable? Being vulnerable is good. Oh, I didn't know that.

So that path goes into my insecurity and finds something, a little gold in it, and says, that's part of me also. Let's accept the wholeness, the diversity of a person, diversity of the outer world, and the diversity of the inner world.

Sara: So good. Almost like it's creating ways just for more acceptance, instead of just trying to get rid of that. Just accept it.

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David: Yeah. And then the things that people are the most against, the most difficult experiences that they have, the things that really disturb you, that really knock you off of your desired state of being, those things are not just things to accept. They usually have very deep gifts in them.

Like my insecurity has a little gift, be vulnerable. It's okay to be vulnerable. I didn't know. I was trying to be less vulnerable, I really was just a minute ago. And now I'm like, oh, being more vulnerable with yourself is okay. The deeper that disturbance, that difficulty, the deeper the gift that lies in it.

It's hidden. It's not caused by you, it's because you were hurt. It's good that I really suffered a lot because I needed that. No, nobody needs to be mistreated, period.

Sara: Yeah.

David: But the system cooks things in difficulties over long periods of time. And if you enter in the right way, the eyes that say, maybe something's in the out that you've been working on for a while in that anger, maybe we can go into that and discover something. The deeper the difficulty, the deeper the wound, the deeper the medicine. The wounded healer is the medicine. So it's not just an acceptance then, Sara, it becomes part of people's path to live that out.

Like you might say anger has been around for a number of years and I've tried to get rid of it. And then I would start to think, Sara, anger is part of your path. What do I mean? I don't mean walk around angry all the time. I mean, that fire, that's the base of that anger may be part of 20 or 30 years of your activism around porn. In other words, you will live it and make it into the fire of your passions.

Sara: Yeah, beautiful. I wonder how this might apply to someone who is trying to quit porn. So just like a little background, this is really common what I hear. People, they start struggling when they're really young, 11 or 12. They grew up in a household where there's lots of sexual shame, weren't taught about sexual things, and started viewing porn.

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It gets more and more available. We use it as an escape from emotion. We use it as there's some over-desire, there's the dopamine hits. It becomes a habit. How does this apply to something like this? There's so much shame there, right? It's just like deep.

David: Yep. Well, there's two very important things to look at. We're not going to talk about this one yet, but maybe we will. But for those people listening who are upset about what porn or the porn industry does to create more violence, particularly against women or children, that has to be held so that if we're going to understand a person who's engaged in the viewing, the interaction with porn, we have to hold the context.

The context is some people are being injured, right? And whether that's children or women or men, but people are being looked at in objectified ways that supports that particular orientation that becomes part of a rape culture or an abusive culture. So I just want to hold that for a second and just say to people, if that's coming up for people, hold that trigger. It's valid and that ought to be unshamed as well, right? That ought to be given expression, anger, fire, hurt, things like that.

So, let me just hold that for a moment. If we're working with someone who's involved in, they are the watcher of, they're not the person who is injured by a person watching porn. If it's that particular person, then there's things we need to know if we're going to unshame.

Now, again, when I say unshame, I do not mean, do not, capital not, they shouldn't feel bad. They shouldn't feel guilty. They shouldn't feel responsible. They shouldn't make amends if they injure people, they shouldn't feel accountable. They shouldn't want to make changes. Because some people take the word shame as, well, you should feel shame for certain things.

But I define shame differently. I think you should feel guilt for certain things. Responsibility for certain things. Compassion for the people you hurt for certain things. Empathy for people that you hurt for certain things. A lot of

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things, remorse for things, right? Desire, Sara, what can I do to make that better? I hurt you.

Making amends, that desire, all those, I'm going to call healthy, meaning they can lead to good results. But shame means something's wrong with me. I need to fix myself. I don't need to understand myself and my story, I need to fix myself. That doesn't lead to change. It leads to people becoming less in contrast.

And I'm being so emphatic about that because there's a common idea of shames, which is more Judeo Christian in nature. You should be ashamed of yourself. It's a moral thing. This is not a moral, I'm not talking about a moral discussion here, we can. I'm talking about a psychological discussion, and the moral viewpoint of shame is not helpful for psychological healing or for making change in our life. It's just a moral thing. People should have that or not.

Sara: Yeah, is it Brene Brown who teaches us shame causes hiding and avoiding?

David: Yes.

Sara: You know, it's not going to lead to change.

