

277. How to Handle Slip-Ups Without Shame



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 277, What to do when you slip up.

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 episode this week. I am so glad you're here. I say that every week, but I really am. I'm so glad you're here. I really want to address what to do when you slip up. Okay, this is so important because what you do after you slip up will determine whether or not you're able to quit for good. What you do after you slip up is the difference between burning out, just trying the exact same things and burning out, or making actual real progress towards your goal of quitting porn.

So, if you're someone that has said, "I've tried everything and I keep going back to it," I want you to stop, question it, and recognize that you're probably wrong. You have not tried everything. I guarantee, especially if you aren't a part of *Overcome Pornography for Good*, that the only things you've tried are willpower, accountability apps, or blockers on your internet that block the internet, and probably meeting with some leaders. Willpower, accountability apps, meeting with leaders, just trying really, really hard. Those things don't work long term.

And I really dive into the why, why these don't work long term on other podcasts and in my masterclass. But really quickly, if we're going to talk about those, so accountability apps, that's totally just a band-aid solution. Because all it does is it just blocks the porn so that you never have to see it, but I mean, first off, we can get around those apps really easily. I have clients who tell me that they in the past they've coded their way through these accountability apps. You can get around it.

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It's a great thing I think for kids and for families, but you know, once you're older and you can get past those, it's not a long-term solution. And because we can't run away from porn, it'll always, always, always be there. This might work for other substances. Maybe you can avoid alcohol, but porn is everywhere and sexual stimuli is everywhere.

So it doesn't work. Those accountability apps, they don't work. So if you're like, I've tried everything and all you've tried is an accountability app, sorry, you haven't tried everything and that hasn't worked, and that's okay.

Willpower. Remember, willpower doesn't work. We've talked about this a little bit in previous episodes, but I want to explain willpower to you with this example.

So I want you to imagine there's this wild tiger. And this wild tiger is creating havoc and you need to go take care of him. And so what you do is you go, you have two ways that you can handle this wild tiger, okay? First way that you can handle this wild tiger is by building a fence. So you build a fence around him. But this tiger is constantly tearing down the fence and jumping on it and scratching it and biting it. So every single day you have to go and rebuild the fence. Can you imagine how exhausting that would be? That is exactly what willpower is. Willpower is exhausting and it's constantly rebuilding that fence. It takes a lot of effort, it takes a lot of energy.

So that's one way that you can handle this tiger. The second way you can handle this tiger is you can go and you can train it and you can become its master. And then instead of the tiger always attacking you or creating havoc, it just kind of becomes your pet. It just hangs out with you and you've trained it. Right? So learning how to train the tiger, you're going to get scratched and bitten probably a little bit, but eventually you won't have to work so hard and it'll just kind of be here by you calmly.

That's a much better long-term solution than always trying to build up this fence around this tiger to keep this tiger in. So willpower is always building that fence. Retraining your brain, learning how to manage your urges and

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process your urges, retraining your mind, that is like taming this tiger, becoming this tiger's master. It's a much better long-term solution. So willpower doesn't work.

And then lastly, meeting with bishops or other leaders and listen, I love bishops, and I think they're so important. And I think it's important to meet with them and I think they are a great accountability partner and they're great for spiritual healing. But that's the thing, you guys, bishops are there to help you heal spiritually.

They're not trained and not taught to teach you how to train your brain out of a habit, and that's totally okay. They can give you spiritual guidance, they can be very helpful, absolutely, but they aren't trained to help you quit a porn habit any more than they're trained to help you quit overeating. Like I said, that's okay, and I love them. My dad's a YSA Bishop. I love Bishops.

So, if that's you, I've tried everything, and those are the things you've tried, just recognize that you haven't. And there's a better way. So, first things first, when you slip up, watch yourself, don't fall into this self-pity, "I've tried everything," discouragement trap. Okay, you haven't and that's the best news I could give you. The best news I could give you is you haven't tried everything, and we don't need to go into this self-pity place.

So, here is what to do when you slip up.

Number one, notice what comes up. Like, notice the emotion that comes to the surface after you slip up. Maybe it's shame. Maybe you're thinking, what's wrong with me? I'm so stupid. I'm a terrible human. I'm not worthy of help. I'm not good enough. Hey, just notice what comes up. Maybe it's self-pity, like we've talked about. Nothing works. Everything is against me. It's so and so's fault. Okay, just notice what comes up without jumping onto the bandwagon and believing all of it. Okay?

This is a mindfulness technique. When I was going through coach certification, what they called it is being the observer, learning how to become the observer of your mind. Instead of just believing everything your

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mind is telling you, just become the observer. So you're noticing the emotions that you're feeling and the thoughts you're having that are creating shame or self-pity without believing them and without jumping in with them and going down that rabbit hole.

