



EPISODE 12

3 Tools for Healing Your Heart When Your Spouse is Recovering from Pornography with Karen Thurber

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

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Creed and Crishelle talk with Karen Thurber, a young wife, mom, and entrepreneur with her own flower business. She is learning to support her husband, Alma (see episode 11) in his recovery from pornography use, and continually working on her own healing as well. Karen shares 3 important tools that have helped her. First is self-care, second is communication in their marriage, and third is reaching out for support. You'll hear about the power of boundaries, honesty, 12-step groups, and daily scripture study.

Crishelle ([00:00](#)):

Hey everyone. Today we are talking with Karen Thurber and we are breaking the silence on healing through recovery. And this is a topic that's near and dear to my heart, just because this is the side of, not that there are sides, but this is the side of the table, quote unquote, that I've been on and that I've experienced because of someone else's use of pornography. So I'm so excited to chat with you today. Karen, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Karen ([01:10](#)):

So I am a new mom. That's probably the most exciting thing that's going on right now in my life. I have a six month old. And I am not going to school right now. I have a part time business where I get to play with flowers all day. So that's fun.

Crishelle ([01:25](#)):

That's so fun!

Karen ([01:26](#)):

And then I get to be a full time mom.

Crishelle ([01:28](#)):

So that is so fun.

Karen ([01:31](#)):

I am the wife of Alma Thurber who was just in your last podcast. And I am 20, 23. I almost forgot my age. Yes, I'm 23 years old, so

Creed ([02:16](#)):

Yeah. Awesome. Well congrats on having the new kid and being—

Karen ([02:21](#)):

He's a cute one!

Creed ([02:22](#)):

—A new mom. That's awesome.

Crishelle ([02:24](#)):

And we loved learning from Alma. He has so much wisdom to share from his experience. And I imagine that it's the same if not more from you. This is great. So Karen, what has been the most helpful for you in your recovery? What have you found that's brought healing?

Karen ([02:43](#)):

What have I found that's brought healing. I have a full long list. I could go on for pages and pages, but I'm going to focus on three. The biggest things for me and one of those is self-care. I think that's probably the biggest, which is why I chose to talk about this one first. Self-care, something that I struggle with. I feel like in the environment where we grow up especially here in Utah and with growing up in The Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], we learn about service like from a very early age and how important it is to serve everyone. And that is so important and we know that that helps us to feel the spirit. That's how it helps us to become the people that God wants us to be. But I think sometimes we misunderstand and we had to have this mindset that we'll take care of everybody else first and then if we have time, we'll take care of ourselves. I know that's how I grew up, is that like, I'll take care of everybody else and then if I have time, like maybe I'll do my scripture study, maybe I'll, you know I dunno. Things like that. So,

Creed ([03:41](#)):

Yeah, I think a true doctrine of, well, at least The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Christian doctrine is that the second greatest commandment is to love, love others as thyself. Right? And we often don't, we don't talk enough about how we are supposed to love ourselves also, but it's such a key and key aspect of that. I mean, Christ himself showed us that he loved himself. He loved himself enough to go away from people and have, you know, some meditation time in the woods. You know, to contemplate life. He allowed others to take care of him too. Like he allowed others to provide him food, a place to sleep. A great book that talks about this loving yourself and others is called the boundaries is called Boundaries by Chris Townsend and Henry Cloud. So once again, we've mentioned that before, but if you want to learn more about those kinds of things, Boundaries is such a great book.

Karen ([04:47](#)):

Yeah, definitely. Boundaries is going to be another one of the things that I talk about. But I love that you brought up that, that Christ himself took time for himself in Matthew 14, we learned about that specifically, verse 23. He, John the Baptist was just killed and he's his cousin, right? He's a close family member and he was, I can imagine that he was distraught. He was sad. He needed time for himself and he was serving people, but he did take time to

go up into the mountain and just take time for himself. I'm sure he prayed and spent that time to get closer to his father and to take time for himself. So I'm really glad that you brought that up. So—

Crishelle ([05:27](#)):

What does self-care look like for you?