David: That's right. And she would say, also, some people say when a person makes an argument like a Brene Brown argument, or my argument in the moment, "shame can't be helpful," people say, well, no, there's toxic shame and non toxic shame. You need non toxic shame, I should feel bad about hurting people. And like I said, I think that's reasonable. And whatever, it's fitting, it can be helpful.

But then people start going down this road, well, there's good and bad shame. And people get very confused about what this thing is. Well, guilt and shame, guilt and shame, people say. But those are not the same dynamics. If I hurt you and I feel like, oh shit, I'm really sorry. I feel guilty for hurting you. That's not shame. If I feel like, why am I like this? What's

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wrong with me? I'm such a weirdo, how do I suppress myself so I don't act that way? That's very different.

Can you feel a difference? Oh shit, I should have not done that. I should not have said that to my wife. I was in a bad mood and I hurt her, that's not okay. That's not shame, that's guilt and maybe it's inappropriate because I'm just putting myself down, but it could really have hurt her. I have done that, I've said things in bad moods that have injured people. That's different from why did I do that? Why am I always like this? I'm such a screwed up person. Maybe it's because of this.

And now I'm in a state, and if you can follow my state I'm wrapped up in myself. My wife is now invisible to me. I'm wrapped up in my own stuff. I'm not thinking, "Oh my gosh, what's it like? What was the hurt that I caused? How are you doing, sweetheart?" I'm not thinking that in shame. That would be great if I was thinking that, but shame wraps me in my own – It's like a snake eating its tail kind of a world. And the other person is actually not more visible to me, I'm not more concerned with them. I'm more wrapped up in my own difficulty.

Sara: Yeah.

David: You can say something in a moment, I wanted to get to in a moment what would I do with the person watching porn. But I just want to make space because I'm saying a lot.

Sara: I love it. Let's just go there because, yeah, I agree. And I think that's an interesting way to think about it too, is the shame is really enveloped in yourself, but not in a healing way. And I love that visual of a snake eating his own skin, just so good. So anyways, I just love that. But I want to hear what you have to say. So go ahead.

David: Yeah, it's just so important because people think, well, David if you hurt me – Or let me take me out of it. Well, somebody sexually abused me, are you saying that they shouldn't feel any shame? And I'd say to that person, I'm not saying you shouldn't be furious. I'm not saying you

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shouldn't say eff you. I'm not saying you shouldn't block that person and cut that off your life. I'm not saying we shouldn't put that person in jail.

I'm not saying any of those things. I'm just saying if we want to heal them, meaning make it less likely that they harm people and make their lives better, they need something. So what do they need?

When a person is involved in a habit, I call that either an addiction or an addictive tendency. Tendency, meaning we wouldn't say it's a full scale addiction. Let's say I'm watching porn for two hours a day every day, I would call that an addiction. But let's say I look at it every so often, or I don't know. There may be people who periodically go to porn or anything other addictive substance.

In this case the pornography is like a substance like my pills, my cocaine or whatever, right? It's something that I'm using to change my state. I'm in one state, "Look what I've done, now I'll look at porn." Oh, it feels better all of a sudden, right?

Sara: Yeah.

David: I'm not trying to down myself, but you get the idea. I can do that with a drug, whatever. I can do that with coffee, "I'm so tired. Oh, hey, I can get a lot of work done." So I'm using something to change my state of consciousness, my state of experience, my feeling state. When a person does that, there is an intelligence in the background. The intelligence is not, "This is a good idea, keep putting needles in your arm. Keep looking at porn." That's not the intelligence.

The intelligence is that the state I'm accessing when I'm watching that porn, I'm not a porn watcher, but I'll say that. I'm using myself as an example, right?

Sara: Yeah.

David: The state I access is different from my normal state. My normal state has difficulties in it and absences. Absences of feeling and ways of living.

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When I'm watching the porn, I'm in a state. And that state I need more of. Not through the porn, with the cocaine and needles and heroin, it's a state I need more of. Not access that way, access that way is dangerous.

Here's the radical thing, Sara, if a person was here saying I want to work on my porn watching, I would love to back off of that but I still get wrapped up in it. How could you help me? I would say, let's take a moment, [inaudible] pornography in front of you, I want you to tell me the last time you looked at porn. Yeah, that was three nights ago. Can you remember that night? Yeah. How were you feeling beforehand? Well, I don't know. I was not sure what to do.

