

270. The Impact of Fact vs. Story in 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 270.

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.

Let's talk about today's topic, which is fact versus thought, or fact versus story. It's how we're talking about it here.

So this topic, fact versus story, it's so, oh my gosh, so important and life-changing if you let it be. It can affect every single area of your life. So everything that happens, everything that happens in life, there are facts, and then there's a story, your story about it.

So, for example, 2020, the year is 2020. Fact, 2020. Fact, COVID. COVID has been on the earth in 2020. Okay? The fact about COVID is that it's a virus. Maybe facts that you could say about COVID is that one of your state leaders told you to stay home. Maybe a fact is your classes are online or your kids' classes are online. Hey, those are the facts. And then you have a story about those facts. The story might be, this is the worst year ever. Everything is harder. Now I can't have fun. Now I can't go on dates.

Some of our stories are even, it's the end of the world, and we're all, you know, it's just a matter of time before we all die. Right? There's fact. The fact is the virus. You could put fact, number of people who have died. Put fact, number of people who have had it. Right?

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But even that, do you see how even that gets a little bit messy? Because we don't necessarily always have the facts on those numbers, right? The numbers have changed just depending on who's talking about it. So sometimes even the numbers are a story if it's not fact. So we want to get as factual as possible. Fact, COVID's a virus, encouraged to stay home, and you have a story about that.

But what's really important about this fact versus story is that the story doesn't equal the fact. Okay? So, there being a virus, you being encouraged to stay home, does not equal, it's the worst year ever, everything is harder, now I can't have fun, now I can't date. Those just aren't true. Those are stories you have.

You can still date even if you're encouraged to stay home. It might have to be online through a camera. Everything is harder. That's a story. That's not a fact. The fact is there's a virus and you're encouraged to stay home, and whatever else you would put in the fact. Everything is harder is a way that you're choosing to think about that.

Okay, so other examples, relationships. If we talk about relationships, maybe the fact is someone said, "I don't want to go out with you." Now that's a fact.

We can prove and record what they say and prove that they said, "I don't want to go out with you." Your story about that is what's important. Your story might be, right, you might have a story about you. I'm a disappointment. Why can't I find someone to date? There's something wrong with me. I'm not good enough.

And then you probably have a story about this person, right? They don't understand. What's wrong with them for saying that? Why are they so picky? But that story that you have is not true. It's not the fact. The fact is someone said, I don't want to go out with you. You might be making that mean, I'm a disappointment. There's something wrong with me. I'm not good enough.

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So many of us, this is so important. So many of us are not used to questioning our stories, are not used to questioning our thoughts. And we just believe them. And so someone says, I don't want to go out with you and you think, I'm not good enough. I'm a disappointment. And you just believe it. Even though it's not a fact, it's something that you're thinking to yourself.

So much of this process, this coaching work and the process of overcoming pornography is this skill where we learn to stop and think about our thoughts and not believe everything you think.

And so, of course, we're going to relate this to pornography. Let's talk about some of the facts of pornography. Maybe a fact is that you've viewed for 30 years. Period. That's the fact. I've viewed for 30 years. And then you have a story about that. What's your story? Maybe I've viewed forever. I've just viewed pornography forever. I'll never be able to quit.

First off, do you recognize that story is not true to the fact? I've viewed forever is not, I've viewed for 30 years. I guarantee you, you haven't viewed forever. It's just your story, your dramatic story about it. And I'll never be able to quit. That's also a story that you're choosing to think about the fact that you've viewed for 30 years. There are people who have viewed for 30 years and have been able to quit. Absolutely. So I'll never be able to quit is a story that you have about that fact. Make sure to question that story.

Maybe another fact is you're just thinking like, hey, I viewed porn yesterday. Fact, I viewed porn. What's your story about that? Your story might be I'm not good enough. I'm not worthy. There's something wrong with me. Do you see how that story is just a dramatization of the fact? I'm not good enough. I'm not worthy. There's something wrong with me.

Here's the thing, not everyone who views porn thinks that stuff. Not everyone who views porn thinks they're not good enough, thinks they're not worthy, thinks there's something wrong with me. Right? A lot of people view

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porn and are like, there's nothing wrong with this. Which is fine. You can totally think it that way.