Karen ([05:31](#)):

That is a great question. Self-care for me has changed with time now that I have a baby. Self-care is a little harder. But my husband and I have something we call dailies. Dailies are so important. Dailies for me, what a normal morning looks like is I have to shower before my husband leaves because if I don't show before my husband leaves, it might not happen. So showering is super important. And then after that we really work on helping each other get our dailies done, such as scripture study yoga for me. Exercise, prayer, things like that really help us to become closer to the savior and take care of ourselves because we really, we can take better care of our loved ones when we're taking care of ourselves. I can be a better mom if I'm taking care of myself first. I can be a better support person to those that I support and a better wife and a better daughter. All these things. If I'm taking care of myself first and I'm making sure that I'm doing what I need to do, then I can better support those around me.

Crishelle ([06:39](#)):

I really love that. What I love about what you're saying is that self-care isn't necessarily about doing the same things every day or like going to the spa, which that's a really nice thing, but rather it's taking care or like taking care of your soothers or doing the things that help you to self-regulate every day. Like moving and doing like a devotional where you're spending time and connecting spiritually, your taking care of like your physical body and you're showering and those kinds of things. Are there any things that you've learned as you've done that to be, to be flexible with or that you've learned to really value?

Karen ([07:38](#)):

Definitely. Again, going back to Matthew 14, Christ was in the middle of serving people when he needed to take time and go just kind of leave the people. And I think that's the

biggest thing that I've learned is that I have routines. Routines are so nice and I struggle with them sometimes. But routines are really nice, but sometimes you have to modify the routines because like I said, I'm a mom and I'm still trying to figure out the mom thing and sometimes he needs me. Sometimes he needs to eat, sometimes, we need to stop what we're doing because we need to talk about something or maybe, I don't know, maybe I have to drop [my husband] off at school or things like that. So sometimes I do have to modify things and help other people in between the times that I take care of myself. Because as much as I would love to get it all done in the morning and then take care of everybody else, sometimes it doesn't work that way. But it is important that it does get done. That you don't just leave it and be like, okay, it didn't happen. It's fine, I'll take care of myself another day. Right? It needs to be something that you plan and if plans change, fine, but make sure that it gets done so that you can feel like you're taking care of yourself. And a huge part of taking care of yourself is making sure that you feel close to the spirit. And I think that's the biggest thing is that you can modify things. Things can change. Routines are great, but they won't always work out perfectly. Just make sure it gets done.

Crishelle ([09:07](#)):

Yeah, I really love that. How has this helped with your healing and recovery?

Karen ([09:29](#)):

How it's helped me in my recovery is one, when I do my scripture study in the morning, I'm studying the support book. For those of you who don't know, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a support book for those who are helping those who are struggling with or going through addiction recovery for those support people, there's also a book, and this is a new thing. This hasn't been around for a very long, maybe a few months. But I remember when it came out, I was so excited. We used to just have papers that we'd give out at the support meetings. And this book helps me because it gives me different principles and I could give you a whole other like three podcasts on like what these principles are and how they've helped me, but that's been a huge help to me. And those things helped me become closer to the savior. And I think that's the biggest thing that has helped me in my recovery is doing these things. Doing these dailies helped me to feel closer to the Lord and to feel closer to Heavenly Father and helped me to recognize my

potential and recognize my worth. And that's what these dailies do for me. It's when I'm taking care of myself, I feel my worth and that's important.

Crishelle ([10:44](#)):

Yeah, I love that. What do you feel like is the next biggest thing that's helped you?

Karen ([10:49](#)):

Communication. I feel like every marriage book and everything, everything always talks about communication, but it's really so important. Part two parts of communication that I wanted to talk about are boundaries and the other one is reporting. Boundaries are to make us, to help us feel safe. I think you brought that up in the podcast with my husband. That boundaries are what help us feel safe and what help us be safe. Some of these boundaries that I have, I'm just going to talk about two. One is I expect 100% honesty and I have to give 100% honesty. Sometimes it's easy for me to downplay what I'm feeling because it's not, it doesn't seem as important as the, the feelings that my husband might be going through. But I expect myself to be 100% honest and I expect my spouse to be 100% honest.

Crishelle ([11:36](#)):

I love that. I love that one. I just want to just like, amen that and that is I think the key to success in these conversations. Whether you're dating someone who is going through this, like that's the expectation. That's what you're looking for is someone that's honest, someone that you can be honest with.

