



EPISODE #5

Travis Spencer: Couples Recovering Together from Pornography Use

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

Travis Spencer, MFT is a newly-graduated young therapist, but he's already spent years studying how couples navigate recovery from the impact of pornography. Travis shares what he has learned from his own experience of recovery, his work as a therapist, and his grad school study of couples. Hear about the 5 common experiences he observed with successful couples: a catalyst event that motivated recovery, finding support, getting educated, setting up structures such as boundaries and routines, and finally working on healing past trauma and learning better stress coping skills. Ultimately, couples came to see the experience as a crucible that helped them come out on the other side stronger than ever before.

SEE THE SHOW NOTES AT REACH10.ORG

- Crishelle: [00:00](#) Today we are breaking the silence with Travis Spencer, who is a marriage and family therapist and he's going to help us understand a little bit of what has led to the success of couples working towards recovery together. And we're so excited to be chatting with him and to get to know him a little bit better and to understand some of the work he's done and some of even the research that he's helped create.
- Creed: [05:13](#) Whoo. Yeah. Thank you so much, Travis, for being with us. Let's get started with telling us a little bit about yourself. Where are you from? What do you like to do? Your education, career, and why you're involved in marriage, family therapy, and in particular these topics of pornography and healthy sexuality?

- Travis: [05:40](#) Yeah. I, first of all, I just wanted to thank both, you know, Creed and Crishelle and Vauna Davis for putting on this podcast. I think it's a really awesome way that we're starting to, you know, as you guys say, break the silence in our culture and in community regarding pornography. It's definitely something that needs to be talked more about. And I think, I think it'll, it'll make a big difference for people as they listen. I've already listened to a couple of your guys' podcasts and found them really inspiring and some great stories that you've had people come and share. So I'm really, I feel very blessed and privileged to be on here sharing some of my experience and what I do.
- Travis: [07:02](#) So I grew up in Colorado near the Denver area and went to do my undergraduate degree at BYU in Provo, Utah and then went up to Utah State for my master's degree in marriage and family therapy. I really actually started out as a huge band nerd in high school and I wanted to continue following that career for the rest of my life. But I served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that kind of changed my perspective on things that were really important to me. I realized that relationships were very important and that helping people with their relationships was something that really interested me and something I wanted to become more involved with for the rest of my life. So when I came back from my mission, I got very interested in and followed that path. I chose marriage and family therapy over other degrees because of the emphasis on relationships.
- Travis: [08:16](#) So I think maybe the most significant thing that got me interested in this topic was because of my own experience with pornography and its influence on my life. As other people have shared including you Creed and Crishelle with your stories that you guys have shared. There's a huge impact that it has on people, but nobody's really willing to talk about it. And my experience was very similar. My parents didn't give me a lot of sexual education and I internalized as a young boy that I needed to take care of myself and I needed to hide what the ways that I coped that were not healthy, including with pornography and masturbation. So I sought out a lot of help and recovery, but I still was very, very guarded, very isolated, very full of shame.
- Travis: [09:16](#) And I got back from my mission and still was struggling here and there after going through a lot of treatments, some therapy, went to 12 step groups and still just struggling with this and wondering why and why I hadn't been able to find a solution yet to help me with this issue. And I turned to, I've always been very interested in research and there hasn't been very much research out there on how to treat someone who believes that pornography is maladaptive for their life or causing a problem for their life. There's a lot of maybe just opinions and books but not so much empirical data. And actual research that's been done that, that I found to be helpful. And I went to probably over 10 different therapists over the course of 10 years trying to figure out what I needed and found a lot of help but still struggled.
- Travis: [10:22](#) And I think a lot of that was my own issues too with learning to come out of my shell and seek the support that I needed. But I became passionate about this subject and I wanted to help. I got involved in Reach 10, three or four years ago which is the founding organization for this podcast. And I really loved the relationships I built

there. The connection I felt even around such a shameful subject. And I kind of made it a goal for my life that I wanted to help in this area using the skills and the talents that I had and I felt like marriage and family therapy would be a great place to do that because this pornography issue had had such a devastating effect on me and my relationships.

