

278. Using the Rules of Improv in Quitting Porn with Kat



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 278.

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.

Kat Jenkins: Hi, welcome to the podcast. I'm Kat Jenkins, a coach here in the program *Overcome Pornography for Good*. I'm really excited to be talking to you guys today. We're going to be talking about sort of how to use the rules of improv to overcome pornography.

So I got the idea for this podcast. I was watching a MasterClass, Amy Poehler's MasterClass. She gives the rules of improv, and she called it, "Prepare to be Unprepared." And I think that is sort of how life is, right? And that's kind of what she talked about. She suggested that these rules that she has used in improv could also be used in life for anyone for different reasons and in different places. We can apply these rules.

And I would agree that is true and that we can also, as I was listening to this, I was like, "These rules are all really great for what I do with my clients in overcoming pornography." And so I thought I would share these rules today and I want you to think about how you can apply these to your life in how you overcome pornography and what it looks like for you.

So in improv, just like in life, it's kind of all made up as you're going along, right? Like you don't really know what's going to happen next. You don't know what that person in the scene is going to bring. I tell my clients this all the time, like, just make it up. You made up the stories in your head right now. So let's just make up better stories. Let's just make up a better way of doing this. We're all just making it up as we go. So let's just make up the best stories that we can.

And so I think that's really helpful too, as you think about how to apply these rules. Like, we're just making up how we feel about ourselves and the

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stories that we tell about who we are and about our past and about our future and about all these things. So let's just work on using these rules to make up the best stories that we can. So I really think these are going to help you as you work through your journey in overcoming pornography and how that's going to look for you.

So, I'm going to share and I'm going to talk about each rule briefly. There's nine, so this is a little longer than maybe some of the podcasts I've done in the past. But just like improv, the scenes in our life are playing out in real-time and you have the opportunity to decide how and when to use these rules for yourself. So not every rule might apply to every situation. It's just using the ones that are going to work for you. So my challenge for you today is to take at least one rule that I share and think about how you're going to apply it in your work in overcoming pornography.

So, I'm going to share some examples because obviously there's examples of how to use this in improv and I'm going to share examples of how that might look and how you might apply this rule in overcoming pornography. Again, these are just examples, so please, you know you best. So apply these rules to yourself and your life as you best see fit because obviously the examples I give might not be relevant to you, but I want you to work to find what will be relevant to you, what will be helpful for you in this. So if you can think of a better way to apply these, great. Do it, right? Don't take just my examples. But what I can promise you is that they can be applied. All of these rules can be applied and they will be helpful if you use them. So again, use them as you best see fit in your life.

Okay, so let's talk a little bit about, you probably all know what improv is, but right? It's this live performance in which the actors make up the scenes, like we talked about. So if we're just making it up, let's make up the best story possible. So the dialogue, the characters, on the spot, these are all changing and shifting and growing as they play out these scenes. There's no script, right? They each play off each other and they add to the story as they go.

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So let's talk about how this relates to what we're doing here, to overcoming pornography. We'll get into it more as we go over each rule, but to some extent, isn't that what we're all doing, right? We kind of talked about this. We're all making this up. We don't know what's going to happen. We don't know what players are going to come into the scene. We don't know exactly how it's going to happen.

And maybe for you, in overcoming pornography, it feels like the same scene. You're acting out the same scene all the time with pornography, like it's happening at the same time in the same place. So part of these rules is maybe going to help us to incorporate something new into the scene so that we can change the outcome. So we're not always getting the same outcomes.

Okay, let's start with number one. So these are some of the rules. So the first rule is, keep saying yes. So this is a really important rule for improv because if you say no, you stop the scene, and then there's nowhere to go. So if someone comes into the scene and says, "Doctor, can you help this patient?" and you say, "I'm not a doctor, I don't know how to do that," then you've stopped the scene, right? You've created this stopping place.

It's the same with an urge, right? If we say, "No, I'm not looking at this, I'm not doing this." It's like the urge enters the scene and says, "Here I am, look at me." And we say, "nope, go away." Or we pretend that it's not there or we try to ignore it or we just lean in and keep creating the same scene like I was just talking about, right?

So this is a really good rule where we can start to build trust with ourselves, okay? So we have to say yes, so the other players in the scene know where to go. So we've been playing out and maybe acting the exact same scene with pornography, with viewing. It always seems to end up in the same place. And so we want to change that scene. We want a different scene to play out.

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So we have to start trusting ourselves to show up for this scene in a particular way. So we want to start saying yes. We want to start saying yes to the goals that we've created. We want to start saying yes to maybe things in the program that we've learned or things in the podcast that we've learned. So we want to start saying yes to different things.