Creed ([11:55](#)):

Also, step one in recovery. Isn't step one for those who are helping?

Karen ([12:01](#)):

No, the principles are different. The, yeah, the principles are definitely different, but it is a big part of all the principles. Yeah. Honesty is a huge, huge deal. Yeah. Yeah.

Crishelle ([12:13](#)):

And I also appreciated that you mentioned that sometimes it's hard to be honest and that you expect honesty from yourself and how you're feeling because that can be really hard

because someone telling you something difficult or like being there. I know that for me, my tendency has been like, okay, well I don't want to make this more dramatic than it already is, so I'm just going to like stuff my feelings in a closet and it's fine and just go on as if life was normal. It's fine until you explode later. That's it. That's what I've learned. I'm fine until I'm suddenly not fine anyway. Right. And it will always come out and that's what I found is that it always comes out. And so that commitment to honesty, I really appreciate that you brought up

Karen ([12:54](#)):

Thanks. And it's hard, but it's so important. Yeah, definitely. And the other boundary that I wanted to talk about is that I, if there is a relapse or if there's even triggers that that have really been affecting my loved one, then I want to know about it within 24 hours. Those are just two things that really helped me is 100% honesty and I want to know about it within 24 hours so that we can find a solution. You know, not just kind of forget about it. Yeah, let it go.

Crishelle ([13:30](#)):

Brush it under the rug. 'Cause that doesn't work. We talked about that. Was that hard to establish with Alma?

Karen ([13:38](#)):

No, I think he was already doing it I guess, but I wanted to make it mine. I wanted to be like, Hey, this is a boundary that I need to expect. Not just like I'm hope that it happens but actually expect that both of us. So anyway, he was pretty good at that I guess beforehand. But we're constantly improving. I'm sure there's other things that we can improve on. Yeah.

Creed ([14:04](#)):

Do you mind bringing us through the whole process of a day in which Alma relapses and tells you about it and how you, when you hear that information, what goes on for you and how do you regulate your emotions?

Karen ([14:17](#)):

Definitely. I think that's a really good question. All of these things, right? It helps if I have done my self-care that day for sure. If I have already read my scriptures. And it's funny how when you read your scriptures, if a relapse does happen and I've already done my scripture study, I feel like in my scripture study I've learned what I needed to for that situation. So the Lord definitely knows what's going to happen and he knows how to best help on your day to day, right. He knows things before we know them. And so definitely those dailies, if I can get that scripture study done, if I can, if I've prayed and I feel close to the, to the savior, then definitely that helps. Communication. again, like I said, I expect honesty and sometimes if there, if there is a relapse or even if there's just a struggle during the day, then maybe it's not something that I really want to hear over a text message or I really want to see over a text message. Sometimes it's something that I need to we need to sit down and talk about. And so when I say I expect 100% honesty, it doesn't mean that it's like right away you text me and you say like, this is what happened. Sometimes it is like that if there's a trigger or things like that that he needs to reach out. And I love to be a part of that. I love to know that he's reaching out when he feels like he needs to. And let's see, where am I at?

Crishelle ([15:44](#)):

I just want to ask, and if this is too personal, like we don't want to include those. Does it hurt? Like, do you hurt with him? Like how, like how do you work through that?

Karen ([15:54](#)):

Definitely. It definitely hurts. When, when a relapse happens, it's not like, Oh, it'll be fine. Sometimes I like to pretend that that's how I feel inside, but it's really not. I mean, there's definitely times where I feel overwhelmed and discouraged and kind of like, here we go, it's going to happen again. But again, if those dailies have already happened, if I'm taking care of myself and taking care of my recovery, then it helps me because then I know how I need to react.

