



The Root of Pornography Use | A Presentation by Sara Brewer

February 11, 2023

Kurt Francom: Alright. We're all thinking it. What are we going to do about this porn problem? It can be so daunting and heavy as we watch it, destroy individuals and families. What you are about to hear is a presentation by Sarah Brewer.

Who is 1 of the top Saturday Saint coaches when it comes to overcoming pornography. I wouldn't be surprised if you've have seen some of Sarah's content online. She is becoming more and more popular because her approach to helping individuals overcome pornography is just so effective. Her method is described on her website as shamed free and sex positive. As I listened to her presentation, I was so encouraged.

As she describes so many practical approaches of understanding the issue and then addressing it. Now, this episode is a presentation rather than an interview because the video version of this presentation is now part of our liberating Saints virtual library. There we have 25 plus presentations to help leaders who are striving to help others overcome a struggle with pornography. So enjoy Sarah's presentation and then head on over to leading-saints.org slash 14. The link will be in the show notes.

And there you can watch Sarah's a video presentation to see all the slides and visuals that she shares during this presentation, and you'll get free us to the entire library for 14 days, which should be plenty of time to watch all the presentations. Everyday people who thought they could never overcome pornography, are doing just that that. Hope is available and recovery is real So visit leading saints dot org slash 14 to access all the incredible material. So you're checking us out as maybe a potential podcast you could start listening to. I know many of you have been listening for a long time, but let me just talk to the newbies for a minute.

What is leading saints. What are we trying to do here with this podcast? Well let me explain. Leading saints as a non profit organization, a 05:01 c 3 is what they call it? And we have a mission to help Latter saints be better prepare to lead.

Now, of course, often means in the context of a calling, it may mean in your local community, your work assignments, we've heard about our content influencing all sorts of leaders in all sorts of different context. We invite you to listen to this episode to maybe a few others of our 500 plus episodes that we have out there, jump in and begin to learn and begin to consider some of these principles we talk about on the leading saints podcast. Here we go.

Sara Brewer: Welcome Thank you. I'm so excited to be here.

Kurt Francom: Yeah. I'm glad this is working out, and you know, I've seen... First of, I've got a marketing background. I must say you have phenomenal marketing and all things that you do online with. That's the good things that you do.

So you keep popping up in my feet. I'm like, use this era. And Sarah Brewer. And so I was fun to connect. And you are a life coach.

Mh. But you're a life coach for individuals struggling with pornography. Is that a a good way to

Sara Brewer: Yep.

Kurt Francom: And how did you... I mean, it's not... I don't wanna, like, stigmatize this industry or anything, but usually, I see a lot of like, men who are, like, in recovery, and then they're, like, I found some things that have worked.

I can help others. Yeah. So I'm gonna be the the coach. Right? So how did you get in this niche of being a life coach for individuals who struggle with pornography.

Speaker 1: Yeah. So I first started coaching return missionaries and just...

Speaker 2: Oh wow.

Speaker 1: Loved, loved, loved. That... And that's when, you know, I I... For me found these tools that I learned through life coaching was after my mission, it was a difficult transition and a lot of clients wanted help with porn. And so it just kept coming up, and my certifications the things that I learned around buffering some of the things I'll talk about today and then just education around healthy sexuality, shame free sexuality.

It just it worked really, really well for people, and I remember being in my parents basement. Be like, like, feeling this calling. Okay. Let's, like, focus on porn, and I was scared out of my mind, and that was, like, I am un girl. And I'm kinda young and, like, people are not gonna wanna hear this for me, but It just...

It really felt like a calling, and know we ran with it, and it's been really successful To helped a lot people since then So it's guess cool.

Speaker 2: Yeah. I'm I'm glad you jumped in, and you felt that calling because... Man, we need we need some help. Right? So it's, like, all hands on deck.

Whoever feels called to jump in and and make a difference here. Let's do it. And I wanna maybe smash any stigma, you know, I'm not only for the stigma of you being a light... A a female life

coach in this with this focus, but I would imagine that not all of those that you help are men, You know,

Speaker 1: You women. Absolutely.

Speaker 2: So what how would use this what you've seen with that dynamic of both men and women struggling with pornography?

Speaker 1: I mean, I think the, like, majority of my clients are men. But women absolutely do. And it's the same tools that we can use to quit as women and there tends to be more shame there for women. And so that's something to work through even more. But, I mean, we're all sexual beings.

And porn, like I'm gonna talk about here. It's just, you know a way that... We learn to cope with emotion, and and so anyone can struggle with it. It doesn't mean that you're less than if you're a woman struggling with it.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Well, I don't wanna steal any anymore of your talking points here or too early. So let's jump into your presentation. I'll be standing by listening, and then I'll jump on at the animal. We'll talk about, I'll fire some questions at you.

So...

Speaker 1: Cool. Sounds great. Okay. Yeah. So the presentation is called the roots of pornography use.

So and then I title that here best practices for leaders who minister to those struggling with porn have leaders in mind as I made this presentation. And I'm excited because I do get emails often from ministers from other religions, not just L from many, many different backgrounds were, like, help me. Help my people. And so I'm excited to be able to share this with them as well. Alright.

There we you go. Okay. So Am Sarah Brewer, help people quit pouring, my tagline is shame free sex positive. I'm also the hosts of the overcome pornography for good podcast. So you can...

You see me around there. Here's what we're gonna cover. Gonna talk about the 3 big root porn use, unwanted porn news. And individuals. The first 1 is escape and buffering.

The second 1 is over desire, which are these automatic, more compulsive urges and the third route is identity. And then, Kurt, if you want to ask questions after each section or at the very end, whatever you wanna do, just stop me.

Speaker 2: Okay. Cool.

Speaker 1: Okay. So first 1, gonna talk about this first root of porn news switches, escape and buffering. So a myth that many of us believe about porn is that porn use is about an overactive sex drive or rebellion. And this just isn't true. The truth is is that porn you, especially, you know, unwanted porn news is about escaping emotion, and I call this term buffering.