Travis: [11:15](#) Right after my mission, I actually had a broken engagement with someone that I loved. But she was really hurt by my struggle with it. And so she left and I had to learn how to move on and it was really almost traumatizing. I definitely met criteria for an adjustment disorder at least, but possibly even PTSD or some of the symptoms of that and had a lot of . . . just a kind of a traumatic response that I sought a lot of support for. And through that support, I was able to make some big changes in my life. I became a lot less isolated, a lot more truthful about what I was really struggling with, with people around me, with my roommates, with my family.

Travis: [12:20](#) And yeah, I got the help that I needed. Found a strong support group for myself and moved forward and started dating again after three or four years. And now I'm married, I married someone that I met in my undergrad and we went to the same marriage and family therapy program at Utah state.

Travis: [12:44](#) Now I have a beautiful baby daughter and kind of just moving forward in life. And something that I think that's about this issue will always have an effect on my life. I have to constantly be vigilant about my own weaknesses but also still have felt some major changes that have changed my character so that I feel much more comfortable and safe. Talking about my struggles that have helped me find a great amount of recovery and sobriety, even with sobriety not being the main goal but still that I feel like that's the fruit of the recovery process that I've been through. So I mean we could probably spend the entire session talking about my story there with my own experience with pornography and how that's affected my life. But that's probably just the main highlight. And I feel very, very blessed to be able to be in the space that I am now where I see others who struggle with this and I'm able to be a support for them and understand and have compassion for their struggle because I've been there and I think that's the beautiful part of this recovery process with any addiction, with any problem in our life. When we get through it, we have the opportunity then to turn around and help others along the way that are kind of following in our footsteps and going through the same issues.

Crishelle: [14:24](#) Travis, thank you so much for sharing your story and I feel very, I mean you mentioned feeling privileged and blessed. I feel very privileged and blessed to be able to get to know you a little bit as you share your story and a little bit of your struggle and where you are now.

Creed: [14:44](#) It's always inspiring to hear people's stories about trying and making great efforts for change of behavior. And it's always, I mean, even if they aren't successful, it's just good to hear people being real. So thank you very much for, for sharing your story and for being a force for good and healing now with your experience now that you're in

therapy and also for just being on the podcast and sharing yourself. So thank you very much for your courage and help with that.

Crishelle: [15:21](#) So you mentioned a little bit of this in your story of just like the different addictions out there. But from your research that you've done into the research and, and from your experience as a therapist and your own personal experience, what similarities are there between pornography use and other addictions?

Travis: [15:43](#) Yeah, that's a really good question. So currently I'm working out in Vernal, Utah at a community center for therapy that's called Northeastern counseling. And I am on the drug court here. And so most of my clients don't come in saying that there are problems with pornography, but most of my clients I work with are struggling with things like heroin addiction and methamphetamine addiction, alcohol, and I run three groups a week that is centered around substance use recovery. And I've really enjoyed seeing that process. Where in my, in my in my training as my master's program, I was interning at an organization called Addo recovery and all my clients that were there pretty much their main concern for coming in was with pornography or masturbation and how it was affecting their relationships in their life in problematic ways. But now that almost all of my clients are with other addictions, it's interesting to see the connection there. And there's always been a debate within the research and in clinical practice. And even, me saying right now that pornography is an addiction, that I had an addiction to pornography. That turns a lot of people off because they're like, well, you know, you can't be addicted to a behavior the same way that a substance such as heroin would be addicting. But there's also a lot of people in the other camp of "it's definitely an addiction." And I've had clients tell me that were addicted to both, that it was harder for them to overcome their addiction to lust than it was to overcome their addiction to heroin.