We might have been saying yes to things in the scene, right? Like, yes to porn, yes to viewing, but we want to start saying yes to other things. So keep saying yes. Stop saying no or stop avoiding because we talk about that a lot in the program and in the podcast that we want to make sure that we're leaning into the things that we're feeling. So keep saying yes, okay?

Again, this is a beautiful place to really build trust with ourselves because no one wants to do improv with someone who keeps saying no and stops the scene. And so I want you to think about how you've been stopping the scene from playing out in a really beautiful way in your life, and start saying yes to the things that are going to further your script and further where you're going. So, first rule, keep saying yes, okay?

Number two, be a good listener. In improv, being a good listener is paramount. We have to know what's going on in the scene. If we're not listening to what the other people are offering us, if we were up on that stage, we wouldn't know where to go. So you have to be a good listener.

Amy shares that being a good listener allows people to be seen and heard. And that's what we all desire. We want to be seen and heard. And so what greater way? Again, we were talking just about how rule number one, keep saying yes, builds trust. Being a good listener for ourselves also builds a whole lot of trust in what we're doing. So listening to what we need, listening to what's going on inside of us.

So this might mean listening to the things that you've been ignoring within yourself for a long time, which is sometimes why we end up viewing porn, right? We stop listening to what's going on inside of us. We stop listening to the feelings, we shut those things down. And so I want us to start being a

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good listener. And this is a skill. This is a skill that we can learn. It's not like, "Oh shoot, I've never done that, so I can't do that." It's okay, we're just going to practice this. Practice being a good listener. Listen for the things that you've been ignoring and start building trust with yourself that like, I hear you.

Because, like Amy says, being a good listener means we hear and we see and we're heard, and that's what we are sort of yearning for and longing for with ourselves. And we have probably been ignoring that within ourselves. We've not been seeing or hearing ourselves. So start being a good listener. Start listening to what's going on inside of you, the things that you've been ignoring, okay? Number two, be a good listener.

Number three is, she suggests that we need to find your team. Who can you be bonded with in this journey of overcoming pornography? That's your team. Those people that you're bonded with. They might not be in your life for long. Maybe there's these people in this program as you're overcoming and they're only here for a year or two, or maybe they're lifelong friends that come from this. It doesn't matter.

Finding your team means who can I bond with in this journey right now? We typically do things better together. So having a team is really important. And especially if you can look back and say, "Hey, I've been trying to do this all on my own and it hasn't been, quote unquote, working," right? So finding a team, finding somebody that can support what you're doing and cares about what you're doing.

If you're here listening to this podcast, you know that this program is one of those places, coming and being a part of what we're sharing is a place where you can have a team, someone who sees what you're going through, someone who knows what you're going through, someone who's going through the same things and has support and care for you on your journey. So finding your team can really enhance your journey on overcoming pornography. Okay? So find your team. Number three, find your team.

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Number four, next rule, finding the game. So this is like asking ourselves, what are we playing here? What are we actually talking about? Where are we getting at? Like understanding, like in improv, we need to understand like where is the scene going? Where are we trying to get to? We want to ask ourselves this question, "What are we playing at? Let's find the game. What is the game that we're playing?" In improv, right?

Like I was just saying that might look like understanding the role of each character and what they play, where they want to take the scene. Who is playing what part? Okay, so who's playing what part in your scene of overcoming pornography? If you're finding the game, you might be looking for and trying to understand the role that porn plays in your life, right? How am I masking my feelings? What does that look like?

If the game that we are playing here is that we are trying to understand and get to know our feelings better and be safe with those, okay? Then we might need to start giving feelings a bigger role, a bigger part in the scene than we've been giving them in the past. So that might be part of how we find our game, how we find what the game is, how we decide what that looks like. They're going to have to start being in the scenes more often maybe, right? Maybe we've kind of put them in the background and we don't allow them to be a part of the scene, but maybe we need to start giving them more screen time, more time in front of the camera, right? Does that make sense?

So the rule number four is we need to find the game. Get clear about what the game we're playing. Maybe this game for you isn't about your feelings. Maybe it's more about your beliefs. These are some of the milestones in the program, right? Like emotions and buffering, urges, beliefs, and identities.

So understanding what is the game that I'm playing right now, and it might change, it might shift as we go through our work of overcoming pornography. But understanding what the game that I'm playing is and being clear about what that is with myself can totally help determine how

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I'm going to show up, right? And what the scene's going to look like. Okay, so we need to make sure that we find the game that we're playing and understand what that is. And it might change and it might be different, and that's okay. Okay, number four, we need to find the game.