So might be escaping emotion like loneliness, anxiety, stress, shame is a big 1 boredom, discourage, pressure anything really. Buffering is just a term use for any action you might use to avoid negative emotion. So a buffer can be over eating can be over drinking. It can be scrolling social media. It can be Netflix.

It can be over shopping, and it can be pouring. It can be a whole number of these things. And seeing it in this, like, seeing porn with a list of all these things helps us get rid of the shame because we notice oh. Just the same thing. It's the same thing as if I was using over eating to escape emotion or overs shopping to escape emotion, That's all porn use is, because it's me escaping emotion.

So for example, might be stressed from school from tests and my clients right, got finals coming up and just so stressed can't even handle. I need to escape the stress so I escaped with sugar or feeling shame and an ina,

Speaker 2: and

Speaker 1: I just can't It's just really painful and so I escaped that with video games, or, you know, again, shame and ina, we escape that with corn use, and it gets rid of that feeling for a moment, but the thing about buffers is that it doesn't really solve the problem. Makes us feel better for a second, and then we typically feel worse afterwards, but a lot of us get stuck in these buffering patterns. We feel emotional pain. So a mistake that many people make is that they use band aid solutions that don't solve for the buffering. Can be things like accountability programs, web filters, just gotta replace it with exercise.

A lot of people hear that. Even seeking deeper connections if you see deeper connections, it'll all be fixed, relying only on fasting and prayer, These are good things, but they are band aid solutions, and they will not get to the root of the buffering. So instead, we wanna do so we want to learn emotional management, different coping skills learn emotional resiliency, which is the ability to feel the emotion without needing to escape it. And I think I'll talk about this here in a little bit, but this emotional resiliency, it's not, like, let's just be strong and not fill the emotion and just, like, buck up and be a man. It's not what I'm talking about.

It's really learning this skill of being able to sit with a emotion and many of us aren't taught that. And it's a skill that we need to learn now in adulthood, then we can teach you tour kids and just get better and better. And then lastly, instead, we need to work on healing from emotional wounds. So an application for a leader, and I'll get here into a more specific example in a second is that we need to recognize especially with our members that are coming to us for help and wanting to change, recognize that corn use is not about rebellion. And it's not about having too high a sex stride.

Also need to focus. The second point here is notice that focusing only on quitting porn isn't going to create long term results, So just don't look. Don't look. Don't look. Don't look don't look.

Don't look don't do. Don't do it. Don't do it. That's not gonna create long term results. The focus needs to be on healing wounds, learning this emotional management and resiliency skills.

That's the root that's gonna help with the porn use. So a very common story that I hear especially with Rms. Like, I was saying, I I love the Rms and hear this a lot. Come home from their mission, and maybe they struggled with porn before their mission, but they quit and didn't struggle and then they come home and a whole bunch of stuff comes up as their Rm. Right?

A lot of negative emotion, no. Fear, worry, stress, on top of that, there can be difficult missionary experiences, that caused some trauma and shame and regret and, you know, kinda tab. We don't talk about the hard parts of missions or, like, the trauma missions often. We'd talk about how great there are, so there can be some shame there and just a lot of inner turmoil. And inner turmoil, that negative emotion builds and builds and built do they need an escape and what are they used to escaping that emotion with, especially pre mission is pork.

So you use porn to escape that even for a moment. And then this is where we get into the shame cycle. They receive shameful messages from themselves, from others that they're working with. This is, you, something's wrong with me because I quit and now I'm back. I'm never gonna be able to change.

With these shameful messages, Shane causes us to hide and avoid. We hide and avoid from other people. We hide and avoid from ourselves. And we hide an away from God or who wants to pray or show up spiritually wouldn't feel shame. No wanna do that.

And then there's the more porn use because we're hiding and avoiding, feeling more negative emotion using that to us using porn to escape the negative emotion. And then these arms you know, I worked with or even heard of, so I didn't talk about this at the beginning, but before I even really got into work I've had you know, experiences with friends and people that dated that had the same pattern and they're able to quit after getting emotional health, through working with her professional, not just trying to pray it away or trying to shame themselves out of quitting. K? 1 important thing to notice here is that shameful tax sticks used by well intention, family or usually only makes it worse. So that brings me to shame that I wanna talk about for a moment, a very common fuel, not just in rn important use, but in all porn news, especially unwanted corn use is shame.

So shame only makes porn use worse. Shame is this feeling that there is something wrong with me. Shame comes from thoughts. There's something wrong with me. And like I mentioned before, Brown teaches us this is that those actions that come from shame are hiding and avoiding.

And when we hide and avoid, it creates more porn. It creates more shame, it creates more buffering activities. And so then we get into the shame cycle, and this is what a lot of members get into around pornography as they porn. They think they're... There's something wrong with them.

They feel shame. They hide and they buffer with more porn, and it just cycles, and cycles, and cycles. And then they think in order for me to quit more, and I just need to beat myself up a little bit more I need to tell myself that this is really, really, really bad. But that just keeps them here in this shame spiral in this shame cycle. K?

Shame, just a few messages here. So shame is always a message from the adversary and is never from God. Sometimes my clients, they think well, like, shame is God telling me to be better. But what we see, you know, God cares about the fruits, cares about the fruits of what we're doing with our life. And the fruits of shame are never good fruits, so shame cannot be from God.

I love thinking about you know, Adam and Eve, they take the fruit and what's the first thing that says to them? Hide hide yourselves. What have you done? His first message to them was shame. We have to be very, very careful not to mistake that shame is from God because it's not.

And we see that when we see the fruits of this shame cycle, we see that shame cannot be from God because the fruits are not good. Guilt is I did something wrong. Guilt is a great, like, sign little siren that goes off in our brain like, hey You did something that didn't really line up with your values. Shame is I am wrong. It's really important here is in order for guilt to stay helpful.

