



EPISODE 11

3 Tools for Breaking a Pornography Habit with Alma Thurber

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

Creed and Crishelle talk with Alma Thurber, a young husband, new father, and university student, about 3 of his top tools for recovery from compulsive pornography use. Hear his experience developing a growth mindset, setting good boundaries for himself, and building a support network. Alma shares the danger of a binary mindset (aka black and white thinking) and how it can get in the way of recovery. He shares examples of his boundaries to avoid triggering situations, and how he brought in more people to help him keep making progress. These essential tools are some of the things that have helped him feel hopeful and more confident. Listen in, you'll love his practical advice and his commitment to find healing and quit pornography.

SEE THE SHOW NOTES AT REACH10.ORG

Creed:

Welcome listeners. Today we are breaking the silence with Alma Thurber about three tools for recovery. Thank you so much. I'll, I'm up for being here on the podcast with us. Can you introduce yourself?

Alma:

Yeah, thanks. I'm glad to be here. So thank you. Said, my name is Alma. I'm a student at Brigham young University. I'm 24 years old. I'm a new dad. I have a six-month-old at home. And so that's really exciting. And I am recovering from compulsive pornography use and I'm here to share my story a little bit and share some tools that have really helped me in my recovery.

Crishelle:

Awesome. Thank you so much for sharing your insights. We're really excited to talk about these, these topics today. So tell us what those three things do you want to talk about.

Alma:

Yeah, so my, the first one would be having a growth mindset or just a healthy mindset while going through recovery. The second would be setting good boundaries for myself. And then the third is about building a support network that can assist me best in my recovery. I really love all three of these topics.

Crishelle:

So I know we could spend a whole episode on every single one of these topics, but I hope that you, and like as we, as we listen and learn from you, that you just highlight why these three have been so impactful for you. Awesome. So starting with the growth mindset, what does that mean for someone like you?

Alma:

So I guess the way I would phrase it is being willing to commit to consistent growth over time and not be expecting results like overnight. So I guess as for example, several months ago, I made a commitment to myself that I was going to continue working my recovery and doing what I needed to do despite what my sobriety date was. And that's helped me a lot because there's a roller coaster of a journey for all of us as we go through our own recovery with relapses and just good and bad days and it's really easy to become discouraged. But as

I've had that commitment to continue working my recovery all the time it's helped me keep going and I've seen a lot more success overall as I've been able to stay positive and commit to the longterm goal of just like healthy living.

Creed:

So you said about a year ago you started, you made that goal. Yeah. So is that when you finally like started to understand what a growth mindset is? Did you take you long, was it hard for you to get to that place of having the growth mindset?

Alma:

Yeah, I think so. I think, like I said before, it's discouraging, especially like after a relapse or things like that. It's easy to want to give up or feel like everything I've done in the past was for not. But just committing to continuing to build myself regardless of what my sobriety date was has helped me like keep going and realize that everything is working. Maybe just not on as fast as I want it, but it is, there are positive changes in my life.

Crishelle:

I really love that. What do you feel like has been the biggest shift for you as you switched to this growth mindset?

Alma:

Yeah. I would say so recently I learned about something called a binary mindset which is simply feeling like you're either doing really, really well or you're doing awful. And so, exactly. So like for example, after a relapse, I might commit to myself, okay, I'm never going to relapse again. I'm never going to have like a bad day ever. I'm just going to be perfect. And so day one comes along, I don't relapse. I'm like, yeah, I'm doing so good. Day two, I'm doing awesome. Then eventually down the road it might not be sustainable and I'll relapse. Then I'll feel like, wow, I'm doing absolutely terribly. So I would say with the binary mindset it often makes you feel like you're doing better than you are just like on day one and two. And it's easy to get lazy feeling like, man, I'm cured now because I haven't relapsed since I've made that commitment. But with the binary mindset it's, you're looking at the long term

goal on like overall progress and on the same side, like when you relapse, never, everything isn't for, not like you can keep going, you can keep progressing forward and you're looking at kind of the big picture of things. So with a growth mindset, you were looking at the big picture of things and small setbacks or even good days aren't going to skew your overall progress and you're willing to commit to just taking things one day at a time and not be discouraged if there's bumps in the road.

Crishelle:

I love that. I love that. So let's talk about boundaries. What have you learned about boundaries?

