

274. Physiology vs Morality: Reframing Your Urges and Shame



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 274, Physiology versus Morality.

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 the podcast episode this week. So, physiology versus morality. Now, if you are someone who feels a lot of guilt and shame for having urges to view pornography, to even want pornography, this is going to be something that you really want to pay attention to.

I have a lot of clients who struggle with this for with feeling the guilt and the shame just for wanting porn. And there's one in specific that I'm thinking of right now where this guilt for wanting the porn always created more porn usage. And I'm going to talk a little bit more in this episode how that happens and why that happens. But this is a really important one for you, especially if you just feel guilty for just wanting pornography, okay?

So first off, here's what I'm going to say about that, is the reason that you want it isn't because something's wrong with you or because you're doing something wrong. The reason that you want it is because you're a human with a human body, and that human body has normal and important sex urges. If you grew up in a family that avoided talking about sex and sex was kind of taboo, you might have missed this, and that's okay, you're just going to learn it now. But sex urges and wanting sex and these urges to, you know, release these sex hormones, these are normal and important and a good thing.

So I want to talk about three things today. The first one is the difference between physiology and morality, okay? These are two different things. Physiology are normal body responses because you have a normal human body. Morality is what you choose to do with those responses. And morality,

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you get to decide for yourself what morality is. Different people have different ideas on what morality is.

Okay, so for example, if we take hunger, being hungry is a physiological response. It's not good, it's not bad, it's just there. Period. Hungry. Morality is what you choose to do with that hunger, right? You have choices. You can go make a sandwich or you can steal food from your roommate's shelf on the fridge. Or you can go and steal food from the grocery store. Morality is what you decide to do with that physiological response. For many of you, you'd say it's immoral to go and steal food. The hunger isn't immoral, but the action of stealing food might be immoral. Remember, hunger doesn't mean that you're good or bad, and it's the exact same with sexual urges, okay? Physiology are your sexual urges. Morality is what you choose to do with it. You get to decide what that is.

This is really, really important to understand the difference between these two because of this step number two I want to talk about, which is that physiological symptoms are normal and nothing to be ashamed of. I want you to imagine if we shamed ourselves for wanting sugar. And some people do this. If you're on social media, there's, you know, big movements of food positivity and body positivity, and a lot of that starts with neutralizing food and not making food good or bad, sugar good or bad. So, some people do this. They shame themselves for wanting sugar and for craving sugar. What happens is it really is very detrimental to their health, to their mental health, causes eating disorders, and can cause a lot of binging, right?

If we shame ourselves to want sugar, what happens is it creates this deprivation, like this idea, "I want it, but I can't have it. And not only can I not have it, but there's something wrong with me for wanting it. What's wrong with you for wanting sugar?" From that place of deprivation and shame, what they do is secretly eat all of the Cadbury eggs and all of the donuts and all of the sugar. Go and hide and secretly eat all of it until they're sick. And this is the same with our sexual urges. When we shame

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ourselves for having sexual urges, it causes deprived, secret, bingeing behavior.

So instead, what we want to do is we want to try to look at these physiological responses as neutral. Okay? So I want you to imagine that you're at a grocery store and you see a candy bar in the aisle and you're thinking, "Hey, I want that. Like, that sounds really good." You don't make that mean, "Oh, what's wrong with you? You're so gross for wanting a candy bar." You're like, "Of course I do. Candy is delicious. But I'm not going to have that right now."

Or do you ever have urges? Like, whenever I stay up past 11, I always want to go get Arby's. Have urges to go get Arby's, right? What if you wanted Arby's and you're like, "Ew, what's wrong with you for wanting Arby's? So awful. You're such a terrible person for wanting Arby's in the middle of the night." Right? If you did that, that would just cause deprivation and shame and lead to you going and getting Arby's and eating it secretly, probably, right? Instead you're like, "Yeah, but I'm not going to get it because I don't think I'll feel very good. It's not really lining up with the values that I have in my life to eat healthy."

So I'm just not going to have it. And of course, I want it and that's okay, but I'm not going to have it. Okay, so we want to do the same with urges for pornography. Right, I want that. I want to continue exploring that and that's okay and I'm not going to. Instead of, "What's wrong with you? This is terrible."

I once heard Jennifer Finlayson-Fife, she's awesome, and I'm going to talk about her a little bit more later in this podcast. She's an LDS sex therapist. You definitely need to go look her up if you haven't yet. But she once said that, you know, something along the lines, I hope I'm not misquoting her. Um, but she said something along the lines of like, "expecting our kids to not want to view pornography is like putting kids in a candy store and

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expecting them to not want to eat the candy." And that isn't a bad thing from this lens of morality versus physiology.