We have to release it and let it go. If we hold on to guilt, it becomes shame. I've used an example recently, you know, guilt might be like someone honking their horn at you if you start to sw into their lane, like, like, oh, I'm like, okay. I'm gonna get back in my lane. But if that person

keeps honking at you, Like, the rest of the time you're driving, Hong kong Kong Kong, it gets annoying and frustrating and then you probably drive more reckless and you get more upset.

And so guilt, similarly, it it's gonna give us that sign, and then we have to release it and let it go. If we keep holding onto it, it turns into shame. Something that, it's really helpful too is to notice that it's not either shame or justification. Hey, a lot of times, people are like, well, I don't feel shame, and I'm just gonna go in view and justify, do all the things. Those are 2 very different sides of this spectrum, shame and justification, very, very extremes.

What we need to notice here is that there's is middle ground. There's middle emotions that are gonna be much more helpful than Shame and much more helpful than justification. Either of those are not gonna help us quit part, but staying here in the middle using emotions like worthiness, commitment hope that's gonna be so much more useful than these extreme sides. So we need to try to find this middle ground and stay in this middle ground as much as we can. It's also a difference between physiology versus morality, and I wanna talk about this with shame.

Okay. Physiology versus morality. This is really important to bring up as we're talking about Shame too. Just leave we heard. So physiology, our normal natural body responses, hunger, a sexual urge, craving for sugar, their normal natural body responses, morality is what we do with those responses.

So fill, you know, an urge for sugar and we have opportunities with that we can, you know, eat an apple, We can go and steal a candy bar. Okay. Morality comes with what we do with those physiological responses. Morality is not the physiological coal response itself. This is really important because so many people feel shame around the physiological response because they feel and sexual urge because they want to view pornography.

When the truth is is that that is not morality. That desire is not sin, sin comes with whatever your values are about what you do with those physiological responses. And if we're feeling shame about anytime we feel an urge, We demon it. We push it down. I'm gonna talk about this more here in another section too, but I do wanna introduce it here, and it just makes it worse.

It just makes it worse. It gets us in that shame spike shame cycle, and so it's really important that we start to differentiate between physiology and morality and physiology, desire for sex, hunger cues, desire for sugar is not morality. What happens like if we think about this with sugar, When we demon eyes desire for sugar, it leads to bingeing sugar. It leads to bingeing behaviors. When we'd say, oh, I shouldn't want that.

I shouldn't want sugar. I shouldn't aggression watch sugar, it leads to Binging more and it's similar with sexual urges. So we need to neutralize that and recognize that physiology is just a normal natural body response in part of being human. So a little bit of application here for leaders is we want to avoid coming down with the hammer, giving ultimatum, fear techniques meats, your family will be ruined forever if you don't stop now, and punishments as an attempt to motivate, just doesn't work. And then lastly, a few articles that are really helpful with this is there there's an ensign article called, it is a sin to be weak, and it talks about the difference between weakness and sin.

This can really help us with those shame spirals. And then Brad Wi cox gave a great conference talk recently called worthiness is not flawless. I have clients bring that talk up to me. Often and how helpful it is for them. Okay.

Do you have any questions, Kurt, that you wanna talk about here? Or should we keep going?

Speaker 2: You know, just some things what I wanna underscore is this this concept of escaping the emotion. Like, when we put in that context, especially as church leaders because it's so easy to default to this state of, like, oh it's the behavior, and we hyper focus on the behavior. And it drive ourselves crazy because, like, that will not solve the behavior. It's you, situated it. And so And then the world just opens up as of as far as options with how we can help people when it's like, oh, this actually an emotional thing or this is actually something about just how you...

Your skill set of coping with tough things you've experienced in life, and let's talk about that. And it's so liberating as a church leader especially as a bishop just think, oh, I don't have to just talk about porn all the time. Like, I've said everything that that I know to say, let's move past that and Really talking about about real healing, You know? Yeah.

Speaker 1: Such a good perspective. It's gonna help the the person so much more to.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And going back to, you know, you talk about filters and other things we try again. We're focused on the behavior. I mean, those can

Speaker 0: still be good tools to use here

Speaker 2: and there or, I mean, they're... They're still needed along the path some way, but sometimes we hyper on them as the maybe a solution. Is that?

Speaker 1: Yeah. Yeah. The solution is that I use covenant eyes and that it's a software to that helps you have good material. And that's just not gonna be a long term solution.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Be helpful for sure. And I'm gonna use those with my kids as they grow up. But I'm also not going to rely on that to fix it.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Yeah. And I... You heard a lot. You know, it's almost a a joke with some...

Because hear so much of, you know, those, you know, maybe the return mission or whatever Like, well, you just get married so you have an appropriate outlet. For the sexual urges. But again, that they find... They hit the same wall again, like, oh, actually, that didn't help. Like...

Speaker 1: Oh, hang gosh.

Speaker 2: You know, Like, just these little things we think we just have to address the behavior given appropriate outlet for it, but it just perpetuate it.

Speaker 1: Yes. I can't tell you how many clients I have that. Or, like, I thought Marriage was supposed to fix this. But guess what, there's a ton of negative emotion that happens when you get married too. There's stuff to figure out.

There's stuff that you could buffer from, and it's getting married is not the solution. Right? Yeah.

Speaker 2: And I I just... I appreciate your focus on return missionaries because And also your focus on shame is the root cause of why this becomes such a a difficult dynamic But, you know, return missionaries are so vulnerable to that shame because they've had such an overs structured life, which, no, that's nothing wrong with mission life. I think it bless their lives and in various ways of being over structured and whatnot. But then you move out of that over structure, and and you're feeling like, it's been 2 years. Like, I've got this figured out.

Like, I'm stronger. Like, I feel like I'm on the search high and then that first mess up, you fall so far from where, you know, this pedestal you felt like you were on that you've conquered you fall so far that that shame is even more potent

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: For those return missionaries, because they... They're transitioning into a not so structured life. Right?

