



### EPISODE 3

## Nathan and Shelby Astle: Open Communication in Relationships When Pornography Is an Issue

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[Breaking the Silence Podcast by Reach 10](#) with hosts Creed Orme and Crishelle Simons

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*How can young couples navigate the tough topic of pornography when one (or both) are working to stop using it? Nate and Shelby started this conversation while dating and are still relying on the power of open communication in their marriage. Hear what they mean by not letting pornography define a person or a relationship. Validating both partner's feelings and not taking on the emotional labor of someone else's work have been key factors in their relationship. Nate shares tools for getting out of a shame cycle, learning self-regulation, and the importance of realizing his actions were causing Shelby pain. Together they resist narratives about "the creepy guy in the basement" and hold to the view that we are all whole people even while we have both strengths and weaknesses. Every relationship is unique, yet we can learn from each other's experiences as we navigate our own.*

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Crishelle: Welcome back listeners. We're so excited today to be breaking the silence with Nathan and Shelby Astle. They are so incredible. And we are going to be talking specifically about talking about pornography in a relationship from dating to, to now marriage. And I love Nathan and Shelby so much. They're two of my favorite people in this world and their story is so inspiring and so I'm stoked to be able to, to talk with them and to share, share this with you all there.

Creed: We're so lucky to have you guys. I'm looking forward to a great conversation. So to get started, can you tell us a little bit about who you are, what you're up to, and what your story is?

Shelby Astle: Yeah, so my name is Shelby. I am currently a master's student at Kansas state studying applied family science and my research areas of interests are healthy sexual development. So like how we can help adolescents and young adults have a healthy view of themselves as a sexual being. And then also parent child sexual communication, how parents talk to their kids about sex is a big area I'm interested in.

Nathan Astle: Hi, I'm Nate. Nate Astle. I am also a master's student in at Kansas state university in the couples and family therapy program. And I have a specific research focus on financial therapy, so how couples navigate topics around money and financial conflict. So that's me,

Shelby: And we're connected, we are married so we are in a relationship with each other.

Crishelle: Tell us a little bit about like how long have you been married? How long have you, did you date the, just a little bit more about yourselves?

Shelby: Yeah. We've been married for four years. We, we met in third grade, which is like really cheesy, but we get oohs and aahs, so, you know, so cute.

Nate: You should all be jealous of our story.

Creed: I am.

Shelby: Every story's beautiful. But yeah, we dated for eight months before we got married, which is kind of a roller coaster, but we're really happy now, so it's great.

Nate: Yeah, we, we would recommend that you really get to know your partner before you marry them. We were a little lucky that we've been kinda childhood friends, but that's our little caveat.

Creed: Very cool.

Crishelle: That's fantastic. Where are you both from?

Shelby: Oh, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Crishelle: Cool. And so now you're in Kansas living live in the dream great master's students. How long were you into, or how far are you into your master's degrees?

Shelby: I will graduate in August of next year

Nate: And I will hopefully graduate in December of next year. And then we both plan on pursuing PhDs after this. So we're forever students.

Crishelle: That's fantastic. And that's great. Love all that student debt you have. Just kidding. They are really awesome and figured out a different way. Oh boy. Cool. so we want to know a little bit more about your story, about your relationship and especially in regards to healthy sexuality and pornography and how have those topics evolved throughout your, your relationship and how you even first started talking about those things.

Nate: Yeah. So just for a little background, I started or as I started looking at pornography when I was 13 which I think is typical age range maybe even a little late compared to what's happening now. And I came from a highly religious and highly conservative family, but also conservative culture.