And I just have to say, too, I've been running some Facebook ads, and I will just tell you, there are tons of people who you talk about stopping viewing pornography, and they get all up in arms like, "What's wrong with you? Why would you say that? Why do I need to stop? Stop telling me there's something wrong with me." I'm like, that's not what I'm saying at all. If you listen to my content, if you listen to my podcast, you know that's not my message one bit.

But my point is that not everyone who views pornography thinks I'm not worthy, thinks that there's something wrong with me, thinks I'm not good enough. That's a story that you're making up in your head. There are even people who are viewing porn and want to stop viewing porn, who do not have the story playing in the background, I'm not good enough, I'm not worthy, there's something wrong with me. Right, you can believe that porn is bad without making it mean that you are bad. The story, I am bad, I am bad, I'm not worthy, I'm not good enough. That's really, really detrimental.

Another fact might be that you said that you wouldn't, and you did. Maybe we can prove it. Maybe you wrote down somewhere, I'm not going to view porn again. And then two weeks later, or the next day, you did. Your story about that is I never follow through with myself.

Do you see how these are different? You said you wouldn't, and you did, period. That's the fact. That's it. Your story is, oh, I never follow through with myself. And that's probably not even true. There are probably a lot of things that you follow through with yourself. You probably go to work when you say you're going to go to work. You probably meet with friends when you say you're going to meet with them or get stuff done for your boss. There are probably other things that you follow through with yourself. You probably shower. Probably go to sleep.

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You probably follow through with yourself a lot, but you're making that one fact that you said you wouldn't, and then you did, mean this big generalization about you. And I see my clients do this a lot where they take one fact and they make it mean something about them in every single area of their life. And I want you to notice that and be careful for that.

Another fact when it comes to pornography might be fact, I'm feeling an urge. And the story about that might be, I need this to go away. This sucks. I hate this feeling. Oh no, I'm feeling an urge. This is a big deal. This urge is a problem. Some of you have this story going on, I'm sinning because I'm feeling an urge to view porn, but the only fact here is we felt an urge. Period. And you don't need to make it mean all these things that you might be making it mean.

Maybe it's not a big deal. Maybe it's not a problem to feel an urge. Maybe feeling an urge is not a sin. Maybe it's a normal part of life to feel sexual urges and it's not a big deal. Right? Your story makes it much bigger than it needs to be.

And this is so important because our facts, the facts in life do not cause emotions. Your stories and your thoughts do. All right, I'm going to repeat that again is facts do not cause emotions. Stories and thoughts do. So you don't feel bad because you're feeling an urge. You feel bad because you're thinking, I shouldn't be feeling an urge. This is a problem. This is a big deal.

You're not scared because you're feeling an urge, you're feeling scared because you're like, this sucks. I'm scared. I hate this. This is a big deal. I can't do this. I need this to go away. You're not angry because someone said, "I don't want to go out with you." You're angry because of the story about that. You're angry because you're thinking they should. What's wrong with them? You don't feel bad because someone said, "I don't want to go out with you." You feel bad because of your story about that. I'm not good enough. I'm a disappointment. There's something wrong with my nose or whatever.

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You don't feel shame because you viewed porn. You feel shame because you're thinking, there's something wrong with me. You don't feel hopeless because you've viewed pornography for 30 years. You feel hopeless because you're thinking, I've viewed forever, and I'll never be able to quit. Okay, so your emotions are not caused by the facts. They're caused by the story and the thoughts.

And your actions are driven by those emotions that you feel. So the results in your life, what you have in your life is from your stories, not from your facts. And I'm going to say that again. The results in your life are not from the facts of your life. The results that you have in your life are because of your stories.

And then pornography, of course, right? Whether or not you are able to quit porn has nothing to do with the facts. Has nothing to do with how long you've viewed. It has nothing to do with what kind of porn you view. And it has everything to do with the story behind the porn usage. If your story is I'm never going to be able to quit, then that's going to become your reality. If you're thinking I'm never going to be able to quit, you will not be able to quit.

If your story is it's too hard and miserable and painful, then it's going to be hard and miserable and painful to quit porn. If your story is, I just don't follow through with myself, that's why I can't quit because I'm not, I just don't stay committed with myself, then that is what is going to become your reality. It's your story about yourself and your story about the facts of the pornography that determine what your results are.