Speaker 1: Yeah. And there's so much shame. It's not even just shame around Porn. It's shame around. I'm I'm not reading my scripture is like I was, and I just don't feel like I'm as good of a person and I don't have things figured out, and I'm being idle and all the things.

Right?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: There's there's a lot.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And then I I appreciate your your discussion on Shame and and Guilt. You know, a lot of times we... You hear that the separation of what Guilt is what shame is, but I love your emphasis on, like, an an over emphasis on guilt

Speaker 0: can lead to shame.

Speaker 2: Right? And not only, you know, I preach a lot to leaders like, the best thing you can do is is remove shame or rather than remove behaviors, you know, in that interaction as a church leader, But part of that is you gotta recognize yeah. There's guilt and there's a purpose for guilt, but we have to move past it. We can't just dwell on the guilt or constantly come back to remember how, like, wrong this was like, you should be filled guilt. Like, and then we we push them into shame, and then we,

Speaker 1: you know,

Speaker 2: we we lose progress or we don't see change and it gets so frustrating. Like, well no. I'm focusing on guilt, but I love that emphasis the guilt can lead to shame if you hang with Guilt too long.

Speaker 1: Yeah. I think the problem comes when we use Guilt is like the motivator. Guilt is more like a sign. It's more just like a little signal. And then let's use something else to motivate us.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And I guess that's... And, these these are these terms are all related, but that concept of if you're in a in a posture, as a church leader of trying to motivate people or you're thinking, if I could just motivate him enough, then we'll get past this. Like, obviously, he's not motivated because he had 4 really got relapse last week and the week before he he only had 3. So I just need to motivate him more, like, just gotta get out of the motivation.

Yeah. And just push them back to grace, and love, and hope, and you're we're gonna find better results there.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And what's really going on? Because the problem isn't that you slipped up 4 times last week. The problem is there's something that's really causing you to go there. And what is that?

Yeah.

Speaker 2: Really helpful. Alright. Let's move on to the... That... Your next section here.

Speaker 1: Okay. So route 2 over desire, over desire is like I said, those compulsions for porn. And so, Myth here is that desire and comp compulsions for porn means that your brain is broken and than fixable. The truth is is that over desire is learned and can be un. It is actually a sign that your reward system in your brain is working correctly.

K? An example here of over desire is like, every day after I eat dinner, I want chocolate. I I have trained my brain to want chocolate. Every single day. After I did dinner, and I actually think it started on my mission because I was blessed enough to have members who would feed me dessert after every meal.

And so that's kind of an example of here what this looks like for members circling with porn. It can be enriching hours can be, you know, every time they're at the station. They're first responder fire, firefighter and every time they're at the station, they have our just for porn, every time, you know what. 10PM hits or first thing in the morning is just just happens. So the truth is is that it's actually your brain in your reward system working correctly.

And we see this through Pa dogs and and Pa study around his dogs. It's so basic thing we hear in. Like, college psychology courses. Pa was a scientist, and he had a bunch of dogs that he kept in cages, and he would go around and he would ring a bell, and then he would give the dog a treat and ring the bell and give him a treat and ring the bell and give my tree over and over

and over and over and over again. Pretty soon, the dog started to associate that sound of the bell with the tree.

And so these dogs would hear the bell, not even see the treat and start to salivate at the sound of the bell. They just associated that sound of the bell with the tree. Makes sense. Right? Now the other part of Pavlov's experiment he was able to train them to stop salivating at the sound of the bell.

We don't often hear about this part but this part is just as important and really really brings a lot of hope to people struggling with their desire for porn. So what he did to train them to not salivate at the sound of the bell, was he rang the bell and didn't give him a treat and rang the bell and didn't give him a treat, ring the bell and did give a treat over and over and over and over again until they stopped associating that sound of the bell with the treat. And at first, they were ticked and they were barking, and they heard that bell, and they were angry. And they were salivating. They're, like, what the heck path off.

Where's my treat, but after enough time after hearing that bell enough without getting the reward, they would hear that bell and not associate with treat at all. Now if Pavlov would have just put his dogs on an island for a few years where they didn't hear any bells, and then bring them back a few years later, they would still salivate at that sound of the bell even if it had been 2 years since they heard it because what's going to create bringing down that desire, getting rid of that association isn't gonna be just time away from it. It's going to be actually hearing it and not receiving the reward. So this makes sense with missionaries. Right?

They're out, doing something else. They don't have the same stuff that was available to them before, but then they come back and they still have these urges because they didn't go through the process of hearing it and not giving themselves the reward. And so a few key takeaways here, Well, and let me say here too and make sure I'm being clear, you know, what this looks like is, it's 10:00. You give yourself porn. You watch porn at 10:00.

And then your brain remembers that, and 10:00 comes around again, and you watch porn and you train your brain to start wanting porn at this certain time because you've done it before, or with certain emotions. So whenever you feel stress. You train your brain to associate stress with porn. You train your brain to associate waking up with porn. You train your brain to associate going to the station with porn.

Being in a certain environment with Porn. So that's what's happening here, and we can train ourselves out of that, like Pa, train these dogs out of it. So a few key takeaways from this example is that it's a mistake to focus on avoiding urges. Like, it would be a mistake for Pa to focus on just avoiding the bell. Instead, what we wanna do is focus on training our brains out of desire which is hearing that bell, and not receiving the reward.

K, triggers for porn are never gonna go away, especially today when we have smartphones and we have computers and we have... You know, we live in a very hyper culture, and we have, like, stress is never gonna go away Negative emotion is never gonna go away. So true self control comes from learning to hear that bell without giving yourself the reward. And I'm gonna talk about how to do that, this is mindfulness, and all the studies are showing that mindfulness techniques are the most effective in helping people quit horn because it teaches them how to do this. So what mindfulness looks like is there's imagine a pendulum swings back and forth between willpower and giving.