Number five, the fifth rule, is to take up space. We can totally understand what that means on stage, right? Taking up more space, speaking louder, making sure that we're heard. But how can we relate this to what we're doing here? How can we relate taking up space in overcoming pornography?

It might mean believing that you belong, maybe believing that you belong in this program, believing that you will do this, that you can overcome, that it is a possibility for you. Maybe that's how you start to take up more space. Maybe you haven't taken up that space before, and you're willing to start taking up that space now, okay?

I want you to really think about what that means for you. How can you start taking up more space in this area of your life? I want you to think about pushing yourself to take up more space. It means not shrinking. It means not going back into the same ways that we've done things, okay?

Challenging ourselves to get bigger here, making yourself bigger, taking up more space, creating more opportunities.

This one, I don't have a lot of examples. I just want you to think about for yourself, how can I take up more space? Maybe porn and porn viewing has taken up more space and I want to start taking up more space. I want myself and the way that I want to show up in the world and who I want to be to take up more space. Maybe that's the way that you want to tackle this one. But I want you to really think about, how can I take up more space? What does that look like in my journey of overcoming pornography, in my improv scenes? What does it look like? How am I going to take up more space? Okay, number five, take up more space.

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Number six, is you can't be halfway in. So this is a place when we're halfway in that we stop and we wait to see what will happen next and we kind of step back and we're not really fully in the scene maybe. Like in improv, we're halfway in, we're like, "I don't know where to be, I don't know what to say, and I'm not sure."

Amy suggests that if we are only halfway in, it keeps us stuck and it keeps us straddling between two worlds. And maybe you felt that. Maybe you felt that in your journey of overcoming pornography of like being in times when you're only halfway in. And so you're kind of straddling the world of like, I'm still going to view, but I kind of don't want to, and you can't really make a decision. And so this is where we might recognize when we're kind of halfway in.

Now, this is a really important point. I've coached a lot of people who were maybe halfway in. Making the decision to overcome pornography and maybe going all on that side, maybe part of us in our life and in this time is in a place where we are not ready to be in that place. So we need to step out of the circle and be in the world where maybe we just view right now.

And I'm not suggesting that's good or bad or right or wrong, but when we're in the in-between, when we haven't made a decision, when we're only halfway in and halfway out, then we're going nowhere, then we're stuck. So I don't want you to be stuck. I want you to make a choice. Are we in or are we out? Because if you are in or out, then you know where to go, then you know where to be, okay?

So you can't be halfway in life, in improv, in overcoming pornography. You have to decide, am I in or am I out? Okay? Because don't be straddling both those two worlds because that is not a good place to be. It just keeps us stuck, okay? So don't do that.

And then the other thing I wanted to talk about here is maybe this thought of like, I have to be ready to be fully in. I'm telling you, you can be all in even if you're not ready. Like that's a place that you can be. Because telling

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yourself that you need to be ready is just something we say to keep ourselves halfway in, and that's not helpful, okay? That just keeps us stuck. So, rule number six, you can't be halfway in. You got to make a decision.

Number seven, don't bail on your partners. Amy describes this as when she would do sketches for Saturday Night Live, and they were going badly, it felt really good when others are also working hard to keep it going. Even though it's a failure, even though it's a flop, even though it's not working, instead of bailing, go in more. She's like, "That feels so good when we do that, when we have that, when our partners go in with us, right?"

And so for you, your partner in this scene that you don't want to bail on is probably yourself. So don't bail on yourself when it feels like it's sinking, when it feels like the ship is going down, to know that you're there on the ship willing to do whatever it takes to try to keep it afloat even if it might sink in the moment, let yourself do that because on the other side of that, that feels really good to go back and see how you showed up for yourself and you didn't bail even though it felt hopeless or it didn't feel like it was going to work.

So when you've given into an urge and viewed, the scene does not have to be over. Don't bail on yourself. Double down on where you want to take the scene. Don't give up, okay? Figure out what your next steps are and move towards those. Don't bail and say it's too late. It's not. You've got this. You can go and be part of the partnership that makes it, that holds on to the scene even if it's not working, even if it doesn't feel like it's working.

Amy said that she would go back with, you know, some of her SNL counterparts, and they would look at those skits that flopped, that didn't do well, and they would just be so proud of themselves on how, even if it wasn't working, they all just joined in and wanted to be a part of that.

And I feel like that is the same for you when you do this work and don't bail on yourself. You can go back and look at those scenes and review them and be like, "You know, I could have given up. I could have just stopped. I

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could have been like, 'Oh, well,' and viewed more and gone into a binge or whatever, right? But I didn't. I didn't bail on myself. I stayed where I was at and I was planted in this place and I was not going to let it go down without a fight." And that's really important. So principle number seven, don't bail on your partners. Don't bail on yourself.

