

293. Why Accepting Yourself Makes Change Easier



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With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 293, The Power of Accepting Yourself.

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

Hey everyone, so glad you're here today. And I'm really excited to talk to you about this concept of accepting yourself and why that's so powerful, and what it means to accept yourself. And big questions that I get around it. It's kind of a hard thing to do, and we have some barriers in our minds that are keeping us from doing that. And I'm excited to talk about all of that with you today.

So here's what we're going to talk about, we're going to talk about how accepting yourself makes it easier to change why that's true. We're going to talk about the difference between justification and acceptance. And then I'm going to talk about the how. How can we learn to accept ourselves better?

So the first thing is that this principle that I teach in my teachings, in my podcast, and my coaching is that the more you accept yourself, the easier it is to change. And if you go and listen to any big spiritual leaders, that seems to be a common theme that comes up. Accepting yourself is very powerful and accepting yourself leads to more change.

In fact, I just read this again, Marianne Williamson talks about this a lot in her book, *A Return to Love*. I love that book. I totally recommend it if anyone's looking for a good read.

But here's the thing, I get a lot of questions about this concept, the more you accept yourself, the easier it is to change. People hear that and they're like, "What? If I accept myself, then why would I be motivated to change? Isn't accepting myself and accepting where I am in direct conflict of me wanting to quit viewing pornography?"

And I get it sounds a little bit counterintuitive. But the truth is, and my clients see this over and over and over again. And if you go to the results page on my website and you read some of the experiences from my

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clients, that's a common thing that you'll hear is, "I started to accept myself and that's when I finally gained power over my actions. That's when I finally gained power over myself to really become who I wanted to become."

So here's why this works. I really want to spell this out for you and show you very specifically why this is true. And why it works that the more you accept yourself, the easier it is to change. So a tool that I use in my coaching is called the model. If you're in the program Overcome Pornography For Good, you have a whole training on the model, and I hope that you've watched that.

I learned the model from Brooke Castillo years ago. And it completely changed my life. So the model is just a tool that we use to find the root of any problem. The model will show you the root of the problem that's going on in your life. And it'll tell you how to solve any problem that's going on in your life. So anything that's going on, you put it into the model, you find the root of it, and you learn how to change it.

My clients who learn this and go through the training that I have on the model, they say it's game-changing, revolutionary. Honestly, I think the program is worth it just for that. Those videos alone on the model, I'm absolutely obsessed with it. And the reason that I became a coach is because of the model. It really breaks down what's happening in your brain, and helps you see clearly the root of the problem and how to change problem.

So here, let me give you a part of the model today. Part of the model is you have thoughts, feelings, and actions. Okay? And it's in that order. So your thoughts create your feelings. And your feelings drive your actions. And I've talked about this often on the podcast, that your thoughts create your feelings. Your feelings don't come from anything outside of you. They come from how you're thinking about things.

A kind of extreme example of this is 9/11. If 9/11, the event of 9/11, just caused us all to feel horrible, everyone would have felt horrible when 9/11 happened. But the truth is, is that not everyone felt horrible when 9/11

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happened, right? There is Al Qaeda, the group of terrorists that performed and were in charge of 9/11, and they didn't feel horrible. They were pretty excited about it.

That's because our thoughts, like, "This is such a terrible thing. We've been attacked. How horrible, how awful," caused us to feel sad and grieving and all those negative emotions associated with 9/11. It came from our thoughts, not from the actual event. Because if the event caused the feelings, then the people who performed it would have felt horrible and awful. But not everyone did.

And that doesn't mean that we shouldn't feel bad about things or that we shouldn't have felt bad about 9/11. Of course, we should have felt bad about 9/11. We want to feel bad about 9/11. But that is coming from our thoughts.

So our thoughts cause our feelings, and our feelings drive our actions. So many of us try to change our actions without changing our feelings and our thoughts. And it doesn't work. Because I want you to think about the action that you take when you're feeling really discouraged.

When you're feeling really discouraged your actions are not going to be as impactful as if you're feeling really hopeful or determined. If you're feeling defeated, your actions are going to be not as impactful as if you're feeling capable.

And this used to be me, I used to look at all these things I was doing in my life and I'm like, "Okay, I want to change this, and this, and this, and this. And I want to do this better, and I want to do that better. And so I'm just going to try to do all these different things."

And I would try to do all these different things without focusing on changing my feelings and my thoughts. And so I was never able to sustain action because my feelings weren't feelings that would allow me to sustain action. My feeling that I was trying to change out of was usually lack, like I'm not good enough. And that feeling didn't give me enough momentum to sustain my action. Okay? Does that make sense?