And anyone who struggles with porn knows this pendulum very well. They're like, no No No. I'm not gonna do it. Willpower grit. Not gonna view not gonna view and then if this...

Okay. I'm exhausted so we're gonna view. And then willpower willpower willpower and then give in. So what we need to do is we need to learn to stay here in the middle again. Will power doesn't work because power is, like, holding a beach all under underwater.

When you have an urge to view porn. You're like, no No No. Go away. Go away. Go away.

Go away. Hold it down, hold it down, hold it. What happens when you hold the beach ball underwater. It just wants to pop up, the further down you hold it, the more strength that has to pop up. That's what happens with willpower.

And that's why we get stuck in this pendulum. So instead of holding that down, wanna learn to just sit with it, sit with the emotions, and sit with the urges, not push them away, not try to make them go away, not try to run away from them, but allow them to be there, sit with them. Without giving ourselves the reward, and they have... I'll talk about how to do this specifically in just a moment. But what this does is this teaches true self control and allows these urges and these emotions to pass through sometimes.

And and this isn't just with urges. Right this can be with any emotion with anger. Right? When I hold anger down I have 2 toddlers, and they're the best, but they're really busy. So when I hold my...

Like, if I get angry, I'm just like no I'm no be angry. I'm not gonna be wrong. I'm not gonna think about it go away angry, anger go away. What happens. It explodes, and I explode and it's the worst.

And so This is not just with urges with any emotions. We need to learn how to sit with them instead of trying to make them go away. Sometimes when we think about sitting with the motion or sitting with urges. I can't do that because I don't want it there, and it's gonna be there forever if I just let it sit there The truth is is when we allow emotions when we allow urges to be there, it allows them to, like, make their way through our body and go away. So it's not gonna be there forever.

I've heard before. Emotions only last 90 seconds until you have a thought that brings that emotion again. But the natural flow of emotion and urges is to come and go unless we're holding them and trying to push them away, and then they come back even more. K? So again, here, I wanna bring this this idea of physiology versus morality again because if we are thinking, oh, this urge is bad.

It's bad for me to feel this. That's when we're gonna be pushing it down, pushing it down, pushing it down. When we can have this mindset of, oh, I'm a human, grew up in a super hyper sexual culture. My brain's trained to want the dopamine in a pornography. It makes sense that I'm having this bird right now.

There's nothing wrong with me for wanting this. That's when we can just allow it to sit there without falling into that willpower resist react cycle allow it to sit there and learn how to not give ourselves the reward to train ourselves out of that over desire. So here is 1 of the most simple ways that I teach people how to start doing this is stop, drop. And breathe. So you stop and you point out to yourself, Oh, I'm feeling and urge.

Sounds simple, but this can be really difficult for people, especially if they feel a lot of shame about their urges to actually say to themselves and feeling an urge to have the awareness that they're feeling stress or whatever and they're having urges. So stop and notice that you're feeling an urge. Number 2, drop, drop into your body, so where do you feel this in your body? We're thinking of sensations in our body, we have different sensations in our body with different. So when we are happy, like, For me, happiness in my body feels light, and it feels airy when I feel sad, it feels heavy and tight?

Just a really simple example. So our body has different feelings, tight, hard, soft, light, maybe like, shaky, we wanna drop into our body point out the sensations. We're filling in into our body. Focus on those sensations and breathe into them. It's okay that I'm feeling this.

I'm having an urge. I feel tightness in my chest focusing on it. It's okay. That tightness is okay to be there. I feel antsy.

I feel really antsy and shaky. Okay. That's okay. I can feel antsy I'm gonna focus on it. I'm gonna breathe into it.

When we do this, it allows those urges to make their way through our body and go away. K? This is what it means to listen to that bell to feel the trigger to feel the urge and not respond to them. It's practice and mindfulness. I have some podcast episodes that explain this in depth that I wanna make sure I share because these are totally free and you can listen to me explain this in much more depth.

Episode 66, episode 47 and episode 21. I think in 66, I actually take you through a practice, like, a a more mindful practice there in your mind. So use those and and share those you'd like to. 1 thing that's important to recognize about this is that it's a skill that needs to be learned, and it requires growth mindset. A lot of us when it comes to quitting porn, we have these all or nothing mindset.

Right? We're in a quick cold turkey, this is it we're done. What this actually requires is more of a growth mindset, which is this belief that you can change and that it's step by step. It's not all or nothing. It's not culture turkey.

You slipping up does not mean that you're back to square 1 This is something... Well, I think I'll talk about it in a moment, but we don't... It's damaging to, and say if you slip up, you have to start it all over, not how growth works. Looks more like a graph like this. It's going up, even though there's, like, ups and downs as we're going up.

K? So a few applications here for leaders is that we want to avoid telling people that they're gonna have to struggle with this forever. And I know a lot of us maybe say that because we don't know any better. And we think that that's true and and we feel a little bit hopeless around this. But what I wanna offer to you today is that it's not true.

And instead, recognize that our brains are very malleable, and there is so much hope and so so much hope that you can quit. So you wanna instill that confidence and hope instead. We wanna avoid encouraging the all or nothing thinking, so we start over when we slip up. And instead use slip ups as learning opportunities learning and growing instead of immediate perfection. Want to avoid demon sexuality.

Right? That physiology versus morality principle. And instead teach our members that sexuality is a beautiful part of our existence. And then it makes sense that they're struggling for urges and that it's not problem. It's not a problem to want things that are sexual.

It just isn't morality comes from what we do with those desires. Those desires are normal, natural and okay. And you can learn to be in more control when you stop demon that part of yourself. We want to avoid saying that more prayer, fasting and righteousness will fix this and instead encourage healing pain. Right?