Karen ([16:39](#)):

Yes, it hurts. But when I've done those things to take care of myself, when I'm working my recovery, it hurts less and I know how to move forward. It helps me to move forward. And another thing that, another one of those the three points that I want to talk about is reaching out. So I'll definitely get to that in a second, but reaching out is so important to go

back to what Creed was saying, kind of how my a day in the life of recovering I guess is that I want to know when it happens and it's something that happens at the end of our day. Let's say I find out about a relapse or a struggle during, I dunno, let's say it's like three o'clock. Right? Alma's back. We've already talked about it. Definitely, that's a huge thing, is that we need to talk about it. As soon as we get the chance we need to talk about it just so that we both feel connection because addiction [recovery] thrives in this connection, right? So when we're connecting and we're talking about it and we make sure that I need to make sure that he feels my love and he needs to make sure that we, that I feel his love, that we're still connected in that way. So that's super important. We talk about it and then maybe I need to go and reach out to someone. Maybe I'm feeling overwhelmed and talking about it with my husband is great, but if I can reach out to someone who's been through the same thing, I have lots of friends that I've that I can reach out to. Mostly friends that I've met through the addiction recovery support meeting. I reach out to someone, whether it's a text message or a phone call and I can make sure that I'm feeling connected and making sure that I'm validating my feelings. 'Cause that's the hardest thing for me is validating that the feelings are real. 'Cause I like to think that I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine. And then, or let's say the next day I feel fine, I feel good. Then I'm like, Oh, that was so stupid that I acted that way or that I felt that way. So I don't validate those feelings. So it's important to validate those feelings and that's why I reach out. And then in the evening when the, the second thing I wanted to talk about actually with communication is reporting every single night we tried to report and make sure that we're reporting how we did. If there was any slips or relapses. If I struggled to, I don't know if I spent way too much time on social media when I should have been, I dunno, taking care of things around the house or if I had a list of to-do's that I needed to do and I just spent the whole day on social media or that was just something I struggle with sometimes. We report on how our day is and so that kind of, that's the full day.

Creed ([19:22](#)):

Thank you. Thank you for sharing that whole process and everything. And I like how you talked about even what you're working on for yourself, right. 'Cause we all, we all have our things and it's important to be honest with in a, in a dating relationship and most importantly a marriage relationship to explain, "Yeah. I, I can do better in these other areas too." It's not just one spouse that has things to work on. It's, it's both together. And I think

that's, that is the beauty of a marriage relationship is that it kind of, you have somebody to be accountable to very often, daily, minute by minute and it smooths you out and helps you become a better person through it all.

Karen ([20:03](#)):

Definitely. Something I want to like add to that is just if you've ever gone through the 12 step book, I remember beginning of my recovery, I actually went through the 12 step book, not just the principles of recovery but the 12 steps of recovery for addiction recovery. And they apply to everything they apply to everyone. I went through it with the thought of rather than pornography addiction, I went through it with feelings of self-doubt and if you go through and just change every time it says like addiction or things like that for your struggle, it works perfect and it really, really helped me to get through it. So

Creed ([20:39](#)):

I agree with that too. Yeah. I didn't actually go through the 12 step recovery process or the booklet. Like when I was, when I had my own addiction, I was able to get out of it through kind of working the steps without really realizing they were that specific. But I just love those 12 steps cause it really just lays out perfectly easy steps that you can follow towards recovery. But I did start using it after my mission when I wasn't having a habit with pornography. And yeah, it was like, it's healing also for what happened in my high school days. It's healing for what's happening on the daily. So it's really just the gospel put into action.

Karen ([21:22](#)):

Definitely. Yeah.

Crishelle ([21:24](#)):

I love that. So you've mentioned how reaching out has been really helpful for you and that's that third point you want to talk about. What gives you the courage to reach out? How do you, how do you reach out? Because I can totally relate to the way you were talking about a bit ago of like, Oh, it's so silly that I felt that way. Like I should just get over this. Like it's not a big deal when like validating those, reaching out and validating and really honoring your experience is so important.