Take a little more time and tell me about what you were feeling beforehand. I was a little bit bored. What's it like to be bored? I'm taking my time with that person, Sara, because I want to know a lot about what's happening with that person. What's it like to be bored? And then let's say they put their head on their hand, people can't see that, I'm like I don't know and my head is sinking down. That looks a little bit more depressed than bored.

Can you see what I'm doing? My head's going downward, I'm kind of like – And if your head went all the way down, my head would be on the ground. I'd be like, oh, life sucks. Oh, it's not just boredom, it's life sucks. That's not such a yummy experience.

Sara: Yeah.

David: Okay, now, remember you started watching that porn? Yeah. And you were watching it for a few minutes? Yeah. What's going on inside of you? Well, I like looking at this and I like looking. Okay, okay, what's it feel like inside of you? Well, I've been turned on. What's it like to be turned on? Again, people usually don't ask that. I know what it's like to be turned on, but your turn on and my turn on and Joe's and Sue's are going to be varied. What's it like?

And now let's imagine the person, people do this. Let's imagine, Sara, they kind of watch me and my head is down a little bit like in that bored state.

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Well, it's like – Now look, my head just went up, my eyes got bright. Did you hear my voice? It changed, I have some excitement.

Sara: Yeah.

David: This wide-eyed, head-up excitement, I don't have that in life. And I don't have it almost anywhere, except for porn. Now, once I know I'm moving from a down, life sucks to an excited wide-eyed state, now I can make a deep investigation of how to help that person. How come your life doesn't have more excitement in it? Where would it? If you were to live a more exciting life, not by watching porn, what would you do? Well, I'd leave this stupid freaking job. Oh, maybe you can't do that right now.

Well, I would certainly tell the people in my life who bring me down I'm not making so much space for you because whatever I get around you I feel down and I'm not excited to see you. Oh, you would change your relationships and your job and what else?

So now I'm assuming the state that they're getting in, they need a dose of. The state is medicine, not the porn. The state is medicine and if I'm going to help them leave pornography as the thing they're using, I'm going to have to know about that and help them create a life that has those qualities in them.

What are you thinking? That's a lot to explain.

Sara: No, it's so great. I love it. It's this idea that the desire for porn, it just has wisdom in it. It has wisdom for us. And this state that we want to get to so bad, our brain, it's not just broken. It's doing what it thinks is best to get us these states that we enjoy as humans.

David: That's right.

Sara: And so, anyways, I just love that. Porn, we don't have to hate that desire for it. And we talk a lot about decreasing sexual shame and realizing and recognizing the gift of your sexuality, right? But this is like a whole other level of recognizing the gift of, I don't even know how I'd say this. I

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need to think on it a little bit more. But recognizing this gift of this part of you that is pushing you to find this state in life that's exciting and full of life.

David: Yes. And I love that you're talking about the shame around sexuality at all. Because if I have no way of getting to know my sexual desires, imaginations, fantasies, experiences, if I have no way because I grew up in a culture that said we shouldn't even talk about that, I have nobody to talk to. I've never talked to anybody.

For many people that's true as they're young. It's like, don't do these things, right? It's like, okay. Sara, don't get pregnant and don't let boys do this. And David, don't get anybody pregnant or whatever. Well that's not a very profound conversation, it may be important.

Sara: Yeah.

David: But then I know nothing about that. So then if that part, if that state, let's call that state a state of knowing about my self-awareness about my own sexuality, if that state is not known, I know myself and that education is not happening, where am I going to go to get educated? And if I'm not allowed to talk to people and say, can we talk about it? What's your sexual experience, David? Did you ever do this? Did you ever not get hard in a relationship? And what did that feel like?

If men can't talk to each other, for instance, men because I've been in men's groups and we've talked about things like that, what's going to happen? Then I'm going to look for places that are going to be more hidden because I can't be out. So I'm going to look for places, I'll call it in the dark, in the shadows. Porn is a good place in the shadows, and then I'm going to explore my own desires and needs and what turns me on. But it's not going to be shown to me in the most educational way.

Sara: Yeah.

David: And I'm not going to be thinking, let's see, what can I learn from watching this thing versus this thing?

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Sara: Yeah.

David: I'm not thinking that, so the educational function is not powerful. And it's not done well, it's done unwell, right? So it's just going to flip me around from state to state unconsciously.