Travis: [17:59](#) So it's just, it's always up in the air. I think what matters most is how we use that word addiction. There's similar things. Similar symptoms I think between a behavior like pornography use and masturbation or as a heroin or other drug and alcohol addictions. Like for example, I'd say the five main criteria that I judged to be like addictive symptoms would be one that the substance or behavior triggers the brain rewards center. Which means that it releases a powerful chemical that can flood the brain and reinforce the substance or the behavior. And that either excites or relaxes your body in the brain. So it can go either way. The second one I'd say is over time the person develops a dependency to their addiction. Meaning the more that they use it, the more that they want to use it. And the more that it becomes a primary coping mechanism for the stresses and challenges in what they may experience in their life. Third, the consequence of indulging in their addiction becomes a trigger for wanting to indulge in it again and again. So we, a lot, often we use addictions to cope with our struggles, our stresses. But the more that we use, the more that we want to use, I feel like we need to use, I'd feel worse about indulging in my addiction. And so therefore I want to indulge in it more to continue to numb the feelings that come from indulging. Fourth is the cycle continues to get worse. They feel more and more out of control and eventually there's like this powerlessness feeling of I can't stop. I keep doing this over and over again. I don't even know why. I don't want to anymore. It's becoming

problematic in my life, but I don't feel like I can stop. And then fifth, I say for a true addiction would be it causes significant personal, relational and functional impairment in their life. Meaning that maybe an addict would say they find it impossible to accomplish their day to day tasks or just it's causing a lot of problems that they feel like, I can't function if I continue to do this the way that I am, but I continue to do it anyways. So of those five things I have in my clinical practice working with couples and individuals that use pornography and consider it a problem in their life. Very similar, meaning all those five things have fit. Some of those that I've seen in therapy, I'm just like those individuals that I am seeing use it now that are struggling with heroin and substance abuse and addictions.

Travis: [20:53](#) So addiction, it's just a triggering word in the research [field], I guess is what I'm saying. But the most important thing is how do we use that word? What does it mean? And for a lot of those that I'm working with I often will talk to them about things like, do you consider yourself an addict? And if you do and you wear that label, is it helpful or is it not? And I think some of those, both with the pornography and behavioral side and those with the addiction side would say yes, it's helpful for me to have that label because it reminds me that I can't continue to indulge in this or it's a problem in my life and I need to have boundaries around it. But others, I think they use that word to punish themselves to make them feel worse, to feel shame. So yeah, some of the similarities I guess I've seen and how I kind of see or conceptualize addiction in this field.

Crishelle: [21:54](#) I think that's so helpful and I really appreciate the way that you kind of tease those two apart. Maybe just cause I really relate because I work in substance abuse, addiction recovery as well. So I'm like, yeah, that's what I see all the time. And I would just echo that what I see is very similar thinking errors. And that's really what we're trying to change is those thought patterns and the coping mechanisms and the seeking of the dopamine in unhealthy ways rather than a healthy release. Right. And so understanding it at that level, I think that addiction is a really good and helpful tool. But if it's bringing that shame and it's causing you to feel hopelessness and stuck, let's pick a different word.

Travis: [22:50](#) So I've, been to a lot of 12 step groups in my own recovery and I found some of the guys that I worked with or were around that made the biggest progress were those that would often introduce themselves rather than saying, "hi, I'm so and so and I'm an addict." They would say something like, "hi, I'm so and so and I'm a father and a husband and I struggle with pornography or I struggle with this addiction," or "I'm a son of God that struggles with this," or "I have struggled with pornography" and so I think using that as recognizing that this label can't be completely defining of who you are. And shouldn't be because there's so many other things that define us, but for those that find it most problematic in their own life, I think it's hard for them to get out of that shame of feeling like I'm an addict, therefore I don't belong in the community and I don't deserve connection. But that needs to change if recovery is going to happen.