Nate: And with that came a lot of shame as far as my pornography use and what, what the pornography use meant about me. And so through the years as I continue to be involved with church and you know, talk with ecclesiastical leaders and things about my pornography is that that shame cycle really was kind of pounded into me that there was something wrong about me for looking at pornography is considered a sin. And so when it came to time to date and eventually look to get married and things, that was something I had a lot of fear around was that my partner would see me as less than. And it was something that honestly was, was a really scary thing when we first started to talk about,

Shelby: yeah, I guess I can share my background too. Growing up I had like a really opposite experience from me and I honestly don't know how this happened, but I didn't know that like religious people looked at porn until I was like 22 which is kind of embarrassing to say, but it's true. I'm just like, yeah, my religion teaches me not to look at

porn and not to kill people. And we all like, we have that down, like no one does that. Like we're good check. But I started learning more from my classes and some professors I was working with who studied pornography and I learned that like 60 to 80% of religious people, the stats probably like five years old now, but 60 to 80% of religious people, men and women sought out porn intentionally, at least once in the past six months. And hearing that, I was like, Oh my gosh, like is this a real thing? Like I had no idea, like totally blindsided me. So where was I when Nate and I started dating? I was like, I was starting to learn more about it and starting to understand that porn use was really common and really normal. Which was something that I had just never ever crossed my mind before.

Creed: Wow. All right.

Shelby: So how did that, how did that in your relationship as you started dating, what, what happened as you started figuring that out? Like, did you talk about it on the first day? Did you talk about it later on? What, when, yeah. Tell me a little bit about that dynamic.

Nate: Yeah, so I don't think I brought it up on the first date which is probably a smart move, but it was pretty soon after we started, you know, making decisions to be more committed to each other. It was kind of a natural thing. But before we had even really gotten to that point, I had made a kind of a commitment to myself that I would I would be honest about that. If I was dating someone looking to get married, that that was going to be some, an experience I wanted to share with my partner. Just because I know that shame, you know, thrives in secrecy and it thrives in when we had to feel like we are in something alone. And so for me, I really wanted to make sure that I was talking to Shelby about it so that she wasn't gonna get blindsided, you know, a month, six months into our marriage and I'm feel like, like she didn't know what was going on. And that, that took kind of a lot of guts to get to that point. But how she responded actually is really made the biggest difference for me as I've experienced shame around porn and what that's done.

Shelby: Do you remember how I responded? I don't know if I remember how.

Nate: um yeah, well, I, I just remember her saying something that's always kind of stuck with me is that this doesn't define you. And I remember that hitting me really, really strongly because it had for so long. That's the only narrative that men and women receive when they hear that they're a pornography user is that something's wrong with them. Because typically

the people that are struggling with this do have religious values that say that this is a wrong thing. And it's so easy to get from, you know, this is a wrong thing to, I'm a wrong thing, right? I'm a bad person and that what I'm experiencing right now with, with pornography becomes a defining characteristic of who I am. And so when Shelby talked to me that way and it didn't happen just once, she, those are things that she told me frequently as I would talk with her about pornography use and the challenges I was having in that context. She would consistently remind me that that wasn't part of my value. My value didn't. I am like, I, I'm totally whole and a complete person with or without pornography use. And that was a really impactful thing for me.

Creed: Did you know that at the time, Nathan, this idea that you are still a whole person despite you using pornography or not when you had talked with Shelby or was this something that you gradually learn afterwards or before then?

Nate: Um I think it's been a message I'm still learning. Eh, in all fairness, hearing that once you know, it, it was very impactful. But the opportunities that, that I've had to see Shelby prove it, I guess to me is that like, wow, I, I can trust Shelby with this kind of information because she consistently was able to respond that way. So yeah, I learned it then and I'm still learning it now that because those narratives, those beliefs are, they're strong, you know? Especially in certain cultures and contexts. No. Shelby, if you have any ideas of what that was like for you, what helped you to be able to do that?

Shelby: Yeah, well kind of goes back to like the normalizing and I was like watching documentaries of people sharing their stories, like religious people who didn't want to use porn, but like that it was distressing to them. I was like learning more about research. So I was like, okay, like I'm, I'm putting together like people's stories. So then when Nate came to me I was like, it was still like scary because like coming from a background where like my whole life was like, Oh, like there is a select group of people who look at porn and they are like creepy men in their basement. Like the weirdos, which like is not true. That was like totally false belief on my end. But like if I had come into this conversation with Nate, like having that mentality, then I would not have reacted as like, it's okay, I'm here for you.