I once used a mindfulness app, I don't remember what it's called, but they had a little training videos before you meditated. And one of them explained this concept like you're sitting on a hill watching a bunch of traffic go past. Okay, being the observer is like sitting on that hill and just watching the traffic for that day. Is it fast? Is it slow? Is there a traffic jam? Is there a crash? And you're just observing it. Okay? That's what we can do with our thoughts. We can just observe them, like we're sitting on a hill. It's not getting into the cars. Okay?

So you notice the thought that's like, what's wrong with me? You're not getting into it and believing it and just letting it drive you wherever it goes. No, you're just noticing it and you're seeing it come and go. And it probably comes back and you just keep watching it instead of jumping into it and believing it. That's step number one, is notice what comes up and just be the observer. You can notice what you're thinking without believing everything that you're thinking.

Number two, this is so important. Write down what happened. The two things specifically I want you to write down are number one, the triggers in the situation, and number two, your thoughts and justifications throughout the situation.

So the triggers, maybe you notice it was at a specific time that you usually struggle. I have clients and the first thing that we have to work on are these specific times. It's like every single morning they have urges to go view porn or every single night at 10 p.m. and they have these witching hours. Maybe that's you, maybe you have a specific time that you struggle. Maybe that was the trigger is it was just the time of the day.

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Maybe the trigger was it was a stressful day, like this message that I read, right? It's every time I'm stressed, I just always go back to porn. Write down the trigger, write down what was stressing you out. Maybe, this is really common for my clients too, is maybe you slept in and you were feeling really bad about yourself for sleeping in, and that triggered you to want to go view porn.

Maybe it was a social situation that triggered you and you were just thinking about it and feeling really awkward about it, and wanted to escape that feeling of awkwardness. Or maybe it was the middle of the night, like we talked about, maybe you were just tired. Maybe your trigger was that you were tired. So write down the trigger.

And number two, write down the thoughts and justification. So maybe you noticed, okay, so go back in your mind, what was I thinking before I viewed porn? Maybe you were thinking, I don't want this, go away, go away, go away. You were noticing a lot of resisting willpower thoughts. Maybe justifications like, I'll process this urge next time, or I'm too tired, or this is one I hear a lot too, I deserve this. I've had a long week and I deserve this. Or I did this awesome thing and I deserve this. So just go and write down and notice. And again, we're just observing.

So it's really important here for you not to get all judgy to yourself. So write down what happened. Go notice what happened without judging yourself. We're being curious and not judgmental. That is so important. Because right, what happens usually when we look at porn, what we want to do is we just want to not think about it and ignore it and push it away, not put any focus on it.

And what I'm inviting you to do is the exact opposite. Is to actually go there, think about what happened, think about what your mind was telling you and all the thoughts that you were having, and let yourself relive that moment before you looked at the porn again.

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And if you're really judgy towards yourself, if you're like, that was so stupid, why was I thinking that? That was so dumb. Like, I didn't even want it that bad, but I still looked at it. If you're judging yourself, it's going to be really painful. So I want to invite you to instead approach this from a place of curiosity.

And that goes into step number three. Because step number three is after we write down everything that happened, is we forgive. We forgive ourselves, we forgive the situation, and we move on. And you can even say that out loud or write it down, you know, "I forgive myself. It's okay. I love you. I've got you."

Forgiveness, I love this concept of forgiveness, especially when it comes to shame. So remember there's a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is I did something wrong. Shame is I am wrong. There's something wrong with me. Guilt can be super helpful, and I think it's, you know, a gift. But if guilt isn't forgiven, it turns into shame. Or if guilt isn't released, it turns into shame. All right?

So think about that, really think about that. If guilt isn't released, it turns into shame. If you look at porn and you feel guilty, you're like, ugh, that didn't really align with my values. That's not something that I want to be doing. You can notice that and then you can be like, you're right. Thank you, guilt. Thank you for showing me that. You're dismissed. You can go now. I forgive you.

Right? If you hold on to that and you're like, guilt, guilt, I shouldn't have done that. I shouldn't have done that. Why did I do that? That's when it turns into shame when it's not forgiven.

So step number three again, all these steps are so important, but step number three is so important, forgive. Otherwise, this guilt will turn into shame. So forgive yourself, forgive whoever contributed to the triggers, forgive the situation, forgive your brain, forgive the urge, forgive the

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thoughts that you were having that created the urge. Okay, forgive, forgive, forgive.

