

167. The Power of Prioritizing Nervous System Healing



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 167, The Power of Prioritizing Nervous System Healing.

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 everyone, welcome to today's episode. So glad you're here. Today we're going to talk about prioritizing your nervous system and your nervous system healing. Before we dive in, just again I want to say thank you to all of you who have left me reviews and ratings. And if you haven't yet, I would love and so appreciate it if you would go and do that.

Let me share this really lovely review, this most recent one that I got. It says, "I have tried every possible method of quitting porn. I've tried different podcasts, methods, even put my hard earned money into programs that are only temporary solutions. I finally found someone who I feel gets every detail of quitting porn. Sara Brewer's method is straightforward, easy to understand and implement. I've struggled with porn for almost two decades now, it's only after finding this podcast that I feel confident I can quit porn."

Oh my gosh, yay! Good job! Thank you for sharing that. Thank you for being here. Thank you for sharing that review so other people can find it. Yeah, right, like we are done. We are done using band-aid solutions and we're done with programs or approaches that are not addressing the shame because shame is the biggest culprit to unwanted pornography use. It truly is.

I had someone say that recently to one of my coaches. He was like, I've done this for years and years and years. And this is the only place that I've heard shame addressed and that's why it's working. And so, geez Louise, we've got to address that shame, you guys. We've got to address that shame.

And today I'm going to give you another tool and another thing to think about with quitting porn, prioritizing nervous system healing. So you've

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heard me talk before about the difference between online work versus offline work. And so if we think of our brain, and Dan Siegel has a great model called the Hand Model of the Brain. It's just a very simple, easy way to understand this.

So if you look at your hand and you put it into a fist, we imagine that our thumb here is the amygdala. Our hand over our fist, this is our brain. It's online in this state. It's able to think clearly. It's able to plan ahead of time. It's able to think about things and make conscious, good decisions from your highest brain. Your highest brain.

Now what happens is what Dan calls your lid gets flipped. So imagine your fingers going up and your hand coming up like this. So this is when your brain gets offline. It's when our prefrontal cortex isn't really working. We're not able to make rational decisions. We're just so frenzied. And so it's when you're not able to make conscious decisions in a great way. We're not able to do online work to think through things.

So when we're offline, this is when we need to do some nervous system work, some grounding techniques. We need to do some things for our body to get us back online so that we can think clearly. So if you've ever had a moment where you're like, "Oh, why did I make that dumb decision? I knew that was a bad decision." It's probably because you were offline when you were making the decision.

And so, again, nothing's wrong with you. We just need to learn how to bring that part of our brain back online so that we can start making more conscious decisions.

So let's talk about this specifically with pornography and specifically with urges. I talk about stop, drop, and breathe. Using that process, stop, drop, and breathe to get back online. We stop, we notice what's going on in our body. We drop into our body. We feel what that is and we breathe into it. This is a technique to try to help you get back into your body to make decisions on what to do.

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Now, that might not always be enough. Sometimes that stop, drop, and breathe is kind of on the edge of online work because you have to be conscious and maybe think through it. And so we might need more offline work.

Imagine that you're feeling an urge. You're having a really difficult time moving through it. The stop, drop, and breathe isn't quite working for you. And so let's do some more bodywork. Here are some things, here are some ideas.

You can go and just very simply put your feet in the grass, in water, in earth, and just ground yourself, orient yourself, just focus on what it feels like to have your feet outside in nature. You can do something a little bit bigger, like a cold shower or sticking your face in cold water. You can go on a walk and just focus on orienting while you're on a walk.

When I say orienting, what that means is noticing where you are, noticing what's around you. Noticing all of your senses. What am I tasting? What am I feeling? What's the wind feel like? What can I touch? What can I smell? And engaging all of your senses, just focusing on getting into your body.

You can do exercise, run, jump, dance, punch to music, go biking. You can do things like meditation. You can Google a meditation. That can be kind of difficult though, when you're in a really offline state. And so I like tapping more than meditation when I'm in a really offline state. Tapping is EFT tapping. You can Google or YouTube videos on EFT tapping. What you're doing is you're tapping those acupuncture points and repeating phrases to yourself while you're tapping those acupuncture points. It can help you get back online.

You can scream into a pillow. You can dance. You can sing or just make noises, just whatever potent and novel movement you can use to help your body get back into an online state.

Very simple things that you can do is just looking around and reminding yourself where you are. Reminding yourself what you're seeing. Or like

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looking in your peripheral. So looking straight ahead and asking yourself, okay, what can I see in my peripheral vision? And just trying to ground in there.

