

297. Mindful Urge Management (Pillar Two of Quitting Porn)



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 297, Pillar Two: Mindful Urge Management.

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

Hey, you guys, welcome to the podcast episode this week. We are going to talk about the second pillar in overcoming pornography for good. The second pillar, which is mindful urge management. So I want to talk about what that means, mindful urge management. How to mindfully manage your urges.

We've talked about this a little bit in the podcast, we do a ton of coaching around it in the program. But the idea here is that we want to learn how to manage our urges in a way that will help us instead of a way that will just make them worse and in a way that makes us feel out of control.

So many people are just really scared of urges and really afraid of feeling an urge. And what I teach is that there is nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing at all to be afraid of with urges, if you understand what they are, if you learn how to mindfully manage them. And so we're going to dive into that today.

So if you remember, there are three things that you can do when you feel an urge. I talked about this in the podcast episode, "Resist, React, and Allow." I really dive into those.

But just a quick background, if you didn't listen to that one, or just a quick reminder, is we can resist them, which means pushing them away, pretending like they aren't there, or trying to push our way through them and muscle up all of our strength to get through them.

We can react to them, which is just giving in to them. And you feel that urge, and you're like, "Okay, hey, yeah, let's go look at porn." Or you can allow them, which is this process of mindfully managing your urges, allow them to be there without giving into them and without pushing them away.

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And I know a lot of you want to be confused when I say that. I know because I get questions about this all the time. You're like, "Isn't that willpower?" So go and listen to that episode after you listen to this one if you want to learn more about that.

Because today, what I really want to focus on is how to get into a more mindful spot. And what it looks like to mindfully manage our urges, instead of just resisting them or reacting them. We want to learn how to mindfully manage them, it's much easier, it's a much better long-term solution.

The truth is that you do not have to be at the mercy of your urges anymore. You don't have to be afraid of them. You don't have to do everything in your power to make sure that you never feel them anymore. You don't have to just hope that you don't feel a really strong one. You don't have to be at the mercy of those anymore. Not at all, as soon as you can learn how to mindfully manage your urges.

So the four things I want to talk about today, the four tips I have for you in learning how to do this is number one, neutralize the urge. Number two, get out of your head and get into your body. Number three, allow it instead of pushing it away, breathing into it. And number four, learn and move on.

So number one, neutralize the urge. So the urge that you feel to view porn, it isn't good or bad; it just is. And you have to neutralize the urge in order to really mindfully manage it. Sexual urges are not a bad thing, even sexual urges for pornography. All this is, all this urge is, is a chemical reaction in your body.

Your brain is wired to seek dopamine, to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Always, always, always, your brain is always going to default to that to seek pleasure and avoid pain. And since pornography has a lot of dopamine, and you've experienced this dopamine hit multiple times, your brain is going to give you these little nudges to go and get dopamine. That's all an urge is, that's it.

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An urge doesn't mean you're bad. An urge doesn't mean that you've done something wrong. An urge is just your brain asking you to get more dopamine, period. It's not good. It's not bad. It's just neutral.

Remember that principle of physiology versus morality. Physiology are our normal natural body responses. They're not good or bad; they just are. And morality is what we choose to do with those body responses. That's when our morals come into play. That's when we could say if it's right or wrong.

So, for example, you know, a physiological response to hunger. I'm hungry; that's a physiological response. That's not good or bad. Now I have choices; now that I'm feeling hungry, I get to decide if I go steal some food, if I go make a sandwich, if I go, I don't know, drink a bunch of Mountain Dew, whatever. And that's where morality comes into play, where you get to decide based off of your morals and your moral system what is good or bad.

And the thing is, too, you guys, I want you to keep this in mind: the more confidence that you gain in your ability to experience that physiological symptom without responding to it, the less afraid you will be of your urges. The more that you're able to just sit with it without responding to it, the more neutral you will see those urges. So this comes with some practice.

When we don't neutralize our urges, when we don't think of them as neutral, that's when the sexual shame pops up. And we start to resist, we start to avoid, we start to ignore them. All these things that just make it worse.

Remember, resisting our urges is like holding a beach ball underwater. What happens when you hold that beach ball under the water? It wants to pop up. It wants to explode. How many of us have experienced this? We have the urge, and we're like, "No, no, no, go away, go away, run away from it, run away from it." And it just gets stronger and stronger and stronger, and you just explode and give in to it, right?

