

## 284. What if I'm Single, Divorced, or in a Sexless Marriage? Can I Still Befriend My Sexuality? (Part 4)



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Sara Brewer**

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast, "What if I'm single, divorced, or in a sexless marriage? Can I still befriend my sexuality? (Part 4)."

Welcome to the *Overcome Pornography For Good* podcast. I'm your host, Sara Brewer.

Hey everyone, welcome to today's podcast episode. This is a follow-up to our three-part series, so I guess it's part four. But this is a question that kept coming up that I really want to address. A lot of times when people hear me talk about befriending their sexuality, it's in the context of having a relationship that they can have a sexual relationship in. And that's so fascinating to me how that comes up. It's like what I'm talking about befriending your sexuality, how to befriend your sexuality. You're like, great, but I'm divorced. Great, but I'm single.

And so I really want to spend some good time talking about this today. The belief underneath here that we're going to really look at is that my sexuality only exists in relation to another person and is only allowed to exist in relation to another person in order for it to be okay and good. And until they show up, it's still just a problem to manage.

The messaging that so many of us received around our sexuality is that it's dangerous, that it's dirty, that it needs to be contained, and the only sanctioned container is with another person. And what that does is we learn to relate to our sexuality as something that belongs somewhere else, in someone else, to someone else, not as something that belongs to us. Not something that belongs to you as an individual.

This is why so many people say, well, I just need to meet someone, and then my porn habit will go away. Or once I'm married, this will get better. I've heard this so, so often through all of the clients that we've worked with. And I will tell you, we're going to dive into all of these concepts deeper here in this episode, but I will tell you that is not how it works. And that belief, it

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really messes people up because they'll say, I thought once I was going to get married, this would go away and it didn't.

And so, either what's wrong with me or what's wrong with my marriage? It was my marriage's job to solve this. Even if they might not say it that bluntly, it's like the underlying belief is that because the only way for me to have a relationship with my sexuality is in a relationship with another person. And if it's not fixed in that relationship, it can be confusing and create a lot of problems.

So you're not wrong to want connection. Absolutely, sex and sexuality as a way to connect and to be intimate and to have this beautiful, thriving partnership, so good, so beautiful. But we've outsourced the solution and it creates a lot of problems we're going to talk and dive into today. The key point right here is that you were never taught that your sexuality belongs to you.

This belief is so costly for a number of reasons. Number one is that it makes healing contingent on someone else showing up. So you're just in this permanent waiting room. If we go back to our example of the dog, actually, I don't think I've shared this example in the podcast. I have shared it in the podcast. I've shared it as a tiger. How I've been sharing it lately is the dog. So, should I share it really quick? Let me share it.

So imagine that you grow up in a village and you're told that at 12 years old, you're going to get a dog. And everyone gets a dog at 12 years old. It's very scary. You got to be really careful with this dog because guess what? The neighbor's dog ate their whole entire family. It ruined their life. It destroyed everything. It went crazy. And so be really careful.

So you turn 12, you get this dog and it barks and everyone freaks out. They say, see, we told you. We told you dogs are dangerous. Let's go put it away. And so you do what you're told and what everyone else is doing, which you put this dog in a fence, trying to put it aside. It's outside of the village. You can't see it, you can't hear it, trying to ignore it. But this dog is

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your responsibility and it keeps barking and it gets angrier and angrier every day. It's not getting the food it needs, it's not getting the water it needs. It's neglected and ravenous and angrier and angrier each day.

You're nervous because whenever you go check on the dog, part of the fence is torn down, and you have to rebuild the fence every single day. It's getting harder and harder to contain. Every now and then it gets out and then it creates a lot of destruction, hurts you and it bites you until you can finally get it back in the cage and then build the fence up again. You're waking up in the middle of the night with cold sweats, thinking, oh no, I hope the dog's okay. I hope it doesn't get out. I hope it doesn't ruin my life. And over time, you're more and more exhausted and over time the dog is more and more upset, angry, ravenous, neglected.

Then one day you see a man come along and his dog is hanging out with him. It's just walking alongside him like a companion and your mind is blown. So you go over to him and you said, how did you do this? Isn't that thing scary? You approach him cautiously because dogs are dangerous. Not sure if this is a good guy or a bad guy.

You say, how did you do this? He says, well, I had to take my dog out of the fence, out of the cage. I had to work on my relationship with it. I had to befriend it. I had to build trust with it, and now we're buddies. Now he hangs out with me. Now he adds all this joy to my life and I love him. And one of the best parts is I'm not afraid anymore. I get to live my life freely because I'm not trying to contain this angry thing anymore. It adds to my life. It doesn't hurt my life anymore.