Karen ([21:56](#)):

Definitely, it is hard. I get super embarrassed when I'm emotional and I'm really emotional a lot, but I like to pretend I'm not an emotional person, but yeah, reaching out can be really hard. I have the opportunity to be a facilitator in one of these meetings and, in the support meeting, and so I'm always telling people, just reach out. It feels so good. Nobody's going to judge you and just call me. Here's my phone number, call me or just text me. And it's so easy to say that to other people, but when I need to reach out to someone and I'm super embarrassed and I remember there's been a few times where I'm just like in tears and I'm just, 'cause I, whether it had anything to do with recovery or not, again, this just applies to everything and I'm just emotional and I feel like I need to reach out to someone. And I'm just embarrassed. I don't want people to think that I cry, which is such a human thing to do is cry. But I just feel super embarrassed and but I'm telling you, you just have to do it. Just get over that little hump. And just take the courage to reach out. And then just hearing somebody validate those feelings is really important 'cause it helps you feel like this is real and I can move forward. It gives you hope. I guess that's why I reach out. There's three people or three ways that I reach out. One is through prayer. Again, even though heavenly father knows exactly what we're going through, he knows the trial. I still get embarrassed to talk to him and be like, "yeah, I'm struggling." He knows I'm struggling. But I still struggle. Once I get over that though, that embarrassment and I talked to him. And sometimes it's not always like, thank you for the struggle or I'm sorry that I did this. It's mostly, sometimes it's me just talking to him. It's not a formal prayer, but it's me saying like, "I'm really feeling off right now. I'm feeling bad. I'm sad just to let you know." And then I wait and usually he helps me to he always helps me to feel better, but usually within a few seconds I'm starting to feel better already.

Crishelle ([23:56](#)):

I like to call those for the record prayers. And sometimes I'm even mad at God Sue me. But it's true. I'm like, for the record, this really sucks right now and I'm in a lot of pain. And I found—

Creed ([24:10](#)):

I think definitely God allows for that anger to happen, He can handle it. And he allows for that so we can, we can process ourselves. Yeah.

Karen ([24:20](#)):

It's so true.

Crishelle ([24:20](#)):

I really love that. Like, Hey, this is what's going on. You already know. But like I need to tell you.

Karen ([24:26](#)):

Yeah. And also saying it out loud too, just helps me validate it for myself. So I think that's important. Another one like it, like I brought up I am, I go to a support group every Wednesday. I'm always there. And it's been a huge support once a week to have a plan time where I go and I talk to other people who are in similar situations. Every situation is different there, but they're all similar. And just have other people talk about this. Talking about it I think is huge. Which is why we're doing this podcast, right. Just to talk about it. And another one is like I brought up with earlier just talking to other people who have been through it. And that can be through a text message. Usually if it's a harder day then I'll make a phone call. But that's usually, that's usually what I do and it's so helpful to reach out. So, so helpful. Again, validation in what what's going on is really, really nice and important. Yeah.

Crishelle ([25:31](#)):

Do you, how do you reach out to Alma?

Karen ([25:35](#)):

Definitely. I reached out to him by sometimes I'll text him and say, Hey, I'm struggling. I'm just like, whether it's self-doubt or whether it's just feelings of uncertainty or I dunno with anything again I'll just reach out to him and he'll, he usually sends me a text message: I'm praying for you. And just that, just getting, knowing that he's praying for me is a huge blessing.

Crishelle ([25:59](#)):

That's awesome. That's so awesome. Thank you so much for sharing these three things that are really helping you and helping you to heal through your recovery. I really appreciate

your stories and your experiences and especially like those, "this is what it looks like in my life." So thank you so much.

Karen ([26:19](#)):

You're so welcome. Thanks.

Creed ([26:20](#)):

Once again, those things that we talked about specifically today were self-care, communication, and reaching out. If any of our listeners have specific questions about any of these things that we've been talking about, please reach out to our email: hello@reach10.org and submit your questions to us. We're going to have a podcast coming up soon about questions and answers. Anyway, we want to make sure we're helping you find out what you want to know. So thank you so much Karen, for being here.

Karen ([26:48](#)):

You're so welcome. Thanks for having me.

Creed ([27:01](#)):

Alma and Karen will be back with us to talk about their relationship together on this podcast. So be looking for that episode as it comes in the future.

Crishelle ([27:10](#)):

We're so excited to have them together with us. And Creed mentioned this, and I just wanted to hit it again. We will be doing an episode specifically answering your questions. So we need you to send us questions. This can come through Instagram. This can come through email, this can come through a review (hashtag review us) just any way you want to reach out to us. We want to know what you want to know about healthy sexuality and overcoming pornography and shame, silence, and fear. So ask us your questions. And we can't wait to hear from you.