Like we talked about from buffering and learning mindfulness skills. I tell people. You know, it's the same thing as if you went to your bishop and you're like, I'm over eating. Can you help me over eat... Like, they're not gonna tell you that praying more and fasting more and being more righteous is gonna fix an over reading habit.

It's the same thing. So... Okay. There we go there. Do you have any questions on this section, Kurt?

Speaker 2: Yeah. Man, this is really good stuff. I just... I love this concept of learning to sit with it. Because I think for whatever reason, our natural response is...

Don't sit with it, go to distraction. Right? Like, maybe if you're having struggles, you know, after 7PM, maybe that's when you should go to the gym, you know? And yeah sure I guess that's fine. But if we're doing it in a state of distraction or the old, you know, sing a him or Yeah.

Or even do, like, instead of doing something that's sinful, a behavior, like, maybe do something that's not sinful. So, yeah, maybe over eating isn't so bad. Yeah. It doesn't great But your temporary recommended at risk, you know, obviously that's maybe a a strange example. But the point being is that oftentimes we want to default to or encourage people to go to distraction rather than just sitting with

Speaker 1: it. Mh. Yeah. And it's because we haven't been taught that Yeah. We can do that.

And it feels scary. It feels more scary and mold vulnerable. Mh. Oh. Yeah.

Speaker 2: And I I too enjoy ridiculous amounts of chocolate after dinner. And so like, that's a good practice. And and even, like, leaders. Like, that's the thing is... Sometimes it's hard for church leaders understand where they're coming from if they've never really struggled with pornography, you know?

And so but there are ways that all of us buffer, Yeah. There are ways that we do behaviors that maybe they don't... Aren't sinful, but they're not necessarily healthy. Yeah. I mean, we can point to the smartphone maybe is a good place to start.

Right? Like, just that the overuse of a smartphone is maybe not overly healthy and could be, you know, could be an addressed. So... But finding even as a church leader, like, finding places where you can sit with, like, Oh, wow. You know, I do like to just have a huge lunch after...

During a stressful day, or I'm just gonna sit with that instead, or man, I just even as a father. I feel those emotions come up, like, I'm about turn into Monster dad. So I'm gonna go to the other room and sit with these feelings. Right? And so I think all of us can practice and get a better sense of how this feels when we just get curious about what we're feeling and sit with it.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And it's it's so helpful to recognize that... Because I have people say me, like, why porn, why can't be anything else? Why does have to be porn? Why couldn't...

Like, even drugs? Why? I mean, I know that's it's just from such a place of shame and like sadness.

Speaker 2: Right.

Speaker 1: Like, why couldn't it be anything else? And then the truth is is because that's what you unintentionally train your brain to want. And so it's the same thing as those over desires to eat, those over desires for sugar. It's the same thing. And so many were especially, like, turn missionaries, people who grew up with the Internet, like, we had access to things that people didn't have access to you before.

We had so much access to pornography. And so it makes sense that maybe you you used that as your buffer, and there's nothing wrong with you, and you're part of the generation that just got thrown into this, and we're learning and we're doing better, but there's nothing wrong with you. Nothing.

Speaker 2: Yeah. So helpful. And I love the your emphasis on really inserting hope of making sure it's okay to communicate. This isn't gonna be a forever thing. Like, there are skill sets.

There are things help resources that individuals... You know, they move on with life. This isn't like this white knuckle struggle their rest their life makes me think of my friend, Steve Shields, who, he was entering a recovery from a sexual addiction, and he was introduced to my other friend, Chris Bennett, who had, like, 10 years of sobriety. And Steve was just amazed. It, like, that Chris could just, like, function real life and

Speaker 0: he wasn't like, holding on where Steve was

Speaker 2: sort of still in that moment of, like, I don't know how I'm gonna get through today, and Christ just got through 10 years. Like, how was that even impossible, but he talks about how instilled in him such hope of, like, oh, like, this isn't a white knuckle thing until the end of the eternity, I it will get easier as I build these skills and and reach out to these resources.

Speaker 1: Yes. Yeah. We don't go up to the pulpit and say. I quit porn and you can too. Right?

But it might be a little helpful if we heard that.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And then the... Your emphasis on all or nothing 1 thing I still hear here is more common than I wish it was in the church context is when you're telling the and youth is a whole another dynamic. Like, in my opinion, like, if you're working with you, there's really never an appropriate time to restrict the Sac. And that's for various reasons and I get that's up to each bishop.

But I think that dynamic of restricting the Sac or even visiting with the bishop on a weekly basis that brings such shame to that dynamic that we're actually making it more difficult for success than not. But No. Putting that aside, but I often hear, like, this concept that feeds into this all or nothing of... Alright. Well, if you can go 7 days or 14 days, then you can take the sac.

That's a very all or nothing thing where, it's just gonna, again, drum up more shame and make it more difficult to... For progress.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And what I teach my clients too is that progress isn't measured by how many days you've gone without port. Yeah. We take back to Pa dogs. Progress is measured by how many urges your your processing the determine.

So how many urges you're sitting with and aligned to pass through and how you're building that skill. That's progress. Not big. Let know so many people, you know, can go 30 days and then binge. You know, it's not about days.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Really helpful. Alright. Park 3. Is that where we're at?

Speaker 1: Part 3, this one's the shortest 1. So just a few notes here on identity, Like we've talked about this Myth you have to struggle with this forever. When the truth is is that many people quit porn and it's not a life sentence. I love using the story of Quinn, who is awesome. He 1 of my clients and he quit porn after 50 years of struggling at age 63.

And now he's a life coach. And he works in my programming and he's you know, retired, but he loves it so much that he he does support groups in my my program is just such a powerhouse. Says after I learn these tools switch flipped and it was easy transformation for me. It worked and completely changed my life. And so what we learned from his is that it doesn't matter, how old you are, How long you've struggled.

There is hope and healing available for you And hello. That is the message of Christ. And of the atonement, but sometimes we like don't apply it to porn. And so let's make sure that we're also applying it to porn because it is so true here too. How we think about ourselves really matters.