All right, those are some ideas. Now let's go a little bit deeper into this concept. It's better to do preventative work and preventative nervous system work, preventative body work, instead of trying just to solve crises whenever they pop up.

And so what this looks like is prioritizing body nervous system work daily. Asking yourself, how am I? How is my state today? Am I aware enough of what's going on internally that I know how to help myself from a nervous system standpoint? What does my body need? Does it need exercise? Does it need movement? Does it need rest?

This is a simple concept, right? Like, oh yeah, let's do preventative work every single day. But it can be difficult because the skills that it requires is, number one, being able to observe your body from a nonjudgmental and really honest point of view. And if we're not used to being in our body and observing our body, we can just be in a constant state of stress and not even realize we're in stress because it's just our norm.

It's like that analogy, a fish doesn't know that they're swimming in water because it's just always there. So really learning what am I experiencing? Am I in a constant state of stress or in a constant state of numbing myself? Am I able to observe what's going on here?

This is where a coach can be really helpful. This is where a meditation practice can be really helpful. This is where setting an alarm on your phone to check in two or three times a day just to ask yourself, oh, what am I feeling right now? And then just take a few notes. What am I experiencing right now? It's going to just take some practice, but you get better at it as you practice.

The second skill that this requires that's simple but also really difficult is trusting your body. Do I trust my body when I'm feeling stress? Do I trust

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that I need something else, or am I just going to continue to push through and eventually hurt myself a little bit more?

So for me, what I used to do, and sometimes I still fall into this trap but I'm pretty good at it now, is I used to just go and go and go and go and go and go and go. And I wouldn't be aware of what was going on in my body. And I didn't realize that I was in a constant state of overacting and like a constant state of stress and of just doing more and more and more and more.

And so what would happen, like if I would start to feel overwhelmed, instead of saying, all right, maybe this is my body telling me something and I need some nervous system work – I didn't even know what it was at that point though, so tons of grace for my past self. I would just say, nope, I just got to keep going. I will stop being overwhelmed, if I just get all my stuff done.

But that didn't work. I didn't trust myself. I didn't trust that the overwhelm was telling me that I needed to slow down. And so I would crash. I would crash and burn and crash and burn and crash and burn.

My friend, Lindsay, is so great at this. I love talking to her because she'll tell me something like, oh yeah, this stuff was coming up for me and it was a little bit of a difficult day. And so what I'm doing today is I'm just spending the whole morning doing this and this and this and this. I'm going out paddle boarding and then I'm doing breath work and then I'm doing yoga and like all these things.

She's so great at listening to her body. I really appreciate talking to her. But why she can do that is because, first off, she's able to observe. And second, she trusts that what her body is telling her is a signal that there might be some nervous system work to happen here.

So back to this idea of preventative work instead of solving a crisis, right? My example of going, going, going, going, going, going until I crash and burn, that crash and burn was a crisis and it would take days, sometimes weeks to get out of. It's so much better long-term if I would do the preventative work before I get to that crash and burn state.

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And so now that I've gotten good at it, what that looks like for me is just connecting into my heart and into myself multiple times a day. And I don't need it to be like a whole 10 minute meditation. It can be a quick 30 second breathing. Breath exercises, just every now and then. It's workouts, so I always prioritize my workout. And specifically lately it's been prioritizing jogging and running because it feels so good and it's something that really, really helps my nervous system, is just getting my heart rate up.

And then another thing for me is a lot of rest. And so I schedule a lot of rest into my days and into my weeks. Now, what that requires is it requires getting over those deeply rooted, I feel like they're American beliefs, maybe just a more Western belief that being idle is lazy and I always have to be productive to be enough.

So it requires you challenging those beliefs and letting yourself be less productive for the sake of healing your body. And the crazy thing about that is that the more you take the time to rest and to heal your body and to do the nervous system work, the more productive you will be on a more consistent basis.

Okay, you guys, so that's my challenge for you this week, is let's really prioritize this nervous system, healing this nervous system work. I gave you a bunch of examples, but really what it comes down to is how aware are we of our bodies? How aware are we of the emotions, the state, the angst we're feeling, the stress we're feeling, the shame we're feeling, whatever that is. Are we aware of what's going on?

And number two, once we become aware of that, can we trust our bodies that it's telling us something? And can we try some things to help it out instead of just trying to ignore it and push it away?

All right, you guys, that's going to help you so much. If you're trying to quit porn, it's going to help you so much. Have a great week and we'll talk to you later. Bye 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

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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. And then 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. So you can go and sign up at Sarabrewer.com/masterclass, and it is totally free.