And the really great news here is that you get to choose how you think about the facts. That's a choice. And that doesn't mean you want to feel good all the time either. Okay? So if the fact is Grandma died, you probably don't want to feel good about that. You probably don't want to feel a lot of positive emotion around that. You probably want to be sad.

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Maybe some of you want to be sad about the facts about COVID. Maybe some of you want to be sad about the facts around pornography, and that's fine. But I just want you to notice and take your power back. Take the power back. You have determined the results in your life because of your story about it. You can change that story any time you want to.

People do this work, this story work on all areas of their lives all the time. It's so powerful. One that I'm specifically thinking of is money. Your story about money will determine the kind of money that you make and bring in the future.

So maybe think about someone in your life, or maybe you that you know where the story around money is very scarce and there's never enough and it's hard to make, right? Money doesn't grow on trees. It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of time to make money. The people who believe that and have that story, that's their reality, and money is hard, and money, there never is enough.

If you think about people who are really successful in business or entrepreneurship, they don't think that about money at all. They don't think they have to work harder to make more money. They think that there's always enough. They make investments from a place of abundance and gratitude instead of a place of like, oh no, hopefully this is enough. Okay, so the story that you tell yourself about the facts matters. And you get to choose how you think and you get to choose your story. You can change your story any time that you want to.

So remember the story is not truth. And so specifically with pornography, what do you want to make your porn habit or your porn usage mean? Some of you make it mean that you're addicted. Some of you make it mean that there's nothing wrong. Some of you make it mean that there's lots of wrong. No matter what the facts are with your porn usage, however long it's been, what kind of porn you view, how old you are, you can choose to have a different story.

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Here's some of the options that I would offer to you. Okay, I'm an amazing person for wanting to quit. The fact that I want to quit is really honorable. I'm going to be able to help so many people because of this. This is making me stronger. Okay, porn makes me weak as a story. Instead, you can believe this porn habit is making me strong. There are so many reasons it's making you strong. And if that's your new story is that this is going to strengthen me, then it will do that.

You can learn so much about yourself. You can learn so much about your emotions. You can learn so much about having a hold on your emotional life through this habit. You can learn so much about accomplishing hard things through this. Absolutely. This is making you stronger.

Maybe you have a story about your age. I'll have clients come to me and say, "Yeah, but I've been struggling with this since I was 11 and I'm 29," or whatever, right? You can make that mean anything you want. You be like, "I'm only 29. I have so much time left." Even if you're 50, I'm only 50. I still have 50 years or 40 years, or whatever it is you want to believe, right? It doesn't matter how old you are. You still have a lot of time left. Of course, you can quit this. Your age means nothing, nothing. You're just choosing to believe the story that it does.

You can choose to believe there's nothing wrong with me, right? Porn is everywhere. So, of course, I'm in the habit of viewing porn. I didn't know better. I did the best I could with what I was going through, and now I have a little bit of a porn habit, and now I can quit. There's nothing wrong with me. Porn is everywhere, and there's a lot right with me because I'm trying to do what feels best to me.

Right, your new story can also be, I will do everything in my power to quit instead of, I can't do it. I'm not enough. Like flip that. I'm going to do everything that I can. I will never stop. And if I never stop trying, I'm going to figure it out. Now I'm not going to keep trying the same things over and over again, but when I find something new, I'm going to try that. And I'm going to try and try and try until I figure this out

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And I'm going to love myself as I'm figuring it out. I'm not going to wait to feel good about myself and to love myself until I quit. No, I'm going to love myself, choose to honor myself even in the midst of this habit. Okay, the story that you tell yourself matters. It matters so much less what you do and so much more what you think.

So I want you to journal on this. Here are some questions for you to journal on. What is the story of you? What are the facts of your life? Maybe specifically your porn habit, but you can just take this broad. What are the facts of your life, and what are you making those facts mean? And then ask yourself, what do I want to make it mean instead? You look at the two columns, you've got the column of your facts and the column of your story, and you recognize you cannot change the facts, but that story, you can choose to change that however you want to change it. All right, 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." 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.

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