Number eight, this next one is don't worry about being cool. Amy says that this is staying true to yourself and being okay with what you are feeling in the moment because that's where your power lies. That's what she said. I think that's so important that we remember where our power lies and it's being okay.

I talk about this all the time with my clients, being okay with what I'm feeling, being okay with what I'm at, being okay with what's here. So that's what this rule is all about. Don't worry about being cool. There's a limited amount of time on this earth and you need to get over yourself and looking good and maybe being perfect and looking perfect for others.

Amy also says that coolness doesn't allow for vulnerability and vulnerability is what connects us. And when we are in the midst of porn and shame, typically we are not connecting with others and we're not willing to be vulnerable. We just hide. We hide from those things. And so letting that guard down and allowing ourselves to be vulnerable.

Like I was talking about with perfectionism, right? This is probably, I feel this, I know many of you do, where we want to be seen a certain way, right? Wanting, so we hide. We hide so others can't see, because we don't want them to see, we don't want them to know what's really us, and so we pretend.

So don't worry about having to be cool. Sometimes we just got to share who we are. And not with everybody. We have to do it in safe places where we feel trusted. That's why this program is a great place because this is where we don't judge you. Because when we're in those spaces, it's very exhausting, very draining.

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And dare I say that this wanting to be cool and look perfect and be a certain way might also even push us towards viewing. And if you're here, then that's not what you want, right? We're working to overcome that. So don't worry about being cool. In fact, practice being true to yourself and being vulnerable. So think about how you maybe have been pushing yourself to, quote unquote, "be cool" and not staying true to yourself. So working on being okay with who you are and with what you're feeling in the moment. So rule, principle number eight, don't worry about being cool.

Number nine, this is our last one. She says this rule is called playing with status. So, in improv or in a scene, this might be who's in charge? Who's the boss? Who's in control? Who holds the status? So who holds more power? Who holds less power in the scene? Who is like in charge here, who's not? This is also true in life. Like, where are we in particular instances in any particular time? Do I hold the power? Do I not? Do I stand back, or do I kind of, you know, lean forward and take up more space?

And so Amy suggests that we can play around with these norms, because we kind of have this like, "Oh, well, the boss is in charge and so they have the most power." So, playing around with how do I insert more power here? What would that look like? Can I play around with that norm that has been set? Does it have to always be that the boss is the one in control and holds the most power or can we kind of play around with that status?

So what that might mean for you in overcoming pornography, right? Is like, you know, with pornography, like who's holding the power? Who has the status? Is it me? I hear a lot of my clients talk about this, right? Like, "I want to be in control of this and not let it be in control of me." And that's when pornography has the upper hand. It has the power, it has the status, okay? And so we want to start playing around with what that looks like.

How do I create more power for myself so that I have a higher status, so that I have more control, so that I am the one that is wielding what the scene is going to look like, right? Instead of porn. Porn doesn't get to be in charge of that anymore. I do, okay?

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So we're going to start playing around with the status. How do we turn those tables? And one thing that Amy also notes in this one is really the awareness of it is even more helpful. We talk a lot about that. Being aware of like, where I'm at right now, who holds the power? What does it look like? Why does it look like that? Why am I allowing that? How can we play around with this status? Can I flip the script? Do I want to flip the script? Why or why not?

And kind of starting asking, like the awareness helps us bring those questions in and helps us kind of figure out, like, where do we want to go? Who do we want to be? How are we going to get there? What is that going to look like? And so that's how we can start playing around with the status and kind of flipping scripts and deciding and changing kind of who's in charge here and what it looks like.

So those are the rules. I'm just going to read them over one more time so you can be thinking about these. So we want to keep saying yes. We want to be a good listener. We want to find our team and know who that is. We want to find the game. We want to take up more space. We can't be halfway in. Number seven, we can't bail on our partners. Don't worry about being cool, and we want to play around with the status and see if we can kind of switch that up a little bit, especially when pornography is holding the upper hand. Okay.

So I would love to hear how you guys start to apply these in your life. Let us know how you're working through some of this stuff and which rule you like the best and which ones you're applying the most because in different situations, different things will apply, but allowing yourself to kind of open up to, "How can I start applying some of these rules in relation to overcoming pornography?" Because they will be helpful. And just like I said earlier, I promise you that if you apply them and if you use them, they can help you and they will.

So that is the podcast for today. Thank you guys for joining. Again, I'm Kat Jenkins, and we will see you guys next time. Bye.

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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.