Sexuality is normal and healthy and an important part of human development. So expecting yourself to not want sexual things is just going to lead to deprivation and to wanting more sexual things and to shame and to hiding. All right? It is not a sin to have normal physiological responses.

And in LDS doctrine specifically, that's what we teach in our church, right? We are very, I mean maybe not culturally, but doctrinally, we are a sex-positive religion, right? We teach that sex is good and that it's important. We don't have callings where part of the calling is to stay abstinent. Sex is a good thing and it's part of being a child of God. And there's a difference between those physiological responses that are normal and healthy and morality. It is not immoral to have urges for pornography. I'll say that again, it is not immoral to have urges for pornography.

Now, number three, that doesn't mean that you have to view porn in order to be healthy sexually, right? It's not either have this healthy sexuality and view porn or quit pornography and repress your sexuality. You can decide to not want porn to be a part of your life and not suppress your sexuality.

So, for example, you can learn how to not want sugar and still be very healthy nutritionally. Right? In fact, most people would say quitting sugar will help you to be healthier nutritionally. And there are a lot of reasons that quitting pornography will help you be more healthy mentally, emotionally, and sexually.

There are a lot of reasons, and I don't know if you've noticed this about me, but I don't talk a ton about those, maybe I will more in the future, just because I find if we're not careful, it can become really shamey. "These are all the reasons that pornography is hurting your life," right? It can turn into a lot of shame. And my message is positive and I want to help you quit. I say, you might have heard me say this, I might have said this on another

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episode, you don't need to be told not to view porn, you need to be taught how to not view porn.

But there are a lot of reasons that quitting porn will really help you be a lot more healthy, mentally, emotionally, sexually. Some of those reasons are that pornography, it affects your self-image. It affects your body image and what you think about yourself and how you view yourself. It affects the way that you view others, absolutely. It affects relationship satisfaction and it normalizes this non-consensual behavior that can be really detrimental in our society.

Okay, so you can quit porn and still be healthy sexually. In fact, I would argue, and a lot of other people would argue, that quitting porn will help you be healthier sexually. And you can quit porn and not suppress your sexuality, all right? It's not, "quit porn, never have any sexual urges, suppress that until the time is right." We can quit porn and not suppress your sexuality.

A great resource for learning more about this and more about your sexuality is Jennifer Finlayson-Fife, who I mentioned earlier. She's an LDS sex therapist and she has a whole big blog post with tons of resources for young single adults and I'm going to have them put this in the show notes so that you guys can access this. But even if you just Google "Jennifer Finlayson-Fife resources for young single adults," you'll see a lot of stuff pop up, how singles can embrace both chastity and sexuality. I think I'm going to reach out to her to see if she can come be on the podcast sometime. If anyone knows her, tell her that I want her on my podcast.

All right, you guys, so that's it for today. Let's just do a quick recap. Number one, the difference between physiology and morality is so important. The difference is that physiology is normal body responses. Morality is what you choose to do with those responses. It is not immoral to have sexual urges and urges to view pornography.

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Number two, physiological symptoms are normal and nothing to be ashamed of, just like we want sugar. And number three, you can quit porn without repressing your sexuality. It's not either or.

And I see this over and over again with my clients, right? We look at what happened when they slipped up and they viewed porn and they didn't want to. The urge that they have for the pornography is just a fact. Okay, we just put that, we look at that, okay, that's a fact, that's what was happening. And what were you thinking and feeling about that urge? Every time that they say, "Well, I felt really bad about that urge," never ended up with a positive result. The way to get a positive result is to start thinking about it much more neutrally.

Last week, I just had a post on my Instagram about talking to yourself as if you are a sports commentator. So what that would look like is, "there she is, she felt lonely, and she had an urge to view pornography." Or, "there he is, he had a bad work review, and then he had an urge to go look at pornography because he felt bad about himself."

What it wouldn't look like is, "what's wrong with that person for having an urge? They're never going to make it, they're going to be a failure. Something's wrong with them, something's wrong with their brain for wanting this." No, it would be very neutral, like this is what is happening, period. No drama about it, okay? We have urges to view pornography. That's it. Period. No drama. There's no need for any drama about that because it doesn't mean anything. It doesn't mean anything good, it doesn't mean anything bad. It's just that's what's happening.

And if you've attended some of my masterclasses in the past where we've talked about how your brain works, you know, the fact that your brain wants pornography is just a sign that it's working correctly. You've trained yourself to want porn. It means your brain is working exactly how it should. Nothing's gone wrong here. It's just working how it's been trained to work.

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Now, because we know how we trained it, we can learn how to untrain it to not want pornography. All right, you guys, have a great 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.