- Creed: [23:56](#) Totally. I would definitely say that it's so important to be honest with oneself, right? Understand the impact that their behavior is causing upon themselves and perhaps loved ones. Just like step one, "honesty" for the addiction recovery program talks about, but then at the same time completely understanding that we are all children of God. That whether or not whatever struggle I have, I'm a child of God and that that's first and he loves me and I'm working on this little part of my life. I mean it can be a big part of someone's life as well, but we need to keep that good perspective about ourselves with being honest on the actual impact as well. So thank you so much, Travis, for all of that. Can you tell us a little bit about what you did in particular for your master's thesis and what the kind of results were of that?
- Travis: [25:06](#) Yeah, absolutely. I, like I said, have been really passionate about this research about this field and I'm really excited to be able to share with you some of what I've found and put a lot of effort into this project. And if you want a full draft, if any of the listeners are looking to read what I've written, the title is called Common Factors of Couple Recovery from Problematic Pornography Use: A Foundational Phenomenological Inquiry.
- Crishelle: [25:39](#) We'll link that in the show notes.
- Travis: [25:59](#) Yeah, so what I was looking for, "how can I be a part of the solution of the pornography problem within this culture, within other people's lives," is I went looking in the research and the majority of pornography research is all about whether pornography is helpful or harmful for an individual and relationships.
- Travis: [26:23](#) And there's very, very little research that talks about, well, what do we do and how do we help those [people] if it is harmful? And so with that in mind, I wanted to kind of create a foundation for this research for this field and where we can start with looking further, with research on how we can help those that consider pornography to be problematic in their lives. So I did a qualitative phenomenological study, which means that I went from the perspective of individuals and or couples, specifically 11 couples that have been involved in this treatment process that had been involved in seeking therapeutic help for pornography use. And so I interviewed them, these 11 couples from around the country on what has been, what's their story basically their recovery story. Why did they need recovery from pornography?
- Travis: [27:30](#) Why was it the main issue in their recovery process and how did they get to the point now where they believed they had achieved significant recovery and were much happier as a couple and individually in their lives? So I don't want to take too much time with this, so I'm just going to give the quick details on the findings and feel free to ask any follow up questions that you may have about this. But the key findings of the study, after I asked them about their stories is that first and foremost, every single couple said that in order for them to find recovery, they had to focus on their individual recovery before the couple recovery. In every case, the pornography had affected both the user and the partner. And for almost every case, the partner had conceptualized it as a traumatic event in discovering that their partner was using pornography.

Travis: [28:29](#) They believed that it was against their moral code. It was against their marriage. And some even said that it was similar to if their partner had been cheating, which I recognize as I've looked in the research isn't the case for everybody. There are couples out there that don't see or view pornography that way. And I'd say maybe the majority of couples within a Western culture don't consider pornography to be a huge issue. However, for these couples it was, and so as they focused on their individual selves and what they needed to find recovery, then their relationship was able to recover along with that individual approach. And this was really important for them to emphasize that they had to focus on themselves first. Then, so out of that, then there was five themes that appeared that were similar across all these 11 stories.

Travis: [29:32](#) The first one was that almost all of these stories were started with some kind of catalyst event. There was rock bottom experience or a turning point where there was either a disclosure that happened or a big relapse of some sort. That seemed to really catalyze the recovery process for them and it would push them into both individually and as a couple finding a foundation of support for their recovery, which was the second major theme. They would go to a therapist, they would find support groups, both the partner and the user. They would find ways to get spiritual support often. But they would reach out and create a foundation of support that helped them throughout their entire recovery process. The third theme was then they got started in the work of recovery and this was the theme that kind of looked different for everybody. And I think it's part of the reason why research in this field and especially in the treatment side of it is so limited or small or small, is because everybody's recovery kind of looks a little different in what they actually do. But some of the main parts of that is that usually involved getting some psychoeducation about what addiction is. How pornography affects individuals, what pornography is about, what coping is and healthy coping. It often would involve creating some sort of structure in their lives, like boundaries, things they couldn't do any longer. Ways that the partner would set up boundaries to help keep herself safe or him. And then it would also involve a routine of things that they knew they had to do in their lives to keep themselves safe from the addiction or the problematic pornography use.

Travis: [31:33](#) This routine would often involve healthy coping mechanisms. And then the last part of the work of recovery that was similar between almost all the couples is it involved trauma work that pornography use was often an outcome of a way to cope with the stress of life that often started in traumatic events in their childhood or throughout their life where they didn't know how to cope. And so they created a dependency on a maladaptive coping mechanism with pornography and masturbation. But that trauma work helped a lot for many of these couples. So the fourth theme was perspectives of recovery that just like the work of recovery, there's also like a paradigm shift for a lot of these couples, where they learned that they had to view their life, and themselves, and each other in a different way.