I would have been like, Oh, like what is wrong with you? Which is just another shame message. I also want to point out the like reacting positively every time is not like the partners job. And it's not like, like if the partners feeling emotionally distressed about their

partner, like disclosing pornography use to them, like it's okay to have those emotions and those emotions are real. And like I had like done a lot of cognitive work of like dealing with how I felt about it by my education before Nate told me. So like, I guess it's just like, it's not the partner's job to like respond perfectly every time and it's just like an ongoing conversation.

Nate: Yeah, I agree with that. And I think that is a really common thing for when, for a partner to try and manage the porn users behavior. And I, I, yeah, that's totally normal. Sorry. I wanna make sure I go back to the point of like the creepy guy in the basement. That might be the normal thing. The pornography user also internalizes that message that it's like, now I'm the creepy guy in the basement. And that's that, that's just another layer of shame that's added onto what a pornography pornography users experiencing. That quite honestly isn't true. We're like 60 to 80% of people. So that's, you know, that's a lot more than just those uniquely stuck in, in the basement. I guess.

Crishelle: I really appreciate it that there'll be, I am just curious from your end, what helped you as you processed, you talked about like you'd work through some of those, those emotions in your education, but like what has continued to help you as, as you moved past this dating to, in your marriage? Because I think sometimes it's really difficult to separate like your emotions from his experience and, and vice versa. Nathan, you probably have things to share on this too, but like what has helped you to separate that and work through your emotions?

Shelby: Yeah, that's a really good question. I think honestly the biggest thing was the open and honest communication that Nate and I established from the beginning. Cause we made a, just like our relationship culture that like we knew we could sit down and have serious hard about these things. Cause like just all the myths that like we internalize about pornography, just like not really being educated about it. Co like that the idea that my partner is only looking at pornography because like I'm not sexually or physically satisfying for them. That was one that I was like, Oh shoot. Like that was like a worry of mine at the beginning. Especially since we like were abstinent until marriage. And then that again, another myth of like, well, once we started being sexually active then like that'll fix everything. Talking about those myths like, and what I was feeling and believing with Nate

and then him being able to say like, no, like that's not why I look at porn, but also he was there to sit with me.

Like I can see why that is really hard for you to like, I can see why you're feeling that way and like, I know these emotions are hard for you, so let's like talk about them together. Yeah, that was probably the biggest thing working through my emotions was talking with Nate about it. Cause you can learn a lot about pornography and like what other people's experiences are. But Nate's experiences with pornography are unique and different. Other people's that like I might be reading about. So that was the biggest thing was being open with our emotions together. Do you have anything you want to add on that?

Nate: Um I guess, you know, just while we're talking about validating I knew I needed to learn to validate that that my actions were at the time causing Shelby pain. And Shelby at the same time was learning to validate that I'm not just a terrible person like the narrative suggests, but that I was looking, I was using pornography for something. I've kind of learned to work with through things individually but also with a therapist is learning that most people have don't have pornography problems. They pornography solutions. Which means that a lot of the time it is, it can be distressing for a religious couple to experience pornography, but the, typically the porn user is using pornography for something. And most of the time, I don't know when I say most of the time, for me at least, it wasn't about sex. It was about my own feelings about myself. It was about my self worth. It was about accepting myself as a sexual being. And it was about understanding that that, that I am whole regardless of whether pornography is in my life.

Nate: Um and it's also learning things like impulse control. And it's also learning things about managing emotions. When I was feeling really upset about something, I didn't have very many tools of how do I help, how do I get out of this upset emotion? And so of course I went to pornography is that, that's a totally, I don't like the word natural per se, but like our bodies are, do, have sexual desires in them and so it's going to feel good to look at pornography. But as I've learned to develop a lot of tools for coping skills, one of them being, let's let me talk to my partner, let me regulate, learn to regulate myself. Emotionally and physically. Like all of those different things. It becomes less about pornography and more as can I feel good as a person, if that makes sense. I don't know. Sorry if I'm ranting.

Crishelle: no, that makes perfect sense. I love that. That's something that I have really been exploring lately is just like understanding what is healthy self regulation and or self-soothing and, and how to help, how to help like myself have that and teach other people to have that. Cause I think so often our, our quote unquote misbehaviors or like even like you can use the word sane or like negative behaviors or behaviors that lead to unhealthy results are just an unmet need that we're trying to meet in another way. You know? And so figuring out what that need is and actually meeting it in a healthy way is so much better in the end, and so I think that was perfect Nate. I think it needs to be said over and over and over again. So good.