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We've all had this experience because we've all resisted these urges. And that's just not going to work long-term. Willpower is not going to work long-term. And that is one of the biggest mistakes I see when people are trying to quit porn is they're trying to use willpower. Can't use willpower, you guys.

And this first tip I have for you to stop using willpower is to neutralize the urge so that you can allow it without reacting to it, which is into our second point. So number two, let's get out of our head and into our body, which is really becoming the observer. I've talked about this, I had a whole podcast episode titled "The Observer."

I recently had a coaching session with a client who said, "I just don't see how allowing it isn't using willpower. This is not making sense to me still. I'm having all these thoughts in my head and I'm trying to make them go away. And I don't understand how I can allow my urges and allow my thoughts to be there and not look at porn."

And I said to him, I said, "It sounds like you're fighting with yourself in your head." So you're thinking something and then you're pushing against it back and forth, back, and forth. Like, I want this, let's go get it. No, I can't. Let's do it. No, I can't. Just one more time. No, I'm not going to do it one more time. Like just this fight back and forth, back, and forth. I'm sure we can all relate to this. And as long as you're there in your head, you're going to be in this willpower energy.

So instead, what I want you to practice is getting into your body. And instead of getting in that fight with your head and fighting with your thoughts and having this battle in your head, refocus your energy into your body. You can notice, notice what's happening in your head, don't try to make it all stop. But then focus back into your body.

Those of you who do meditation regularly know this is just a meditation technique. This is something we practice all the time in meditation, is concentration and focus on our body and our mind is going to wander and

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we can notice that and then bring it back. It's just noticing it and bringing it back, and noticing it and bringing it back.

And the purpose here isn't to shut off our minds. And the purpose isn't to make all the thoughts go away and to never notice them or to never even fall back into that thinking. But the purpose is, when we notice ourselves doing that, to just refocus into our body. And then you'll notice yourself fighting with yourself again. And then once you notice that, refocus into your body.

So what I mean by refocusing into your body, what I mean by getting into your body, is notice what the sensation feels like as a sensation in your body. So where do you feel it? Are you feeling tightness in your chest? Are you feeling pressure in your shoulders? Are you feeling stuff in your gut? Are you feeling stuff in your back? Are you feeling anything in your hands?

You want to just notice what the sensation is going on in your body. Are you feeling heavy? Are you feeling light? Is this sensation fast? Is it slow? And then breathe, breathe. Breathe into it. Notice it and breathe into it and let it be there, and let that feeling be there in your body.

So when you notice yourself going back to your thoughts, like I said, that's totally fine. We're just going to refocus and center in on our body. This is how we learn how to allow those urges. Notice here, notice we're not pushing the urge away. When we're using willpower we're trying to make the urge go away and so we ignore it. We tell ourselves the urge is bad.

When we're doing this, when we're focusing in on our body, we're letting the urge be there and just noticing it and breathing into it. And it's totally fine if it's there. And it's totally fine if we feel this discomfort in our bodies,

Okay, number three, is allow. Allow this urge instead of pushing it away. So again, this is kind of back to breathing into it. What you'll find is that this sensation that you're feeling, that feeling, it's not dangerous. It's uncomfortable, but you can sit with it, and you can be okay.

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So we want to allow it instead of pushing it away. This isn't comfortable, but we can sit with this, and this is okay. Sometimes people think that there's a problem, and that they're doing it wrong because they feel this urge and they do what I just talked about, and they get into their body, and they breathe through, and it goes away. Because it always goes away when we do that. It always goes away when we just allow it.

But then it comes back and then they freak out. And they think that there's a problem because the urge came back. I always, always tell my clients, or whoever it is that I'm talking to with this, is that that isn't a problem. It's not a problem if it comes back. If it goes away, and if you process it, and then it comes back, it doesn't mean that you've done something wrong. This urge can just be here. It can just be here, and that's okay.

And what you'll find as you get out of your head and into your body, is you'll find that it's not dangerous and it's not overpowering. All it is, is a discomfort, an uncomfortable sensation that you're feeling in your body. We've got to get out of our heads, though, to realize that. And we've got to neutralize it to get there.

Because if we aren't neutralizing it and if we're thinking of the urge as an evil and bad thing, we're never going to be able to just let it be there without giving into it. We're going to always be trying to push it away because we think that it's bad.