Travis: [32:31](#) This would often involve some sort of acceptance of where they are and what they need to do. Acceptance of the, I need to live a different life now, that things are going to be different from here forward, I can't keep doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result, I have to surrender. That would also include

they had to surrender their life. Many of them talked about how their life needed to be centered on a recovery process in order for it to be maintainable and effective. They had to have confidence in themselves that their recovery could happen, that they could have hope that things could change in the future. The two biggest themes that I saw for perspective change was externalization of the problem. Often, in order for the couple to recover, they had to kind of make the pornography and masturbation separate from the individual that was using. I had one couple that talked about how the partner, the supporting partner who was also going through her own recovery process, would call it a different name. And so when he was in his active addiction or whatever, she'd use a different name for him. And that helped her externalize the problem is not being who her husband was. And then the other one is that pornography was not the problem in these couples' recovery, that pornography had been the solution for the user throughout their life. It wasn't an effective solution. It was what we would call maladaptive. But as they were able to learn that if they wanted to find recovery, they had to realize or come to understand what the real problems were, which was often their communication patterns or the different unhealthy ways of coping. It was often the trauma that they'd been through that pornography was just an outcropping of that and they needed to treat the source within their therapy, within their group work or whatever they did in the work of recovery they needed to treat the source of it and not just the pornography itself.

Crishelle: [35:31](#) That is so much, I know you have one more thing to share, but I think that is so powerful because so often we focus on it being the problem when if we can focus on, "okay, actually it was just the way I'm choosing to cope and to get that dopamine release and I need to find more healthy outcomes." And again, maybe that's the rec therapist in me speaking. But I really love that because as a recreation therapist I want to try to help people find healthy ways to cope and deal with their life that brings balance and stability and harmony with their values.

Travis: [36:20](#) Yeah, I totally agree. I think that was really, really important for them to understand, to get to find that what they said was a big part of their recovery process. Because that also helped with everything else that they did, that pornography wasn't their issue. They had other issues and they needed to address those and they could externalize better that pornography that it was separate and that they needed to work on those other issues. But lastly, I think what made a big difference for these couples in their perspectives of their recovery was a crucible perspective. Meaning that they had the hope that because they were going through this really hard thing together, that they could come out on the other side, a stronger couple, a more connected couple closer, more intimate than they've ever been before because of what they were going through.

Travis: [37:14](#) And once couples got to that point in their recovery process, where they were able to catch a glimpse of that vision of their future, that could be brighter than it's ever been before, then that became a huge motivating factor for them to continue through the recovery process and make it and I think it's really beautiful. It was such a pleasure for me to sit down and listen to these stories because they almost always, in tears, would end their recovery process story by talking about that crucible perspective that now

they feel closer as a couple than they've ever been before and that they're so much happier and they wouldn't trade this painful experience for anything else because it helped them transform and in a crucible of this challenge become better, become brighter, become who they always wanted their relationship to be.

- Travis: [38:15](#) The last theme of this the last theme in the recovery process was in their stories with it, there were hindrances along the way. There were things that made it harder originally. Sometimes that would take the form of, they went to therapists that weren't necessarily helpful, that were not trained in how to help these kinds of situations that were not trained in addiction recovery or pornography or sexual addiction, sexual treatment training. There were also a lot of couples that talked about other cautions to the recovery process that just kind of made it more difficult. But then again, in the crucible with the crucible perspective, we're able to use those hindrances as further motivations for their recovery.
- Travis: [39:18](#) It was like a hiccup or a bump in the road of their recovery and then they would just kind of speed up afterwards. They'd adjust after those hindrances. Sometimes it was a relapse or sometimes it was family members getting involved and making it more harmful or problematic to make it through recovery process. So those were the five major themes of the study. And I just want to emphasize that this is a qualitative study. It's a foundational, only 11 couples and their stories, and so their stories won't fit, probably, everybody's experience. But I am pretty confident that these five major themes and their sub themes can be a huge foundation for this work moving forward that I've dedicated the rest of my life to finding to doing more research and finding out how effective these actually are. And maybe through some quantitative data studies through some other research.
- Creed: [40:23](#) Wonderful. Well, amazing. An amazing study. It's very cool to hear about those. There's different themes and I feel like that would give lots of couples some hope about that, you know, hearing at least that there's 11 couples who were successful to overcome this or at least improve their relationship through this struggle and, some things that they can do to help themselves. That's wonderful. My one question that I had for you in particular was, so this is a couple study. I was wondering if you have any thoughts about perhaps teens or young adults who struggle with pornography, who don't perhaps have, you know, the motivation of a spouse or a family member that they're directly affecting with their behavior. And so I was wondering what kind of thoughts or what do you think can help these people who are struggling but maybe don't have that kind of other relationships to motivate them well towards recovery?
- Travis: [41:42](#) Yeah. I'm so glad you asked that. I've worked with several teens through their recovery process and admittedly I think it's a lot harder without that relational kind of motivation. I think sometimes it can be a lot harder and most of the people that go through treatment for this issue are not in their teens because they haven't yet found it to be problematic enough or concerning enough in their lives. But with those that do, there's still tons of hope. I think some of these themes still fit. They still need to create a foundation of support. I think most teens that I've worked with the majority of the work we did was around their shame that they felt because of their use and as