It's really interesting, a friend of mine is like a world known clinical supervisor for sex offenders and people bring him all over to teach about this. And I asked him, I said, what's it like, his name is Jerry Fjerkenstad. And I said, Jerry, what do you teach people if I didn't know anything about that? Because that's not my main audience for people I help. Some people work within that, but that's not like my life of decades of study. So he knows a lot. I said, "What would you tell people?"

He said two things. One, when people work with sex offenders, the therapists that he goes to help in all these different places, he said they're fooled right away. I said, what do you mean? He said those people say, I really did a bad thing. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. And they look like they have genuine remorse.

And he said, and they do have some remorse. They can really produce that. It's a manipulation, but also they can really feel it so they can bring it out. He said it leads to no change. The forgiveness, the I'm sorry, the remorse, I shouldn't have done this, it does nothing.

And he said and the therapists kind of go, oh yeah, they're really moved they really get it. He said nothing, because he has to go to court, this guy, Jerry, and say should that person come out of jail? So he's like, I'll tell you what I have to see.

He said, what I have to see is a person who's going to describe every moment to moment. I started watching this person six months ago and I started thinking about it. And it wasn't an accident that just happened and I lost control. And then I planned this, and I did this. Self-awareness that's incredibly heightened.

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And he said, and then there's the self-awareness around sexuality so that the person says this is what I need and this is what turns me on and this is what I like. And then they can actually say, what am I going to do about that? I'm too freaked out to have an adult relationship and say those things to people.

It's a self-awareness test. It's a little far afield with the sexual offenders, but the self-awareness about who one is and what one needs. So it's so outside the person.

Sara: Yeah.

David: In that way, Sara, the person who watches porn, they're culpable for what they're doing and the people get injured. And then the industry, culpable, right? People who are putting children in and all kinds of stuff, culpable, blunt. And I should say, the whole culture that says it's not okay to think about sexuality, also part of the story. Does that make sense?

If you're raising your kids like we'll never talk about sex, sex is a bad thing, sex is a bad thing. We'll never talk about it, we'll never talk about it. Then you shouldn't be surprised that someone has too many drinks when they first get free enough and do something because there's no education other than no.

Sara: Yes.

David: Enough alcohol, there goes mom's no.

Sara: Yeah. Right.

David: So in some way, you haven't prepared them that well by just saying we won't discuss this. This is a bad thing.

Sara: Yeah.

David: You know that probably as well as I do because you work in this area.

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Sara: Yeah, we see that a lot. But it sounds like what you're saying is the cure is just self-awareness, or at least maybe a big part of it. The more self-aware we are, the more change we can make, the more we can understand ourselves. Why are we so afraid of being self-aware and of diving into that?

David: Yeah, it's shame. I would describe that as shame because it's like this, let's say I masturbated and somebody looked at me and said, "Oh, that's disgusting. I can't believe you did that," or whatever they're going to do. Let's say I was an adolescent or something like that. Or I got punished or something. Inside of me that stays. This is bad. Something's wrong with you. You shouldn't want to do that.

And then my body kind of goes yum, yum, yum. I don't know what these organs are. I'm 14 and I don't even know what to do with myself. I think I'll touch myself, that makes me fall asleep. Whatever, right? That would be a thing that could happen.

Sara: Totally.

David: But then I have an impulse to do something. It goes forward and someone says you better not do that, that's really bad. And that conflict is heavy. And the thing that says that's bad is not only my mother and father who saw something, but their religious institution and their values about things that come from generations of hard brick walls, whether that's a temple or a church or a mosque or a new age yoga studio, right?

Whatever that is, you shouldn't do that. You should hold that in. Don't let yourself have orgasms. Whatever that is is so strong, Sara, it can stop a speeding train. It can stop the life force in me. It's incredible. And to break the rules of that, "No, you better not do it, that's something wrong with you," is so painful. And then because I can't stop myself totally, I break the rule. And then severe inner sanction comes, inner punishment. I'm so bad, I did it again. I'm so bad. I'm so screwed up, I can't believe I did that. Right?

So that pattern goes on in a huge inner system. It looks like inner criticism and it looks like internalized oppression, a culture that says this is a bad

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kind of person. Those forces can stop people from growing for generations, not just for years.