You're like, well, I want to do that. Will you teach me? And then he goes and he teaches you how to do it. And at the beginning, it's a little scary. It takes time. At the beginning, you get bit. It wasn't an overnight thing, but eventually you rebuild this relationship with this dog and are able to live freely.

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So this isn't a perfect analogy, but it works. But it's the same thing with you and your sexuality. We talked about this extensively in episode one of this series. I just want to remind us it because there's some context we could relate to with this specific question around, what if I'm single or divorced or in a sexless marriage?

So if you haven't listened to episode one, please, please, please pause. Go listen to episode one. It'll give so much more context around this and help make this episode specifically make a lot of sense.

But this belief that your sexuality belongs to someone else and that it's only safe when it belongs to someone else is so costly for a couple of reasons. Like back to what we were saying, is number one, it puts you in this permanent waiting room. So you have this dog in this cage and you're just waiting for someone else to come along and take care of it, really.

This puts impossible weight on your partner because their job becomes managing this part of you. And it's not uncommon for people to get stuck in this dynamic in marriage. You know, when that's how you're taught and brought and grown up, it's like both of you believe that, you know, once we get married, my sexuality belongs to you and your sexuality belongs to me. And it sounds really nice, it sounds really pretty, right? And I'm all for monogamous marriage. I love my monogamous marriage, just to be clear here.

But if the belief is my sexuality belongs to you and your sexuality belongs to me, it creates these hard dynamics underneath the surface where it's not true intimacy. It's, hey, this is my thing that I don't have any other outlet for. So you must be the outlet for it every single time. Instead of a much healthier dynamic would look like, my sexuality belongs to me, your sexuality belongs to you, and we are choosing to come together and share it in these ways. But my dog is mine, your dog is yours. And I'm choosing to come and share it with you in these ways. And wow, how beautiful.

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Those of you who have been in these other dynamics where yours belongs to me and mine belongs to you, know how over time that can become really destructive to a relationship and create a lot of resentment. Let me just hit this hard again, is that marriage will not fix this problem. If you're trying to overcome pornography, if you want to heal your pornography habit, if you want to quit porn, marriage will not fix this. And the men who believe it will get married and when nothing changes, they're really confused and ashamed, with no framework to understand why. I've seen this over and over and over with clients in my program.

There's a number of reasons that it doesn't fix this. One of the reasons is that this is about so much more than sex and sex drive and sexuality. There's so much more going on underneath the surface. We have to get deeper and look at the root of why you're struggling with porn, what's really going on, what porn is doing for you, what it's an escape from. And the best way to do that is to befriend your sexuality and to work with it instead of always fighting against it.

So if you're in a relationship with a person hoping that will fix your porn habit, you might never actually befriend your sexuality. Like we talked about extensively in episode one, you just outsource the befriending to your wife or your partner. And when she becomes the stand-in, so you only feel regulated sexually when she's available and disregulated when she's not, that's the opposite of intimacy. That's just dependency, dependency and neediness.

And so one of the most beautiful things you can do for your relationship is befriend your own sexuality. What does that look like? What am I talking about? Let me do some analogies here before we go a little deeper. Going to bring us back to our binge eating analogy that we talked about in episode one.

So most people are trying to quit viewing porn like quitting smoking, but it doesn't work that way. Where it's like, if I just go 30, 60, 90 days without

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smoking, then I won't want to smoke anymore. It doesn't work that way because sex is a biological urge. It's never going away.

So what I found after working with so many clients, I'm like, this mirrors disordered eating so much clearer than a smoking habit or a drug addiction or alcohol. This looks so much more like disordered eating or binge eating. And it's because sex is a biological urge, hunger is a biological urge. And so to help someone heal from binge eating, they have to heal their relationship with themselves, with food, do the deeper inner healing work, and then the binge eating goes away.

It's a simple way to say it, but the main idea here is we have to work with your sexuality, not against it, because it's never going away. And so as long as we're fighting, fighting, fighting, pushing it away, pushing it down, pushing it away, it will come back. It will come back stronger. Again, the cage dog analogy, those are the only options we have with a biological urge, truly.

So healing from binge eating doesn't look like eating everything in sight. You say I'm going to befriend my hunger doesn't mean that now I go and binge eat all the time, or I have this unhealthy relationship with food. It looks like food becoming fuel, energy, pleasure, connection. I've over the years worked hard on my relationship with food and now food is, it's like I know what my body needs to eat during the day to feel good. And so food also becomes something that helps my nervous system feel really, really good. It becomes fuel. And you know, I go over and I have dessert with my family to connect with my family and food can become something that's really meaningful and connective as well. So your relationship with food becomes yours and it serves your life. It's integrated. Sexuality works the same way. Befriending your sexuality is not the green light on everything, especially if you haven't healed that relationship with your sexuality.