I like to think, you know, how we think about ourselves it gives us energy for our actions, So how we think about ourselves gives us energy for our actions. So for example, right to become a runner you have to start seeing yourself as a runner to become successful in your company, you have to start seeing yourself as someone who is competent and able to thrive at the job at hand. This identity piece is extremely important if you're thinking. I'm not someone who can quit porn. It's really hard to quit porn.

I hope I can quit porn, but I don't really think I can. It's gonna be really difficult to do it. You have to start taking on that identity as someone who quits porn before you even do it. That feels a little backwards for people, but it's it's really important. Identity here is a very key step.

Says something that I just wanna mention for a second because it's a big enough thing that I see in my clients that I think it's worth mentioning. Is that all porn news does not equal addiction. Elder Oaks gave a great is in an enzyme, a great talk about this. Ray says we recognize that not everyone who uses pornography will fully is addicted to it. In fact, most young men and women who struggle with pornography are not addicted.

If the behavior is incorrectly classified as an addiction, the user may think he or she has lost agency in the capacity to overcome the problem. This kinda comes back to that identity. Right? This can weaken their resolve to recover and repent and problem He says lastly, it's important not to label even intensive or habit use of pornography as an addiction because that does not accurately describe the circumstances or the full nature of the required repentance and recovery. And so this isn't like a never say addicted stance, but it's just something to be aware of.

I think this is really interesting just to kinda sit on for a moment is that this year in June, the ICID 11, which is the international code of diseases by the world Health organization. They started classifying porn use as an impulse control disorder, not an addictive disorder, and that doesn't mean that there aren't compulsions and, you know, I'm not gonna go into all the nuances here. I've done that another podcast episodes, but it's just something to pay attention to. And here's really the key point I wanna get at.

Is that we wanna let individuals decide whether or not to use the addiction label and we don't wanna just give it to them. Okay? So if it's helpful for them, use it. If it's not helpful for them, all this stuff that I've talked about like, just shows us you can drop it. You do not have to identify as addicted if it doesn't feel helpful, and if it doesn't feel true, not all important use as addiction.

And this is why this isn't so important because here's what we wanna avoid We wanna avoid fostering this addiction mindset. Which is an I can't change mindset. I'm stuck. Mindset. Once an addict always an addict, I'm powerless to this.

Those are really harmful things that we get in our brain that keep us from quitting porn. We wanna avoid creating addiction identities, like, which is what I just talked about. We wanna avoid young teenagers thinking that they're addicted because they're interested in porn. And unfortunately, this happens because of things said about if he's is, you know, a teenager going through the hormones and the natural things and is interested important has access to the

Internet starts to think that they're addicted when maybe they're not. And lastly, we wanna avoid members feeling hopeless and stuck.

Okay. 1 thing... I asked this often in like my life classes that I do a few times a year. So I ask them how do you feel when you think I'm addicted. And these are common responses that I get.

I feel out of control. I feel hopeless. I feel fearful. I feel like I'm never gonna be able to change. And I feel like I've gone too far, and this is so important to think back to that identity piece.

When our identity and we're feeling this out of control hopeless fearful. Like we'll never be able to change like I've gone too far. That's going to play out directly in whether or not we're able to quit porn. It's gonna play out directly how we act. If you feel out of control, you are going to act out of control.

And so it's worth it to maybe question this any of these beliefs that might be coming up for you around pornography, like, a out of control and hopeless. I'm addicted and I can't change, because that's just not true. So little application here for leaders is we wanna just avoid assuming addiction. We wanna avoid just using addiction as a label and let let our members and let individuals decide how they want to label it. We wanna avoid any comments that might make giving young man or women in the congregation think that they're addicted because they viewed or have urges to new pornography and wanna help members foster an identity of someone who quits.

Porn. And so what that might look like is instead of always always always focusing on Don't look. Don't look. Don't look. Let's also focus on, like, what identity?

Do you want to have? How can you live into that identity now? What does someone who doesn't struggle with porn do? Okay. Go and do that.

What does someone who doesn't struggle with porn, feel and think about themselves? Let's start feeling that, and let's start thinking about that ourselves that way right now. I had someone a client recently in my program who said all I've done is the identity work this last month. And I haven't struggled at all. I feel like, so good.

I haven't had any or just report. I'm I'm doing so much better than I've ever done. All I've done is changed the way that I'm thinking about myself. So we cannot underestimate how powerful identity work is. Hey.

There is hope, healing and a life without porn available to anyone. To anyone. And I think this my last slide here is just, yeah. I just have a vision of a group of really powerful and informed leaders that use research based techniques instead of creating unintentional harm from fear and shame. There is so much good that you can do as a leader here in these positions, and I hope that this hope that these principles will help you do that when it comes to pornography.

Speaker 2: Awesome, Sarah, that was that was so good. And I so much appreciate your approach to the concept of addiction. In this work I do with leading saints and especially through creating this liberty saints this resource you quickly realize there's, like, these 2 camps of, like, you never say addict and you do say addict, and I get caught in the middle of it then sort of fresh because sometimes I hear people talk about, Yet, pornography is not an addiction. Don't even use the term as if just by not you saying it attic is somehow going to help. Like You said in some instances.

Yeah. It can help. Right? And so I love your slide where if it helps, use it if it doesn't help, don't use it, because the dynamic, I think people miss that especially those in the camp where they're like, never use addiction. Is that in this process with immortality where we're struggling with things, especially with sin, there has to be a step of surrender where we give it all to God and say, I am broken.

I don't know what to do. You're gonna have to help me. And for a lot of people using that term addiction is another way for to say, I'm broken and I surrender this that without Christ, I'm addicted. And so I need Christ to move through that, And so as long as everybody has a component of that step of surrender, whether that through the word addiction or not. So, anyways, I really believe that you're your approach to that term and and how we use it when not really helpful.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. I I can see it being helpful for people and then I also see the other side a lot where. It becomes a little bit of a trap.