Crishelle: Nathan, you mentioned at the beginning, now you've gone through this type of shame cycle. Can you describe what a shame cycle is? What that means for you and what you do when you are in it?

Nate: Yeah. Well, I, I've worked hard and I will continue working hard at getting rid of my shame cycle. So it's, it's not a done deal yet, but especially when, when Shelby and I were first dating and when this was a particular issue for us was there's lots of things that we all feel shame about. Right? for me, I might feel shame about not being successful or enough. I might feel shame about not having control over myself. That's, that's something. And so when I was feeling that way again, I had very little coping skills and I had a lot of narratives in my life or beliefs that were harmful for me. And so when I was feeling those ways, I would think those things. And then I my threshold for pain this emotional pain that I was feeling in shame eventually led me, it was like, okay, well I've got to get out of this somehow. And eventually that led me to pornography use because time and time again that's helped. Uand then as soon as you finished with the pornography, which sometimes and sometimes not has involved in masturbation, like that's when you feel again these narratives. As soon as soon as that experience happens, those narratives come back and full force like see told you, you don't have control, told you you aren't good, told you you are sinful. which again just makes you feel worse. And then you go through the same emotions, the same thought processes. and so a lot of that happens so often that happens daily, but not just with pornography. You, it's just, just the experience of going through shame and it happens. It happens between intervals of when pornography happens. It happens all the time. And I do want to say it's like my coping skill of choice was pornography use. But there's a lot of people who experience shame and have unhealthy coping mechanisms that



don't align with their values either. sometimes it's over eating with food and, and maybe Shelby, you probably have a lot better like about

Shelby: [[laughter]].

Nate: Um but I think all of us can connect with the idea that we do experience shame and we try and get out of it at times with, with different things. And I think that can be a helpful way to empathize those that might be having problems with an because of, you know, it doesn't align with their values. And, you know, let's, let's empathize. There's a lot of us that experienced shame for me with, it's been helpful to kind of push against those narratives, those, those messages I get from the outside world that say that I'm not good enough or that I'm somehow less worthy as a human being because of this. And that's really, really helped me, I guess spin out of my shame cycle.

Crishelle: Thank you for describing that. I think it's really important to understand when we're in that downward spiral that only you know, facilitates even further you know, behaviors involving pornography or just things that are, that we don't want to do. It just only perpetuates that as opposed to helping us. A big question I have for you, Shelby, is I know that a lot of women in particular, I'm sure men as well, if they find that their partner their female partners using pornography. How did you decide to marry Nathan knowing that perhaps he wasn't perfect or had reached a certain amount of time of sobriety? What made you decide, Oh this is still a good thing, I still want to go through with this? Despite all that.

Shelby: Yeah. I think it goes back to seeing Nate as he described himself earlier as like a whole and like I super loved him, super wanted to get married. Oh that's nice. It was like, it was scary just like where I was at the time, cause I, it pornography had a lot of uncertainty and I was still learning about it. And learning about how it shows up in relationships. The biggest thing I think is just like, it doesn't, like I honestly didn't see it as something that defined him and through our open and honest conversations and we talked about like just like talk about our goals together and religious values were a big part of that decision. And like seeing me, like having conversations with me about the, we're really open where he sharing like crying in tears, like these feelings of shame. Like that idea of like, Oh, I'm marrying the creepy guy in the basement. Like, no, like that, that wasn't even like there for me in that moment cause I was seeing the human reaction of like who he really is. It's just

he's trying to do what he liked, what his goals were and what his religious values were. Pornography kind of was just something that I knew that we would have just have to continue talking about, but it wasn't a deal breaker for me.

Creed: Right. From what I hear and understand. It sounds like you took Nathan as a whole, as some with strengths and weaknesses. Like everybody has to take each other, right? I mean, you yourself have some weaknesses that Nathan has to do with. I have weaknesses that my future spouse will have to deal with. It sounds like you just took that as this is a part of him in a way, but it's not, doesn't define him. It's not exactly what I need to focus on. It's kind of like that analogy of like holding up a problem next year. I can block out everything, right. But if you just like put it far away and put it amongst all the other aspects of life, it's there, but it's not like a key feature.