we were able to help them feel more confidence in themselves, help them understand that pornography, their addiction [to] pornography used to define them, that they could then have more courage in reaching out for the help and support that they needed. Whether that was a support group of some sort or even just being more open with their family members, their parents getting support that way. I think that everybody going through any type of addiction or change process needs to set up boundaries like a structure for their lives where they just can't go, in order to keep themselves safe. Then, also a routine that we all need to develop adaptive coping mechanisms. You can't just stop viewing pornography or stop some sort of chemical addiction and not replace it with something else that's helpful. There's a void there that it'll just pull the addiction right back into their lives unless they replace it with something more adaptive, more helpful for them. So a lot of these things I think do still fit for anybody going through recovery and not just couples. They just might look a little bit different.

- Crishelle: [43:52](#) I really appreciate that perspective. And I think I think often is as humans, unfortunately, we love to think that we're the exception and that my situation is so unique, that chronic uniqueness and that stops us from actually learning the principles that we can from each other. And so I really appreciate that perspective of like, if it's working for a couple, it will also work for an individual. And if it's working for an individual, it can also work for a couple. And being humble enough to really learn from and to recognize that yes, I'm a unique person and my circumstances are a little bit different and I'm a human, which means that someone relates to me and has solutions.
- Travis: [44:43](#) Exactly. We all have character weaknesses. We all have maladaptive coping mechanisms.
- Crishelle: [44:55](#) That's so true. We definitely all do. I'm curious, through all of your research and your experience, what are your thoughts about healthy sexuality? What is healthy sexuality and how do we build that or like cultivate that in our lives?
- Travis: [45:11](#) Yeah. Oh man, that's a great question that we could spend an entire podcast talking about I'm sure. Well, let me start this way: So another research project that I was a part of, and I'll just be very brief with this one because it was headed by a dear friend of mine named Nathan Leonhardt, who is a doctoral candidate at the university of Toronto. We saw in the research, he saw mostly that there's this debate of whether pornography is helpful or harmful. As such, studies say it's helpful for couples that it may spice up their sexual relationship and, if they don't have any moral struggles with pornography, then it can be helpful for their sexual relationship. But the majority of studies I think say the opposite, that pornography is problematic for sexual relationships. But regarding healthy sexuality, we felt that we wanted to try to find like, why is there this discrepancy? Why is there this difference? And that the general message from most sexual media on all levels, I think we talk about pornography as if it's, you know, we think just kind of maybe the worst case scenario, but the pornography definition of it can be you know, from one end of the spectrum to the other. It depends on the viewer whether what, pornography is is to them. But almost

all sexual media sends a message of eroticism, meaning it's the pursuit and delight in central pleasure just for the individual. And also a message of objectification that the other person that you're viewing is you're just viewing them as an object rather than a person. That's someone that is for your sexual desire, for your sexual satisfaction. And so I think healthy sexuality should be kind of stepping away from those two things.

Travis: [47:36](#) Eroticism can be very helpful in a sexual relationship, but as long as it's also coupled with care and concern for the other person and helping with their sexual experience rather than being this selfish pursuit of pleasure. I think also healthy sexuality is not objectifying at all. That we do not separate sexuality. The individual from identity, meaning that we're not creating an object out of the person we are having this sexual experience with. And there's a lot more in that study that he headed up. It actually became the target article for one of the top sex journals in the world called The Archives of Sexual Behavior. And we received seven responses from different professionals in the field to that article that were on both sides of the spectrum of approving or disapproving. But it was a great conversation to have about how sexual media influences sexual relationships. But yeah, I think maybe that's my first point when if we're talking about healthy sexuality, it should be just care, and love, [and] connection rather than disconnection, rather than objectification. If that makes sense.