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So again, the pattern is thought, feeling, action. So, if your thought is, “I need to be better.” For many of us the feeling that we get after “I need to be better,” that feeling is defeated. And then think about what action do you take from feeling defeated? Honestly, probably not very much action.

This is what happens when my clients come to me and they say, “I’m in a rut and I can’t get myself to do anything. I know I should be doing all these things differently, but I can’t do it.” I’m like, “Well, what are you feeling?” “Defeated?” “What action do you take from defeated?” “None, I don’t take action from defeated. I just lay around when I feel defeated.”

If your thought is, “I need to feel better.” And maybe you feel pressure, or graspy, or frantic, what action are you going to take from that emotion of pressure? Probably willpower. Probably action that isn’t sustainable. We’ve talked about how willpower doesn’t work long term, it’s a not a long term solution. That isn’t sustainable.

So that’s why this thought, “I’m not good enough,” will never create the emotion that will actually help you change long term. The reason that telling yourself you’re not good enough doesn’t work, is because it doesn’t create emotion that actually helps you change. We can’t just change our actions without changing the emotion behind it, or also just won’t stick.

So that’s how the phrase, the more you accept yourself, the easier you can change is true. Some of you want to say to me, “If I accept myself as I am, I won’t change. Or I need to tell myself that I need to be better so that I can change.” But it’s the exact opposite.

It’s the exact opposite because the actions from acceptance will help you change so much more than the actions from feeling discouraged and the actions from feeling defeated. And let’s talk about this for a minute. Because a lot of you think, “Well, if I accept myself, how can I just accept myself when I’m doing something wrong?” And so we need to define acceptance and talk about the difference between justification and acceptance.

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Justification is not the same as acceptance. Justification is, "This is okay. This isn't a problem. It's okay that I'm not changing." It's really just lying to yourself. Like, "This doesn't really go against my value system. And this isn't who I want to be, but that's okay." Just lying to yourself. Justification is just one more time, I deserve it. Just more lies.

Acceptance, on the other hand, is, this is where I'm at right now, and that's okay. I make mistakes, and that's okay. I love myself and I don't need to change to love myself anymore. I want to change and I'm working on it, but I don't need too. I don't need to change, to love myself and accept myself more. Which by the way, that's exactly how God feels about you. And for anyone who needs to hear this today, that's exactly how God feels about you. It has never, ever been a requirement for you to change so that God can love you more. He has never required you to change so that you would be more worthy of His love, ever. Okay?

Actions from justification is more pornography, more buffering, more acting in a way that doesn't feel true to you and doesn't feel true to who you want to be. Actions from acceptance is self-love and the ability to make more changes from a place of self-love, instead of a place of I'm not good enough and self-hate.

You can move into other emotions quicker from acceptance than you can from a place of I'm not good enough energy, okay? So it's like you can accept yourself and then it's a lot easier to move into commitment. Once you accept yourself it's a lot easier to move it to discipline. Once you accept yourself it's much easier to move into these other emotions that can take you to the next step in quitting pornography.

But it's not justification. Justification is not love. Justification is not love to yourself. Acceptance is love. Justification is not faith. Justification is not faith and hope. Acceptance is faith. It is faith and hope, I can change. I love myself as I am and I'm going to figure this out and I'm going to change.

And, again, this is why moving into acceptance, out of shame and into acceptance, is one of the biggest first steps I want my clients to go through.

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Because once you're in acceptance, that's when you can actually start to get some momentum around changing your habit.

Because instead of doing it from this frantic energy of I'm not good enough, I'm not good enough, I'm not good enough. You can stop, slow down, really commit yourself really practice discipline. Not because you need it to feel better about yourself, but because you already feel good about yourself. And from there, it's so much easier to make change.

It's so much easier to make change when you're feeling good about yourself, I promise. And I have experienced this in my own life over and over and over again. And it's one of the reasons that I'm so into life coaching, and I'm so passionate about it, and I love it so much. Especially for changing habits and changing who you want to be.

Before I got into all of the life coaching skills and tools that I now know there were a million things in my head that I wanted to change. I wanted to start a business. I wanted to work out more. I wanted to be more organized. I wanted to get more done. I just had lists and lists and lists and lists of things that I wanted to do.

And I was just really stuck in a place of defeat. I just never really felt good enough because I had all these things I wanted to do and be. And because I wasn't those things and because I wasn't doing those things, I couldn't let myself feel good. This is that same energy. I'm not accepting myself, I don't like where I'm at. And I just felt a lot of defeat.