Crishelle: The question I have is, what advice do you have for other young couples who are experiencing the impact of pornography?

Nate: Um well, I'm a little biased here. If therapists you wanna see a licensed therapist they, I guarantee you it is not the first time that they've had a couple experiencing sexual problems for in a variety of ways. So for me it's been really helpful to see some professional help and I know there aren't that isn't necessarily available for those of that might not have enough money. And I, I respect that. But if you can, and that's an opportunity and a privilege that you had on there, therapy can be a really great thing. Again, I want to acknowledge my bias. I, I'm a therapist in training, so I think everyone needs therapy. We all got problems and that's a great thing.

Creed: I agree. Everybody can use it.

Crishelle: So I want to throw this out there too. I think it's really important to find the right therapist too. Because not all therapists are created equal and all therapists like specialize in what you need help with. And and so, so shopping around and, and like working with your budget and your insurance. Like sometimes I think we forget that therapy is covered by insurance. It can be. It can be, right. So, Hmm. Yeah. Taking advantage of that. I mean, amen.

Nate: Yeah. And there's a legacy, a lot of research that shows that the number one factor as far as what predicts client outcomes is the relationship they have with their therapists. So if I feel that I, my therapist gets me and that they understand me and that they care about me, those things are going to predict whether I have a successful therapy experience a lot more than you know, some other things might suggest. So yeah, if you're not loving your therapists after two or three sessions, then you might want to talk with them about that, or find a new therapists. I'm all for that.

Shelby: I think another thing that I would say to couples that I've mentioned a few times already is just like really practicing open and honest communication with each other, which can honestly just start out as like, I'm feeling so anxious and nervous to have an authentic conversation with you about my feelings, but I want to try. So I'm just going to start with telling you that I'm feeling sad today. And like work up from there. And then like as the partner, like making sure you're validating, which really just means like your feelings are real and they're like, they warrant attention. They're like, they're valid basically as what? Like telling your partner your feelings are valid, like practicing that with each other. I really liked the speaker listener technique developed by Prep, Scott Stanley's program where couples like in really and because pornography can be a really like talking about, it can be a really emotional conversation. Depending on where you're coming from. And just like that the speaker listener technique, which you can Google and find online is where like partners take turns telling their feelings and another partner summarizes and then you switched and it's a really good way to like slow down and have hard conversations and we use it all the time like still when we shockingly haven't reached perfection in our marriage yet.

Nate: But we're close!

Shelby: It's a great tool to like let's slow down and really talk about our feelings and it takes practice and we're not good at it. And if you respond in a really angry, upset way, which likely, ouch, I have done. I responded in shaming ways like how dare you do this? Like I can't believe you would do that. Like really not great ways, but we are always able to talk about it later and talk about like, okay, like I'm sorry I responded that way but I was doing not, but I was feeling really like upset. So this, so let's talk about it. So you're never going to be perfect in your communication, but like communicating about your communication and your feelings I would say are crucial.

Crishelle: I think that's crucial for marriage success period. So, yeah,

Shelby: Exactly.

Crishelle: Yeah. Yeah. That's so great. One time I heard you guys talk about, and, and I hope that you still believe this, but I love that you talk about building your relationship like, and so are you willing to go there and share that with us? Like what have you done to build your relationship outside of just focusing on pornography? Cause sometimes I think like Creed said, like problems arise in our marriages or relationships and all of a sudden that's all we focused on and all we talk about which creates more problems.

Shelby: Yeah, yeah.