And if you've never even been taught or told that you can have a good relationship with your sexuality, you're like, what does that even look like? So a healed relationship with food isn't eating everything in sight. A healed

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relationship with your sexuality isn't doing everything that your sex drive is telling you to do. You're not just doing whatever feels good in the moment. You're in the driver's seat with judgment, with discernment in alignment with what you value. Thank goodness, thank goodness.

It's my mission to help people have healthy relationships with their sexuality so they can do more good in the world, not to have some jacked relationship with their sexuality where they're now out doing a bunch of dangerous or harmful things. But that's what partnership with yourself looks like.

So I wanted to bring that analogy in again to kind of give you an idea before we dive in deeper. Okay, so what does this mean that your sexuality is yours? Well, it means a number of things. Number one is that you're allowed to know what you like. Not as permission to act on everything, but as basic self-knowledge about your sexuality that you might have been denied. We're also changing the frame here is that you're allowed to feel pleasure, sexual pleasure.

Again, remember there's a difference here between physiology and morality. Physiology, normal, natural body responses, hunger, sexual urges, feeling sexual pleasure, a physiological symptom, that is physiological. Morality is what we choose to do with that. So are we harming or hurting other people is morality. We feel hunger and then we have choice. What do we do with that hunger? Do we steal our roommate's food? Do we have our own food? We have a sexual urge and then we have a choice. What do we do with that? Are we harming others with that?

Sexual pleasure is not harmful. How you choose to experience sexual pleasure could be harmful, depending on what you choose to do. But the people who taught you that sexual pleasure alone is a sin were operating from a shame-based operating system that got installed in you, but it wasn't true.

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And again, going back to episode two, so if you haven't listened to the whole series, go listen to the whole series, episode two, that shame-based operating system is what creates problems with sexuality. So those who believe that sexual pleasure is a sin are much more likely to engage in harmful sexual behavior. It's a big thing to say. And again, this isn't just saying go and do whatever you want. We got to get out of these huge all or nothing thinkings here.

And a couple things here, first, I have a whole episode on masturbation that I'd recommend you go and you check out. If you haven't listened to my episode on masturbation before, you are the authority of your life. You get to decide what is good and true and right for you. So many of us that weren't taught about sex, it's basically like some sex education there around masturbation that might be really helpful for you.

But also, looking at your sexual energy and your sexuality, not just as orgasm or just as this sexual act, but sexual energy is life energy as like an energy. Again, not just orgasm, pleasure, but life energy, vitality, aliveness, motivation. It's like a current of energy that makes you want to build something and go somewhere and connect with other people.

When that energy, when your sexuality is told that it's only allowed to come out as sexual pleasure in these ways, or when it's exiled and shamed into a corner, you don't just lose your sexual health, you lose access to that whole current running your life.

And so attraction, I talked about this last night in the masterclass that I did, attraction is directly related to sexual energy and the vibrancy and aliveness with that sexual energy. So if you're someone who is single or divorced and you want a partner, you must befriend your sexuality because it makes you so much more attractive.

Let me share with you what I mean. I told my husband last year, I said, I'm not attracted to you because of how much money you make or because of how you look or because of X, Y, or Z. I'm attracted to you because of your

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vibrancy, your aliveness. It's that aliveness in him that seeps out into all of these areas of his life that is so attractive. This is a really game-changing conversation to have in your marriage, too, as well, is what makes you feel alive, what makes you feel vibrant because that's what creates attraction in a relationship.

So that aliveness is what's actually attractive, not the right body, not the right job, not, you know, how much money you make. It's the people who have returned to themselves know what they want isn't looking for someone else to regulate or take care of them sexually. That's not magnetic, that's needy. Neediness is not attractive. And neediness is what it looks like when you've outsourced your sexuality to another person. But when you befriend your sexuality and you're alive and you're okay and you have like this lease on life, that's very attractive. That is a direct result of befriending your sexuality because sexual energy is that energy of aliveness.

And so as we're talking about befriending and working with this dog, I'm not just talking about here's like the sexual outlets for you to go and have, although you do deserve to like not feel shame around sexual pleasure, healthy, safe ways to experience sexual pleasure, but it's also about, okay, I'm going to use the dog example. Again, it's not perfect, but whatever, we're going to keep going back to it. It's like again, okay, here's this like puppy or this dog, and like look at all this energy and life and it's like so fun, and look how much joy I can experience when I'm experiencing this, not just in sexual pleasure ways, but because the energy of it is aliveness.