I do this with other emotions all the time. This is something that is key to my clients quitting pornography, is learning to do this with their other emotions as well. Because what happens is, if these other emotions come up, remember, pornography is a buffer. It's something that we use to escape our negative emotions. I dive into this in our next episode a little bit more.

But we have these emotions. And if we're using pornography to escape emotion, and if we aren't able to mindfully manage our other emotions, then we need an escape from them. So instead, what we want to do is learn how to do this with other emotions. I specifically talk about this and use this

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often with anxiety. Well, I use this with all emotions, but specifically anxiety is one thing that comes to mind.

So for example, like I'm just feeling anxious today, and I find it and I'm like, "Here's what it feels like in my body." And then I tell myself, that's okay. And that's okay. And it feels uncomfortable, and I don't really love it, but it's also fine, and it's neutral. And it's just going to hang out with me today. I'm just going to let it hang out with me today.

I heard my mentor, Brooke Castillo, talk about it like it's like I'm just carrying around my purse of anxiety today. And I just have to carry it around today, but it's okay.

And then lastly, number four is we want to learn how to learn and move on. So many people, once they slip up, they want to just forget about it and not think about it again and pretend like it never happened. Seems like that's the easy way to handle it.

But when you're mindfully managing your urges, that means that you have to mindfully learn from your slip-ups. You can't just forget about them and try to push them away after they happen. You have to mindfully learn from your slip-ups.

And I have a whole process that I have clients go through that when they do slip up, we look at it and we go through this process to really learn what happened and learn what we can do better. And find stuff that we might need to coach on and find stuff that we might need to become more aware of.

What's really fascinating about this process, you guys, is when you start doing this and you start learning from your slip ups, that process alone of looking back at them and answering the right questions, and asking the right questions, and learning from them will create different results for you the next time, just because you're aware of it.

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So the next time something similar happens, your mind will just remember, “Oh yeah, last time I was feeling this feeling, I was trying to push it away. And then I went and looked at porn.” And then that same feeling comes up again and you just remind yourself.

And it comes more naturally, it's not something that you really, really have to focus on and work on. The more that you will look at and learn and move on from your mistakes, the more you do that, the faster you quit porn. And the more you do that, the better you become at these skills.

And this is true with everything, right? This is not porn-specific. If you want to get good at anything, you have to learn from your other tries, right? I'm thinking about school, you take a test, or you write a paper, and then you get a grade back. And you go and you look at it, and you look at what wasn't great in your paper, and you learn from it. And then the next time your paper is better. Or anything, right?

I have my employees do this all the time, if I hire a new employee and they come in and they're doing some work for me, they submit it to me, and then I give them feedback. And then they look at it, and they see what they can do better. And then they submit it again, and they get better and better every single time. And then eventually they're not submitting their work to me because they've just got it down.

I don't know why we don't apply this with pornography typically. Of course, we have to learn from our mistakes. Of course, our mistakes don't mean that something's wrong. Of course, our mistakes just mean, oh, here's what happened, and how can we learn from them so we're better next time?

So this is a really key part to mindfully managing your urges, is to not just get into your body and breathe through them, but to mindfully learn from your slip ups. It's hard to do this if you haven't worked through a lot of your shame.

If you still feel so much shame around your slip ups, it's going to be hard and really painful to go back and look at them. But that's also a big reason

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to go back and look at them. Because it can help you learn to combat the shame. It can give you opportunities to start thinking about your porn habit in a less shameful way so that you can actually quit.

Okay, all right, you guys, so those are my four tips for you today with mindfully managing urges. Number one, neutralize the urge. Number two, get out of your head and into your body. Number three, allow it instead of pushing it away. It's okay, if it comes and goes and comes and goes, that's totally fine. It doesn't mean you've done anything wrong. And then number four, learn, and move on from it. Mindfully learn from your slip ups.

This is a skill that I coach on all the time in the program. It's something that you can listen to in a podcast episode. But to really learn it, you have to apply it. It's like learning how to ride a bike, I can sit here and tell you how to ride a bike and give you all these tips. But for you to really get it down, you have to go out and do it. And you have to go out and you have to fall down a few times. And it helps a lot if you have someone who's right there teaching you how to do it.

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

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.