Nate: well I think how we build it is probably different than when we first started. When we first started, we had a lot of time and that's been really helpful. and then right now we're both in grad school and working our butts off. So, but I, for me, Oh, I guess I'll just, one thing that we do is, even though we're, I mean we're usually working from like 8:00 AM to like 8:00 PM most days. is we go on little walks, for like two or three minutes around our building. That's definitely a nice thing to like work in the same building but little tiny drops, if you think of it like a bank account, they're are going to be big deficits, would maybe have their fights, maybe either challenges like for like pornography if that comes up and that's a problem. maybe there are some, you know, some other problem comes up in your life, like a medical bill, there's going to be things that really grind at your relationship gears. and so if you ha, if you know that there's going to be a big things come along, what you want to do, those small deposits daily, weekly with date nights, do those small deposits that tell your partner that you care about them. And for me right now that's going on walks and we don't have a lot of time, but it makes all the difference.

Shelby: Yeah. And so communication - communicate about like what makes you feel connected and prioritize those things. Cause you're like, your relationship isn't about pornography, it's about your relationship and pornography is just something you're navigating.

Crishelle: I love that. I cannot say amen enough to all of those. I think it's so important to, to focus on, to focus on the good and to fight the bad together. Does that make sense?

Whether it's like the finances or the bills or which are the same thing. So I'm really coming up with, or the kids or the the, the pornography, like whatever the struggle is, it's going to be there. And what are you doing to build your relationship?

Nate: So you're on the same team.

Creed: That's right. Well that how do you guys plan on talking about sexuality and pornography with your children and what are your opinions on that?

Nate: Shelby!

Shelby: Just like shame has been such, like a big part of Nathan's experience with pornography and I definitely experienced shame around sexuality in general. Just a big thing is like shame free, like open communication, like whether kids like it's gonna be I will bring up sexual topics, we'll learn body parts from a young age. We'll learn like consent from a young age, having really child centered communication or conversations where like you're letting the kid lead and ask questions and like give their input. And the biggest thing is, and when you ask teens and young adults what they want from talking with their parents, they just want you to be open and honest and be supportive and shame-free. Like that's by far the biggest thing that they say. So incorporating that into our kids, helping them feel supportive and loved, cause learning about your sexuality can be really like, Oh, like what's happening to my body? It can be scary. So I think just being really open, I'd be willing to share personal experiences then.

Nate: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I will, I will tell my kids about my pornography use. I think one, it will probably normalize if slash when they see pornography and if it becomes something that they don't understand what's going on. And two is I dunno when, when you're human and when your kids see you as like, yeah, you're, you're the coolest mom and dad ever was. Clearly they were going to be is they, they should know that. Yeah. We also have things that we've had to address in our life and that's okay. And yeah, our kids, I dunno, maybe this is just personal philosophy, but it's like our kids should, should know who you are.

Crishelle: Yeah. I really love that.

Creed: I completely agree. I think all of us grew up believing our parents are perfect and amazing, wonderful. It's so helpful if we can understand their humanity and know what they struggle with just so that when we can fall into our own struggles that we know that, Oh, I can still overcome this or still be a good person where this is normal. Cause yeah, when I fell into my pornography, I, I mean I didn't know that anybody else did it either. And so I felt like I was the only one. So if your parents are open to, to talk about just, you know, weaknesses in general, then it can, it can open conversations for, Oh yeah, I messed up in this way or this is what I'm struggling with, but this is how I continue to work at it. Or it would come at that. That is very empowering, empowering, and I feel like hopeful for lots of people and allows for or facilitate some atmosphere of that is, is hopeful and not depressing for, for people who, who struggle with something. And ah, I just love, I love honest, open communication and family from the get go.

Shelby: Yes. Love it.

Crishelle: So good. So what are your thoughts about what healthy sexuality is? Like what that look like in your lives?

Shelby: Yeah, totally. Yeah. so actually my favorite definition is from the world health organization. I pull it up, so I'll read to you. They say sexual health as a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing in relation to sexuality, it requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. So like the behaviors that each person is like sexual behaviors that they're going to choose to do. It looks different based on their value system, based on their goals in life. But in my opinion, healthy sexuality is feeling like positive about myself as a sexual being, whether I'm choosing to be abstinent, whether I'm sexually active. If I'm like really like sex positive and shame-free like it's, I feel like shame is just like a continual theme. But like if you're feeling a lot of shame about sexuality, then it's going to hinder your ability to like, have like really enjoyable sexual experiences or just have like a positive view of yourself as a sexual being. Yeah. That's how I would define it

Crishelle: That's awesome. Ditto. Oh, that's perfect. Has anything good come from this challenge that you've faced together?