Alma:

Yeah, so I guess to start off, I wanted to say with boundaries, the purpose of boundaries for me at least is to avoid triggering situations. And so what that means is, I guess in my personal experience, for example, like being on social media for a long periods of time is triggering for me. It puts my brain and kind of like a numb state as I just keep scrolling and scrolling through Facebook or some other platform. And that's kind of the perfect storm for me and my addiction. So I can set a boundary in place. I'm not going to be on social media in these situations or until I've read my scriptures during the day or things like that to help avoid those situations where my past experience tells me I could be in trouble, if that makes sense. So boundaries are there and are perfectly tailored or ideally tailored to the specific person knowing what your vulnerabilities are to help avoid pitfalls, deck that you know, have happened in the past.

Crishelle:

So totally, I love that example of like a specific boundary or like this is what needs to happen in order for me to be safe in this situation. I think that boundaries are so valuable because that's what it's really about, is helping us to be safe and to create safety in our lives. Can you tell us about maybe a boundary that's a little bit more vague or one that you've like had to kinda play around with and understand a little bit?

Alma:

Yeah. so one of my boundaries that I've had to adjust frequently is in the past said, okay, I'm not going to get on the internet or use my computer at all until I've read my scriptures and done like all of my other like self-care daily type things so that I can be kind of mentally and just, just mentally in the right spot and ready to resist any temptation that could come. Ideally in the ideal world, that's been like a little bit too strict for me because sometimes I might have a school assignment that's really urgent or I have to turn it in right away or it's just life happens and it has been a little bit too strict for me. And so I've made exceptions to this rule. Like for example, saying if I, if I reached out to this person, let them know, like, okay, I haven't read my scriptures yet, but I just need to have, I have to check this assignment for school really quick and then I'll text you when I'm off and I'll go back to do that. So I've created exceptions for myself that allow me to actually live and make it doable while keeping myself safe. Does that make sense? Yeah, totally. Does. How did you come to find that these are the types of boundaries you need to create for yourself or how have you come to know what kind of boundaries you need to set for yourself or modify it? Has that just been something you've been able to come up with on your own? Did you have to have other people to, to, to create those boundaries?

Alma:

That's a really good question. A lot of it has been just getting to know myself. I've just taken time to look at my past relapses and, and realize, okay, these past several relapses, there's been similar things that have happened. So I've looked at those vulnerabilities are the things that led up to those relapses and realized, Oh wow, that situation's hard for me and it's hard for me to resist. If I put a boundary there, I can avoid that triggering situation and hopefully be a lot more successful. And so it is a little bit of like trial and error and I've been able to modify more and more.

Alma:

And like we mentioned earlier, I've realized sometimes that this boundary is too strict. Like I can't live and be functioning like I need to be. So I've had to make exceptions and things like that. And so it's definitely a growing and changing thing is as I've continued to modify

my boundaries as needed. But most of it's just been learning about myself through positive and negative experiences and making changes accordingly.

Creed:

And it sounds like you've been accountable to some people with your boundaries, like you include them in on it. Can you tell us a little bit about who you include and what, what you do with them?

Alma:

Yeah, so this will actually go into our next topic a little bit, but I report every single night to a sponsor and accountability partner and to wife and I will report my sobriety date, whether I was clean that day or not. And then also my boundaries and if I kept all my boundaries, if not, why not? And then, yeah, so I'll just let them know how I'm doing and that accountability is essential because it's really easy to say, Oh, I still had a good day because I didn't relapse. But if I'm not being careful and keeping my boundaries, then there's still a lot of improvement there that needs to be recognized. And so reporting that every single day has helped me stay on top of these things, which keep me safer from my addiction. Does that make sense?

Creed:

So in those moments when you do mess up, when you don't follow your boundaries and you view pornography and you have to report that to your accountability partner and your wife, how do you bounce back from that? You know, remembering the growth mindset.

Alma:

It's never easy to bounce back and every time is a little bit different. But remembering that commitment that I made to myself, for example, like I know I feel terrible right now. I feel a lot of guilt. I'm trying to overcome these feelings of shame and regret. But I have promised that I'm going to keep working my recovery and tomorrow's a new day and I'm not gonna give up. And just reminding myself of that helps me get through those hard times, but also the fact that I do have people who I report to like my wife and sponsor accountability

partner and stuff like that, those people are automatically, they're built in to kind of help me bounce back as well and to remind me of that commitment. Like right now it sucks and it's, it's likely that I'll start feeling like I want to give up or it's not worth it anymore. But I promised myself I wouldn't and those people are there to help me keep that commitment and remind me that it does get a lot better.

Crishelle:

I think for me it's really easy to feel like worthless or that my goal is for naught, like recently I found out some like really sad news that I didn't get my dream job like that I wanted so bad. And like my first reaction was like, well, there's no hope for me. There's no other job out there that I want is bad as I wanted this job and there's no way that I can keep going forward. And like that hopeless feeling like really took over and I was like, no, that's not right. There is hope. So how do you, how do you come back to that hope?