Crishelle: [49:14](#) Yeah, I really appreciate that perspective. And this whole time I've been thinking that I appreciate your perspective because of your approach from the research and like what you're finding in the data and in people's experiences. I think that's really refreshing because I think sometimes this conversation just becomes about one person's story or one experience and we kind of get like blinders or like sunglasses put on that we only see life that way. And so if we can open our eyes to be like, this is what more stories are showing us, this is what more experience is showing us, I think that can be so helpful. So thank you for your wisdom and for your passion and your perspective.

Creed: [49:58](#) Yes. I love your thoughts on healthy sexuality. I think we're really coming to a point, especially with our organization of Reach 10, but I think a lot of research is showing that it's best to and therapy in general therapy research, that it's best to fight or stand for something as opposed to just against something. There's just more motivation and good feelings behind it and positive force so standing for healthy sexuality as opposed to just focusing on the negative.

Travis: [50:31](#) Perhaps as against pornography or something like that.

Creed: [50:36](#) Yeah, yeah. But filling your life with healthy aspects of ourselves, of our sexual nature and filling it with great things. I mean going back to what we really focus on in Reach 10 is just this aspect of connecting with people and being open and honest and vulnerable and getting a team. So lots of these couples that you talked about, they got a team of people to help them with this, their spouse, but also people who knew them, right? And knew what they were struggling with and knew what they were trying to overcome. So forming a team is really important in life, not just with sexual

addictions or anything like that, but it's good for people to know who we are and to have a good viewpoint about ourselves in that way.

Travis: [51:31](#) Kind of a big buzzword in this area or this field now is that we are wired for connection. And I think that's totally true that, even our physiology in our brain and our body is all centered, maybe not centered, but created in a way is . . .we function the best when we are connected, when we're not isolated. But when we feel support and love and connection in our lives that only comes through healthy relationships and through healthy connection with others and with ourselves and often with a higher power or some sort of religious or spiritual belief too, that this connection is absolutely imperative for healthy functioning in every aspect of our life and especially addiction recovery.

Crishelle: [52:31](#) Is there anything else you want to add that you feel like you just want our listeners to know in their experience with struggling to overcome pornography or to overcome unhealthy or maladaptive behaviors in regards to sexuality in particular as they strive to have that connection?

Travis: [52:54](#) Yeah, I'd say that the first thing that comes to mind that's really important for me and everyone that comes through my door as a therapist, is that they are worth the connection it takes to heal. That we have inherent value. No matter what we've done with our lives, no matter where we are at on our journey that we are worth the connection it takes to heal from the challenges of this life. Nobody's perfect. Everybody makes mistakes. We all experience trauma on some level that needs to be healed because of the imperfect people that we're around that we grew up with imperfect families that we may come from. We deserve to heal from those things. And that healing only comes from connection, from being able to experience healthy relationships with others.

Creed: [54:10](#) Wonderful. Well, thank you so much Travis, for sharing all of your insight with us today. We're so lucky to have had you and we wish you much luck and success with you helping other couples to find their own success with this and individuals. So thank you so much for sharing your time with us today.

Travis: [54:32](#) Yeah, thanks for having me. I really enjoyed this opportunity and I hope that any listeners that have more questions, feel free to be able to contact me and I'd be glad to answer questions or concerns even. I understand that not everybody listening may agree with whatever views I've shared. As you guys have shared in some of your other podcasts that it's important that we keep this conversation open for people from all walks of life and different perspectives and that I'm open to be able to answer those questions or concerns at any time.

Crishelle: [55:09](#) Love that. Thank you so much for being willing open those doors and to reach out. That's so perfect. That's exactly what Reach 10 is all about, is opening that communication and continuing to have it open. And we'll include that in the show notes for people who want to reach out. And as always, you can always reach out to Reach 10.