Right?

Speaker 2: Yeah. I've wanna maybe emphasize just... Obviously, you're life coach And man I kinda... When I hear people sort of downplay life coaches like, oh, you know, they don't have real schooling or training or whatnot, And a lot of leaders they feel like, oh, well, I gotta get this person out. They're really struggling with these urges and addiction or whatever it is.

I gotta get them into some good therapy Mh. And there's some good great therapists out there. There's some mediocre therapists out there. There's some great life coaches out there. There's some mediocre life coaches out there And what...

The reason I always try to emphasize this is that it doesn't take long for a leader to realize how daunting this issue is, how per it is, And if we say only this group of people with specific educational traits, you know, it can help us, we're just not gonna win this war. And so I just always encourage leaders consider the great life coaches out there like Sarah, who have have seen success and who are really helping people, you know? And, anyway, so I just wanna make sure that's clear with leaders like, don't don't dismiss the life coaches and what the the power they they can have and Sometimes it can be a lot even, you know, as the leader is analyzing the sacred funds they use for therapy and fast start funds are whatnot. Sometimes a life coach can be a whole lot cheaper, and they get the same results and anyway, so I just wanna make sure we're we're really looking at resource of life coaches. Anything you'd add to that?

Speaker 1: Yeah. Thank you. I... I mean, I work with therapists too, and we we will work side by side clients depending on what they need. I typically will recommend therapy.

If there's some trauma that hasn't been addressed before, that's a little bit out of my wheelhouse, if they need more, like, intensive support, that's gonna be a better fit for them. But, yeah. It's it's more about if Like, I've worked with therapist that have helped me more than a life coach. I've worked with gl coaches that have helped me more than a therapist as. It just depends on the person.

Mh. Your level of trust. How you feel connecting with them. So I graduated from By and therapeutic recreation, and I was going to get my license, and that's when I found life coaching, and I just love business. I just love the business side.

And I love the, like, counseling side too, and so life coaching are really fun mix of that for me. Yeah. But, yeah. It just depends how I typically work around that too is my podcast is just awesome. And so people listen to it and they get results, and they feel amazing.

And then if they want some extra help, they trust me because they listen to the podcast. So So that's a great place to send people for more free help too is my podcast let them start making changes learning more there too.

Speaker 2: Yeah. That's really helpful. And anything you'd add as far as like how a leader could leverage someone like you and your life coach because, you know, with therapy, it's like, okay, we gotta get them an appointment. And then we get them an appointment, They go to this office, they sit on a couch and they talk. And I don't know what exactly happens there, but maybe they get better.

So I mean... But life coaching isn't always like that. I mean, I you do wanna on 1 coaching, but I'm imagining you have other research as well. Right? So how how could a leader use those resources?

Speaker 1: So I've had bishop subsidized for my program for for their members. I do a lifetime access program. So it's, like 6 payments or if you want lower payments, it's 12 payments and you get lifetime access to, like, the program and then lifetime access to weekly group coaching calls.

Speaker 2: Mh.

Speaker 1: Which are, like, group therapy calls and all the other stuff in between so. That's an option that I've had members do in the past. And then we also have 1 on 1 coaching opportunities that we can look into. Does that help? Yeah.

I I haven't ever been in the position of being bishop to help someone find something. So I'm not totally sure what they might be yeah. Questioning Or...

Speaker 2: Yeah. And I I guess it's just such a traditional model. You know, we just sort of do ask Guy I did and and, you know, therapies very traditional model as well. So it's like, you know, someone has a problem I send them to a therapist, and they sent me the bill. I pay it.

And so But, man, this issue, specifically, we just need to look at all resources and try, you know, whatever works and whatever is a good fit for the individual. And so you know, in my opinion, again, or read the hamburger, you do you or whatever you feels best, but if I was in that position again, you know, I wanna have a problem paying for a monthly program for somebody. If it's helping. Right? And, again, not that you pay for it forever, but Yeah.

Try it for a while. And and again, if it's helping just as much as a as the therapist would help and great, you know? Go.

Speaker 1: Yeah. I've had many clients who who You know, it's... It... My program is just really specific on that. You go to a therapist, and there's probably so many things that are working out with so many people that it's not as specialized, you know?

Speaker 2: Right. Yeah. Yeah. So definitely consider it. Sarah, this has been great.

I guess the final question I have for you is if you're in a room full of bishop and relief Study president, steak presence, whatever it is, what final encouragement would you give to them as far as, as they struggle with helping other people who struggle with predominantly.

Speaker 1: I think I would just reiterate the message that, we can't change from shame. And we can't change from from hating ourselves, for being disappointed in ourselves. And so that's the most powerful thing you can do for people is it and take their results off of your shoulders too. What they decide to do is not like a reflection of you. So what we get to do is we get to try to help in healing and we heal through love, not from shame and fear.

Speaker 0: That concludes this episode of the leading Saints podcast, Hey listen, would you do me a favor? You know, everybody's got that friend who listens to a ton of podcasts, and maybe they aren't aware of leading saints, so would you mind taking the link of this episode or another episode of leading saints and just texting it to that friend, you know who I'm talking about. The friend who always listens to pod cast and is always telling you about different podcast podcasts it's your turn to tell that friend about leading saints. So Share it, We'd also love to hear from you if you have any perspective or thought on this episode, You can go to leading saints dot org and actually leave a comment on the episode page or reach out to us at leading saints dot org slash contact. Remember, to see the slides from Sarah's presentation and to watch the other 25 presentations, go to leading saints dot org slash 14.

Speaker 2: It came as a result of the position of leadership, which was imposed upon us by the God of heaven who brought fourth a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when the declaration was made concerning the own and only true and living church upon the face of the earth. We were immediately put in a position of loneliness. The loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor run away and to which we must face up with bold and courage and ability.