Alma:

Remembering the good. Even on the worst day, there are decisions that I can find that I made that were good. There were, there was resistance there at least to a point where I didn't want to give in or there's always good and I can look for that good and realize the progress that I've made. And the other thing, I guess going off of that is looking back and seeing the overall progress. Like, it might stink to say you're on day zero or day one or wherever you're at with in your recovery. But recognizing and looking back and saying there is progress even if it's not in the sobriety date, but just progress in your honesty or the way you're able to move forward in your life. It's, it makes a big difference.

Crishelle:

Totally, totally. I keep seeing this like graph in my mind of like a graph that's moving up, but if you zoom in it's got like downward things and then like an upward and so I think sometimes we get so close to our life and we like look at this moment and it's like this is the only moment and whether that's up or down, that's how it feels. But if we take a step back and we see the whole thing, it helps just that perspective. The perspective is totally different. And so that's what I just kept seeing in my mind as you're explaining that. And I

really like that. That's a good visual. Yeah. Gradually moving upward. And even if, I mean sometimes we do take downward too, you know, like that's a reality also. But remembering our worth as human beings, as children of God, I mean that can, that can take us far. And you were mentioning, this is the third tool that we really wanted to hit on was the support network. So your support network of people help you help remind you of these, these correct principles, right. Help you get back into a good, good mindset again. Totally.

Alma:

Yeah. I think the support network recovery in general for me is just consisted of adding more and more people to the support network. At first, I guess when I was a teenager it was just like my mom and my Bishop. But as I've been able to reach out more and more and more, bouncing back has become easier. But then also just their tools and their advice and their prayers on my behalf has all started to just help exponentially in my recovery, which is huge. I guess each support person or each Avenue of support could help in maybe unique ways. There are ways that a sponsor or accountability partner could help me that my wife couldn't and vice versa, just because some people have maybe experienced recovery for themselves or I've dealt with similar issues and can relate more. But then my wife's always there and always willing to love and be supportive. And just building that work network has been, it's been huge.

Crishelle:

What does it take into build a network?

Alma:

For me the biggest thing was being willing to start going to addiction recovery 12 step program meetings. I met a lot of people there who were in similar situations. I'd have a lot of phone numbers of people I can reach out to and just reporting every single week and creating like friends there and finding a sponsor. And that's been probably the biggest like pool of people that I've been able to add to my I guess my support network or as we're calling it. But then also even reaching out to some family members and other people that way.

Crishelle:

So I love that. I love that. What do you feel like has come from utilizing these three tools? Like what have you seen change in your life?

Alma:

I have a lot more hope. These definitely aren't the only tools that have helped me in my recovery, but these are three of the biggest ones. And it makes me feel even on bad days that I can do this. And it makes me feel hopeful that even regardless of those little pitfalls when we zoom in on that graph, like we were talking about, everything can get better and it will, and I can feel confident in that because of that mindset of the boundaries and the other tools that I have to keep myself in place. And then to keep myself on track. I mean but then also just these people of cheerleader support people, counselors that I have that'll just help me along in my path.

Crishelle:

Fantastic. Thank you so much for sharing and for sharing specific and personal experiences with each of these. I think that that is so valuable and it is one of my favorite parts about being able to host this and that and to interview to interview you is because like that's so real for you. And this is working and sometimes it's hard and sometimes those pitfalls hurt really bad and there is hope. Yeah.

Creed:

So once again, this was Alma Thurber with three tools for recovery and pornography, growth mindset, boundaries and building and using a support network. Thank you so much Alma, for being here and giving us your insights.

Alma: Thanks, loved being here.

Crishelle:

Kay. Listeners, before we go, we want to share with you a review from a listener and what they are loving about Reach 10's Breaking the Silence and what they are loving about Breaking the Silence . This review is from Marlise Avery. I hope I'm saying your name right. And you said this, and I'm so grateful for this review and it really just warms my heart, but this is what you said in the age of information. You don't have to look very hard to find opinions on sex, but for those who hold an ethic of keeping sexual relations between spouses, only few opinions function as both informative and edifying. Much in traditional conservative Christian culture emphasizes the don'ts of sexuality, leaving a blank space for what healthy sexuality between spouses can look like. These conversations are start in filling in that blank. Thank you Reach 10 and thank you, Marlise Avery, we want to make sure that you know how grateful we are for your review because your review helps us to reach more people. And so if you're listening, message us or email us at hello@reachten.org and we're going to send some swag your way. Thank you.