And then lastly, step number four is to decide what to do next time. One thing I want to say about this, the answer isn't run away. I want you to be careful when you're deciding what to do next time that it's not like, okay, well, next time I'm just going to avoid everything. I'm going to avoid this whole situation altogether. I'm going to run away. But if you want to quit porn for good, running away is not going to solve it. So the answer isn't run away.

So let me give you a few examples of some things that you might try to do next time. Maybe you try to process your urges better or try to process them in the first place instead of, go away, go away, go away, willpower. If you notice that's a thought that you're having, it's like, oh no, go away and you're feeling very afraid, try processing the urges. We talked about this in episode number four, all about stop fearing urges. If you're in the program, Overcome Pornography for Good, we have that whole module on this with all of those resources that you can go through and really dive into how to start processing your urges better.

Maybe you make a plan for how you're going to sit with that urge next time, especially if you're experiencing urges in the middle of the night or first thing when you wake up and it's like very specific times that you struggle with porn. Make a plan with how you're going to sit with them.

So, for example, sometimes with my clients, if they wake up in the middle of the night and they have these urges to view porn, the first thing they do is get up out of bed and go get a glass of water. And then from that place of getting up and getting a glass of water, they can sit with the urge and allow it to be there without being so groggy and so tired.

Maybe you decide there are some thoughts that need to change. For example, if you're thinking, I deserve this, I deserve this, as long as you

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think that and believe that, you will want to view porn. So really challenge that thought. I deserve this.

And this is where having a coach and these coaching calls that I do in my program come in really handy, where we can take these and we can look at them and we can really dive into them and work on changing them. Maybe you're noticing thoughts like, this is too hard and you're feeling really discouraged. Maybe you notice certain emotions come up, like you don't know what to do when you feel really anxious, upset, or stressed. You know, like I talked about this message before when you're feeling really stressed, you're not exactly sure how to handle that. Right, we can work through those certain things going on in your life.

But if you haven't done the work to see what is happening, what is causing you to view porn, it's going to be really hard to know what to do. That's why this process of looking at, okay, what were my triggers, what were my thoughts, forgiving it and then changing it, that's why that is so important. Because if we don't notice what we're doing in the first place, it's going to be like we're trying random things that aren't working.

Maybe we need to work through certain things going on in your life. Like, for example, maybe you have a friend or a sibling that's getting married and you're still single and you're thinking it's not fair and you're feeling lonely and you're feeling a little bit resentful. Those things are going to cause you to want to go and view pornography to run away from those emotions. Maybe you have a lot of stress around work, maybe you hate your job. Maybe you need some coaching on that or around your marriage. Maybe you're thinking I'm not good enough, my spouse doesn't like me enough.

During the pandemic, there were a lot of stressors that came up that, you know, caused a lot of urges to go look at pornography. If that's your go-to buffer, some stuff we need to work on there.

Because remember, the root of the pornography habit is everything else that's going on underneath the surface. It's the emotions that you're running

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away from. It's not feeling good enough. It's feeling scared, it's feeling shame. It's feeling unfulfilled. So the only way to solve a porn habit, the only way to solve it for good, is to learn to solve for all of those things going on underneath the surface.

And like I just said, we can't solve those things if we don't know what they are. That's why what you do after you look at porn is so important. Okay, you can choose to hide and to avoid it and to push it out of your mind and just be like, next time I'll be better, next time I'll be better. Or you can choose to learn from it. You can use it as a way to do better next time.

Remember Einstein, his definition of insanity, right? Remember it's doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. If you are doing the same things over and over again with your pornography habit and expecting different results, that's insane. In the nicest possible way, that's insane. We've got to try something different.

So use this opportunity, whenever you slip up, use it as an opportunity to go and gather more data, to gather more data with what's really going on, what you're thinking, what's happening in your life that is creating this pornography habit.

This is so important, you guys, that this is a whole complete milestone that I use in my program. I have five milestones and this is one of them, is learning and moving on and gathering data. My clients, I have them be consistent, very consistent with it for one month at a time, then two months at a time, then three months at a time, get all this data with what's going on. And then they send it to me and we coach on it and then we make actual real progress instead of just trying random things or trying willpower again or telling ourselves that we're not spiritual enough when in reality that will not fix a pornography habit, okay?

All right, again, here's a recap for you guys. What to do when you slip up. Number one, notice what's coming up and be the observer. Number two, write down what happened. So write down the triggers, write down the

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thoughts, write down the justifications that you had in your mind. And number three, forgive, forgive yourself, forgive the situation, forgive the urges. That way, the guilt doesn't turn into shame. And number four, make a game plan and decide what to do next time, discover what you need to work on, and work on it in order to do better next time.

All right, you guys, have a great week. We'll talk to you next week. 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.