Sara: Yes. Yeah. Which I just want to say, and I haven't talked about this before, but just this happening for generations. So those of you who are listening to this and doing this deep, heavy work at times and liberating work and just like going into it, you're not just healing yourself, but you're healing generations and you're breaking chains. I know that's like a big word that we hear nowadays, but you are. Yeah.

David: Yeah, the things that are against us. I once worked with a woman, she was in her 60s and she used to come to my office regularly. And she'd never asked to use the bathroom. And I said, do you ever have to pee when you're here? Because she was drinking water. And she said, listen, watch this answer. Listen, people listening. No. That means yes, at least sometimes a little bit. Not like if you say no. Can you follow? That's a person who is like –

I said, how about now? Do you have any impulse? Oh, I can wait. That means it would be nice to be a little bit relieved in my bladder. But I don't have to. Can you hear, I can wait? That means one part of her would say, can I take a minute and use the bathroom and come back? However, she would say that, right? One part would go pee and relieve the bladder.

Another part says waiting is the right thing to do, you should wait. Now, the waiting could be that what we're talking about is so interesting I wouldn't want to lose a moment. But for many people, it's not only that. For many women it would be interrupting a male and taking care of their own needs, as opposed to being available and being nice and being supportive of another person, especially a male person.

Sara: Yeah.

David: Many women have learned that. So in that case, the thing against her is I should just sit here and be open and caring and listening and value your time and respect you, regardless of my own need, my own body. And somebody would say that's crazy, just tell her you can get up and pee

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anytime. But you see, that conditioning, you should be available, don't take care of your own needs, that could have gone on, Sara, for generations of cultural and gender conditioning.

It looks like a simple thing, but breaking that rule could be as hard as breaking huge rules. As hard as somebody else saying, this is it, I'm leaving this relationship unless you treat me this way. That could be really hard for someone because they were not taught that. So breaking through those boundaries because they're caked on, like the brick walls, cement walls of a building, of a theology.

Those things are so strong, it takes a lot of support or years or people around you in solidarity who kind of say, this is not okay, let me help. Let's get together in a group and support each other to not live so oppressed.

Sara: Yeah, thank you for saying that because I'm thinking about how last night I was thinking to myself, what is wrong with me? Some stuff happened that was more intense in my life recently. But the stuff that was really hard that I haven't been able to really come out of and feel good about is just simple boundaries that I'm trying to set with people. Simple boundaries.

And so I'm like, what is wrong with me that I can do these really difficult, more intense things in my life, but a simple boundary is causing me so much anguish? And so I love, I love that you are saying that. That these things that have maybe been conditioned in us forever can be just as hard to break as maybe some of those big things, and how important it is just to have that perspective.

David: Boundary making is almost always shamed very, very early and goes in very deep. A boundary, if I'm a young person, I'm thinking of a young person because that's when these conditionings happen. And then somebody has more power than me, I'm not saying they're trying to abuse it. Somebody is more powerful than me and I look up to them and I need them.

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So if that person does something that I'm uncomfortable with, I might not be free to say, "Mom, that doesn't feel so good." I might not even know what's happening. Not just talking about the egregious sexual abuse, maybe my mom says, "David, you need a hug," and maybe I don't want to be hugged. Maybe my grandma wants to give me a smoochy kiss and I don't want that kiss.

I'm not saying that it's like a huge thing. Or maybe somebody puts their arm around me, but their arm squeezes a little bit more and it's a little uncomfortable on my shoulder for that to happen.

So I'm saying that's the minor part or not. I'd say it's a minor part. But the big part is, how come I don't say, could you please take your arm off me? Grandma, I don't really, like the wet kisses aren't my thing. Or why not do that?

Well, I've been trained, again, I'm using myself as an example. I was trained in a certain way. Let's say I was trained don't hurt people's feelings. Let's say I told somebody, sometimes somebody puts their arm around me and it hurts. They don't mean it, it's not that bad. They're a good person.

So now I kind of go, okay. So now I go to the person that puts their arm around me and it's a little bit tight and uncomfortable. And I think I should really be understanding. Why aren't I more understanding? How come I'm so sensitive? I should be open, they're a good hearted person. I'm no longer thinking, ow, this is uncomfortable. I'm trying to figure out what's wrong with me.

So then later in life I could go to set a simple boundary, but inside of me is not like, oh, that hurts a little bit, excuse me. The natural reaction would be, oh, ah, wait a second. That would happen naturally out of a system. An animal would do that, a human would do that if they weren't conditioned.