And you know what I did from defeat? Remember thought, feeling, action. I think I'm not good enough, I feel defeat. What action do I take from defeat? I watched a lot of Netflix. That's what I did when I felt defeated. When I feel really defeated, I just want to buffer and watch Netflix and just try to ignore it. I'm just so tired, I just want to watch a lot of Netflix. And then I would beat myself up for watching a lot of Netflix and I would feel more defeat and I'd just stay stuck longer.

But when I was able to switch into acceptance when I was able to go to a place of like, "Okay, this is okay. It's okay if I sit around and watch Netflix.

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This is okay, I love me anyways.” As soon as I was able to drop into that acceptance and stop judging myself so hard, that's when everything changed.

I sat there for a couple days just accepting myself while I watched Netflix. But then a few days later I was able to get up and get moving and make progress towards my goals much better than I was when I was in a place of defeat. When before, “What's wrong with you? Snap out of it.” That just kept me staying in this place for weeks.

And this is the same thing that happens for my clients. And I see it over and over and over and over and over again. The moment they can truly accept where they're at. You know, there's nothing wrong with me for being here. This is where I'm at and this is okay. That's when we can change. That's when our emotion and our energy shifts to allow us to take action that will be sustainable that will actually help us quit for good.

Once we accept ourselves, that's when we can get out of the emotions that are keeping us stuck. I want you to imagine just like really sticky mud. And that really sticky mud is these emotions of defeat, and shame, self-pity, I'm not good enough. Those will always keep you stuck. And I'm thinking of quicksand. What do they say about quicksand? Stop fighting and just relax, and then that's when you can get out of quicksand.

I hope that's right. I probably should have googled that before I talked about it. But I think that's what they say about quicksand, right? Like stop fighting and then you can get out of it. That's the same principle here with acceptance. Stop fighting where you're at and then you can move forward.

Or like those Chinese handcuffs that you get at Party Land. When you're fighting and pulling really hard trying to get out of it, it doesn't work. But once you relax and you stop fighting, that's when you can get out of those. It's the exact same thing with acceptance. That's the principle of acceptance.

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So let's talk about the how. How specifically can we get to this place of acceptance? Hopefully, hopefully, I've sold you on this idea of why it's so important. Now that you know that it's important, how can we get there?

So step number one is you just have to decide. You have to decide to accept yourself. And you have to be firm in that decision with yourself. Your brain is going to want to keep going to a place of shame and defeat and I'm not good enough, and that's okay.

But we need to decide to challenge that when it does come up. Decide to accept yourself. Even say it out loud, write it on a piece of paper, write it on a sticky note. "This is what I'm doing. I am accepting myself exactly as I am, no strings attached."

Okay, number two is practice thoughts that will help you feel accepted. So remember acceptance is an emotion, where do our emotions come from? Our thoughts. And so if you want to feel more acceptance in your life and accepting of yourself, you have to think thoughts that will generate that emotion for you.

And I have some ideas for you, but you might just kind of need to play around what feels the most accepting to you. It can be thoughts like, it's okay to not be perfect. I'm having a human experience, and this is what I came here to do. I love thoughts that begin with maybe, like maybe I can accept myself here. I really love this part of what I'm going through. There's nothing wrong with me.

Recognizing that your worth doesn't change. No matter what you do, your worthiness does not change. Okay, your worthiness is not something that is up for debate. Really listen to me here, your worth as a person is not up for debate, period. Practicing thoughts like that, maybe it's true. Maybe it's true that my worthiness isn't up for debate. Maybe my worth doesn't change even though I'm struggling with pornography right now.

Okay, so that's step number two is practice thoughts that help you feel accepted. And then step number three is accept yourself even when you aren't accepting yourself, right? Some of you are going to go into this place

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of, “Oh, look, I just can't accept myself. “What's wrong with me? I keep going to this place of shame and disappointment.”

When you go there you have to accept yourself when you go there. So instead of, “Oh, what's wrong with me for not accepting myself? Just offer compassion, “I'm accepting that I'm not accepting myself here.” It's a little meta, but it's a little bit deeper and it's kind of taking things to the next level.

You can offer compassion, like of course you do. Of course you aren't accepting yourself 100% of the time. Let me give you guys a little secret, no one accepts themselves 100% of the time. No one is perfect at this. There's always going to be that little voice saying that there's something wrong with you. That's not ever going to go away completely and that's okay.

So when you fall back into it, that's okay. This is where I'm at today. Accept yourself there and then you'll be able to accept yourself a little bit deeper in more areas of your life.

All right you guys, that's what I've got for you today. Have a great week and we'll talk to you next week. Bye-bye.

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