So a lot of lonely people turn to porn, and there's just so much compassion and understanding. It makes a lot of sense. It's the path of least resistance to at least some simulation of connection and release. And loneliness can be really painful. So understanding that porn is an escape from loneliness is the first step, and just having a lot of compassion for that. But what's underneath it, as you know, is a real desire for connection and intimacy and belonging. And so the porn, what I hear from so many people is like the

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porn isn't even the real desire, but it's where the desire goes when there's nothing else for it to go to.

Now, where a lot of people get confused is because they've connected their sexuality only with sexual release, and having a relationship with their sexuality only as having an ability to have a sexual release somewhere. They're like, well, where else am I going to get a sexual release other than porn?

But when we back up and we look at sexuality and your relationship with your sexuality as a relationship with a whole energy, befriending your sexuality means learning how to turn towards what you really want and to show up in an alive way and build connections and build relationships instead of spending all your sexual energy on porn versus spending your sexual energy on building relationships.

I've seen studies recently that show men when they feel lonely tend to turn to porn, when women when they feel lonely, tend to turn to friendships. And so we've really done a disservice to men in our world where women are more socialized to have friendships. It's like more okay for women to have friendships. Men are less socialized to have friendships or to like learn how to make friends. And hopefully we're changing that. But this is one of the results that happens when we teach men that it's not manly to be vulnerable and that their purpose is just work and making money and being a cog in the machine.

So this is not super easy. There's some difficulty here. It's not as easy as turning a switch. This is why we do so much work in the program that we do, because sitting with the discomfort of loneliness, getting to befriend your sexuality, it's a whole process, and you often need support doing that. So I just want to bring that in here to let you know that there's nothing wrong with you if it's not an easy thing to switch around.

So, just to end and reiterate a few things. A healthy relationship does not look like I own your sexuality and you own mine. It looks like I have my

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sexuality and you have yours. Mine belongs to me, yours belongs to you. I know mine. I know what my sexuality is, what it likes. I know how to take care of it. You know yours, and you know how to take care of it. And we choose to come together and share it in these ways.

This is only possible if both people have claimed their sexuality as their own. If you've handed yours to someone else, or if you're waiting to be in a relationship to hand it to someone else, that's not a dynamic that's going to be healthy in the long run. So befriending your sexuality is also a fairness to the partner that you want to be with because you're going to stop making them carry something that really isn't theirs to carry.

And what happens if you don't? If you do not befriend your sexuality, what happens? The compulsive behavior doesn't go away. It stays. And we talked about this extensively again in these first three-part series. I'm trying to decide how much to like repeat, but I'm just assuming that you've heard the first three episodes

If you don't befriend your sexuality, the compulsive behavior doesn't go away, the shame doesn't go away. You get married or get in a relationship and nothing changes. Again, I've seen this in my program, so many people, they get married and they're like, why didn't it go away? Marriage is not the solution. It just doesn't work that way. It's because there's so much more underneath the surface. It's not solved by another person now, where you're now allowed to have sex. It's so much more complicated than that.

And you never get to experience your own aliveness, your own vitality, because you've been taught to exile that part. There's so much available to you when you befriend your sexuality and I'm not just talking about sexual pleasure, but this whole, again, this whole energy of vibrancy and aliveness, this is a return to yourself. This is not a self-abandonment. Befriending your sexuality is not abandoning yourself. It's returning to yourself. It's rebuilding trust with yourself.

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If your fear is, well, I don't trust myself, that's exactly what my program, Befriend Your Sexuality, is for. This isn't something that a lot of people can do on their own. They need support and that's what we're here to do and here to help you with. This self-trust can be learned, it can be developed, it can be grown.

But the main thing I want to communicate here is that this isn't a self-abandonment. This is a return to yourself, your goodness, your values, this good piece of you is always in control. Befriending your sexuality is now bringing that part, bringing this sexual piece into yourself and letting it amplify the goodness that is in you. And it's life-changing when you figure out how to do it. It's truly life-changing.

So I would highly recommend if this has hit you, if you really want to learn how to do this, if you want the support to do this, come and work with me in Befriend Your Sexuality. I'm doing it live for 12 weeks starting in July. If you join before July, you get access to our other program for free.

What makes this so special again is that I'm doing it with you for 12 weeks. I won't be doing this again in the future, where I'm teaching it live, although we will have the recordings and different coaching opportunities. This is just the container where I'm with you every single week for 12 weeks, and we're doing it together.

So if you've been wanting to work with me, too, it's a great time to come in and get in. You can sign up going to [centerforovercoming.com/workwithme](https://centerforovercoming.com/workwithme).

All right, you guys have a great rest of your day. We'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

Thanks for listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast. If you're ready to take your next steps, visit [centerforovercoming.com](https://centerforovercoming.com). We'll talk to you next week.