Sara: Yeah.

David: And conditioned means a shame around saying something. Shame means I think of what's wrong with me and what I should be doing, as

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opposed to my natural reactions. That simple boundary is small, but the thing that locks it in that makes it impermissible, that could be enormous. It could be enormous.

So the thing itself could be very small. Can I take a little break? I don't have more time for this. But the thing that holds you from doing that could be very, very powerful.

Sara: So good. Oh, that's so good. Thank you because there's the layers of this too, right? Oh, I shouldn't feel shame. Like I should get rid of the shame, right? And then you shame yourself for feeling shame. And there's just so many layers of this. And I can hear our listeners. Anyways.

David: Yeah, around boundaries people need a couple of things. One, if a person says I have a boundary with whatever it is, telling people I can't meet them at a certain time, let's say. Like Sara says, can you have lunch with me? And I say, yeah, yeah, okay. I just described the person who doesn't really want to or it's not right to or I have something else to do. Yeah, yeah, okay, let's do it, Sara. That's not a yes, right? That's a no, but I'm not allowed to say, free to say this is not going to really work for me. So this person needs a container where they can get in touch with their natural organic reaction, unshamed.

That means, David, let's imagine you were really free and Sara says, "Can we have lunch together today?" By the way, I'm using examples, everyone, that are not real. She hasn't asked me to have lunch with her. So then I would say, what's it like for you? Well, I feel confused. I know. What happens, I'm going to make believe I'm Sarah, David. Okay. Let's have lunch with me. What happens in your body? My tummy gets a little tight and I hold my breath a little bit. I'm exaggerating now. And tightening.

Then I'd say can you stay with your body, the somatic experience, tighten it a little bit more. Support that tightening and that not breathing. And now I hope my breath and I tighten, and I feel like a wall. All of my whole body gets tight and I feel like I'm immovable. I'm not breathing, my stomach is tight, my chest is tight, I'm immovable.

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Oh, if someone asks you to do something you don't want to do, you become a brick wall. Well, I shouldn't become a brick wall. I know, that's shame. That brick wall, you need more brick walls. Well now I'm in touch with myself. The shame would lead me on, what should I do? It's going to hurt her feelings, whatever. I'm going to go into a whole thing.

But in all of that I lose touch with my body's natural organic response. I need that brick wall for a little thing like a lunch. I need it because I'm used to ignoring my own needs. And what I need right now is really important to me. I really need to be firm. Not with you, inside myself.

Sara: Yeah.

David: With you if you were doing something really violating.

Sara: Yeah, I love that, what you're saying, being really firm inside of yourself. And anything else that maybe you missed or that you want to say to the audience today?

David: I mean, I always have more things to say, as you can tell. I have a lot to say on that level. People should check out my work. There's so many ways of doing that. You can Google my name, which is David Bedrick, B-E-D-R-I-C-K, like bedrock only with a Rick. People can Google my name and YouTube and watch hours of videos. I have a TV show called Unsahmed TV Live where we work with people.

Sara: Yeah, good.

David: There's like 10 episodes, you can watch me do what I do. And those are also no cost. I'm on Instagram and I post reels and videos and stuff regularly there if people just want no cost introductions. More than introductions, there's a lot of teaching. You can also look me up on Amazon, I've written three books, they're like \$10 or something. It's not a big investment.

The last one is called You Can't Judge A Body By Its Cover and it's all about body shame, sexism, and pharma and there's 17 women's stories

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that I work with and I tell their stories and provide a transcript that they let me do as part of a research project. So that's really good. And people can contact me on the website, they can see all kinds of programs that I have if they want to invest more energy and focus than that. But there's a lot available without any cost.

I just want to say that so I'm not only like, how do I make more money doing these things? I love making more money. But there's thoughts of, I assume, more shame about that. But that's just fine and my programs are really good and affordable.

But there's lots of ways of accessing hundreds of hours of stuff. On Psychology Today I have like 90 essays written.

Sara: Nice.

David: So those are all available without cost. So if people look up my name in Psychology Today, you get a whole stack of articles on things.

Sara: So good. And I love your Unshamed TV, too, that's on Instagram. I've watched some of those. They're really good. Yeah, so good. Thank you so much for coming on today. Love your work. Thank you so much.

All right, you guys. Have a great week. We'll 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 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, and it is totally free.