Nate: I sometimes I struggle with, we're like challenged cause I think it's something like always like a bad thing, but like it's for Shelby and I only, we have learned to talk to each other. and I think we honestly would have done that anyways, whether pornography was there or not, but this just happened to be our pathway to good communication, one pathway. And I, I don't know that for me. you know, kind of finishing where we started. Like I had so many questions about who I was and whether I was a good person and whether I could feel good about myself and as Shelby and I have developed, not just in the skill of communication but the emotional experience of good communication, those feelings have really flourished into confidence. I'm happy, solid sense of self. so I think for me, learning to on that deep of a level with, with my spouse but also just with learning to connect that way with anyone has been life changing. And I know like connection is the real anti porn. I know that's the like the motto that you guys go by and I you know, connection is hugely impactful.

Shelby: I agree. I also think for me, I had to learn, like unlearn some of the things I was socialized to learn. As a religious woman I was socialized to like always be like taking care of other people and kind of like taking other people's emotional burdens onto myself. So when we were first married, I was like, okay, like what's our game plan? Like how are we going to make sure, like the porn doesn't happen this week? And like, I'm gonna text you, I'm like, pick you up at this time. I'm like, things like that. And I like that did not work at all. It was like horrible. First of all, it's not my, it's never anyone's job to be responsible for other people's actions. But like in our marriage that was really like detrimental cause I was like taking on emotional labor That wasn't my emotional labor to have in the first place. So as we have like talked about it and like worked through like how that impacts us, I've learned that like, no, like I'm never responsible for any of Nate's decisions and I'm just responsible for like, I see my role as I'm just here to be supportive and love you, but it's not my job to monitor you or I'm not responsible for anything you do. So that was a big learning thing that I think came out of this.

Crishelle: That's fantastic. Creed: Wonderful. I think it's so important to understand those emotional boundaries, but also how far to, how far you can extend to support someone and you can't take on their problems and try to fix them. As we wrap up, is there anything else that, that you want to share with our community with as we're seeking to change the

culture and to really create healthy sexuality and overcome the shame, the fear in the silence? Anything else that you want to add to that message?

Shelby: I just want to support ya'lls motto or game plan, whatever it's called. Like breaking the silence, like just like I've heard so many people talk about, their like porn use as like, I thought I was the only one who was doing it. And that's like so far beyond true that it's like sad that we have like so many people from like our age group that felt like they were alone and really like there were so many. so I think just like learning from other people's stories, is, is really important. If you, it's never, you never have to share your story. If you don't want to, but if you want to like people will rally around you and people have had your same experiences. most likely. So break the silence. I did a fist pump when I said that, but I realized that listeners can't see me.

Nate: I guess for me it's just there's, there's hope and there's hope all along the way. If you don't have to wait until pornography is no longer a thing in your life to be hopeful about your present and current situation. For some people that might look like finding a therapist, for others it might not. They might need a sense of community, others might need another thing. I want to respect that everyone has kind of their own individual experience when it comes to something like this. And for those that might be dating a partner or are opening their eyes to working with people that have experienced pornography in some form maybe it is a boundary and it is going to be a deal breaker for you. And that's only you can decide what your boundaries are. And so I want to honor and acknowledge everyone's autonomy.

Nate: And while why are you doing that? If you found someone, are you thinking about someone that you're like, yeah, everything else is perfect except for this. I'd encourage you to look at them the way that Shelby's looked at me, that it doesn't define them and I would encourage you to not let it define them for you. Because we are all people and we all do have ups and downs with a lot of different things. And only you can decide what you're going to accept and what you're not. But just be as kind to the idea of people as you can be, if that makes sense.

Crishelle: Yeah. I love that. Thank you so much, both of you for taking time out of your busy grad school schedules to, to chat with us and to share, to share your stories and your wisdom and your just who you are with us. I, I'm very grateful and so happy to have you guys. Thank you for sharing your thoughts expertise or at least all learning that you're



doing. And just your experience. It's so helpful for couples and young adults out there. So thank you for, for sharing and helping us break the silence. Totally.

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