



EPISODE 17

How to Create a Healing Bond of Connection - with Weston Smith

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

Weston shares how powerful it has been to confide in people about his problem with pornography. Starting with his mom, a good friend, a recovery group, and now with guests and listeners on his podcast. You'll love this great conversation with Creed and Crishelle ranging from building community, to seeing true recovery as becoming excellent, to tips for staying strong during the COVID-19 quarantine.

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Crishelle:

Welcome back listeners. We are so grateful and excited to be able to record this podcast over zoom and to continue to "break the silence" with incredible guests. And today our guest, his name is Weston Smith and we are specifically going to be talking about building a community. A community that is specifically for recovery and the importance of connection in recovery. And so we're so excited to talk with Weston. And before we get to Weston I just want to put out a couple of reminders. First, we are so grateful that you have found us and that you are listening and we would really appreciate it if you would subscribe, rate, and review our podcast on iTunes. That will help more people find us. We

also have an anonymous link in our show notes where you can go and submit questions, stories, any feedback and that's really helpful. We've received a couple of responses and that's been so helpful and we want to continue to hear your feedback. So without further ado, Weston, introduce yourself.

Weston:

Wow, what an honor. Breaking the Silence with the famous Crishelle and Creed. What an absolute blessing. A little about myself besides being a Reach 10 fan boy, I'm 29 years old, I'm from Salt Lake City, went to school at Utah State University, served an LDS mission in New York City, I work for a software company in Lehi. I'm so over Covid-19 and I'm so excited to get back to work and I hate pornography so much and I'm so grateful for this opportunity to share this platform with you guys. I guess a side project that I do—I partnered with one of my best friends and recovery partners, Spencer Buzz, well he and I are co-hosts of the Eternal Warrior podcast. It's sponsored by a therapy group called Life-Changing Services, specifically Cody Hawes, one of their licensed clinicians and partners there. And so we share stories just like you guys do, but I'm so excited to be here in a collaborative environment with you.

Crishelle:

Yeah. I'm so glad that you mentioned that. I was hoping that you would just bring up your podcast because if you're not already listening to it, go and listen to it because it's awesome.

Weston:

Check out the EWP. We like to have fun there.

Creed:

It really is. So inspirational. Like I started listening to it today and boy, the little clips of inspirational quotes from movies and from LDS church leaders like at the beginning was like, so just Ugh, gave me lots of energy. So listen to your first episode to a couple other episodes. I really like it. So I'm so happy to have you and collaborate with you on this, on this fight against pornography and for healthy sexuality. So way to be!

Weston:

Love that I appreciate that you said, not only do we do, we fight against pornography, but we fight for healthy sexuality and for meaningful connections and meaningful communities. And I guess that's what we're going to be talking about here tonight.

Crishelle:

Definitely. That's exactly what I want to hear from you first is what do you think leads to a healthy community and healthy connection?

Weston:

I think it all starts with communication. One of the biggest challenges that we see, especially like in the Latter-day Saint community, but I think in any type of conservative community is that sex is such a taboo topic and our parents might rely on certain institutions like schools or, or maybe even church to teach us what that is, when it really is something that's so personal and so intimate and means something different to a lot of different people. So opening up a dialogue early and often. Frequently I feel like some parents, and this isn't an indictment against our parents or their generation at all, it's just what they're used to, we kind of treat, I mean it's, it's even called "the talk" and you guys can't see me doing this, but I'm totally air quoting "the talk". So it's like this one time, not the talks, not the series, not the ongoing dialogue and conversation. It's just "the talk." Talk about where babies come from and that's it. When the world and everything around us, we have so much more noise telling us about we live in such a hyper-sexualized world where everybody is out for their own self-gratification, which is so...it's such a warped view of what God wants for us. So where does it start? A healthy ongoing dialogue at a young age.

Crishelle:

I really, really love that. I think what I love most about that is that you're focused more on the aspect of sexuality that I think is so often missed, that it's not about me at all. It's actually about being connected with someone else and sharing and really understanding them and them understanding me. And that's what that was. That's what leads to healthy sexuality and fulfillment, even in sexuality. And that's not the message that we get from the world at all.

Weston:

It's what's in it for me? What can I get out of this? You're a me monster. And I dunno, it's just, it's so selfish. There's no communication involved at all. It's all just greed and lust.

Creed:

Yeah. And if we don't learn that from our parents or within our own homes growing up, it can be really hard to understand what meaningful connection and intimacy is because the world teaches this backwards, solely hedonistic, self-pleasure point of view when as you both have been saying it takes two and it's something to share with someone and not just to, you know, do self-pleasure with. Because we need a...we're here to connect and have a community with people and that is a beautiful way to do it with someone we can call our spouse.

Weston:

Yeah.

Crishelle:

Tell us a little bit Weston, about what you've learned about community and connection and how to build those things.

Weston:

Yeah, absolutely. So I'm a recovering pornography addict myself and so we're, I mean everybody that we feature on our podcast and the community that I've been fortunate enough to be a part of that way...you cannot fight an addiction, whatever it is, alone. You can't. One of the guiding principles of 12-step programs in alcoholics anonymous and what we teach at life-changing services as well is you have to turn over your will to something other than yourself by virtue of you giving up your will to something else. There's another party involved. And so in essence, some type of community. What I've learned from having a community is recovery is so much fun and it's so invigorating and a lot of times we think of recovery as trying to get back to normal or trying to be fixed. Like you're broken and you're trying to just be normal again. True recovery is not like that. True recovery is how do you become excellent? How do you maximize your mortality? How do you make every one of your 24 hours each day count for something? Because the adversary and the evils of the world are certainly trying you to try to get you to do not only something bad, but just something else to take that time to distract you. And in my life when I am bingeing my life

away, or just consuming at such a high rate where I forget to create and connect, then I'm losing. I'm not where I need to be. I'm not fulfilling what I want to do and I'm falling back into sexual addiction and lust and things of that nature. And so in order for me to have healthy sexuality, I have to constantly be pushing forward for something. And I actually really appreciate that. It's one of the great blessings about being a recovering addict from anything is I've of necessity had to become a higher productivity person. And it all starts with community. Getting other people involved and allowing other people to share their scars and their stories that as soon as you are vulnerable enough with someone, you give permission for everyone else to be human and to come forth and to lay their burdens at the Lord's feet, but also to give them hope that, you know what, it doesn't have to be that way. You don't have to be broken. You can be and will be excellent.

Creed:

When did you start and how did you create a community? When did that start to happen for you?

Weston:

I think community initially found me. I was 16 years old and I was doing bad things. And my mom just knew. Moms have super powers and she just said, Wes, like she just asked me just point blank. She's like, are you watching pornography and masturbating? And I was like, Ugh. Yeah. You know, I mean, it was just so, such a punch to the gut, you know? And I couldn't lie to my mom. I could never lie to my mom. And, but also, that was the first time anybody ever knew and I could be confident and instead of like feeling so anxious anytime the topic of pornography or sex came up in my church community especially, but just anywhere, I didn't feel so much shame anymore because I had an advocate. I had an ally. My mom was on my side. She knew what I was up against and she wanted what was best for me. And so we could talk and I could share with her what I was going through and when I had made mistakes and, oh that alone gave me so much confidence and it was able to snowball from there. Being able to then talk to a church leader about what was going through and get some more confidence there and eventually joining recovery groups. And all of a sudden I've got people that are just like me and they're going through the same thing together and we can help each other. They have skillsets that they can teach me and I can develop my own and in turn teach them. And then my friend Spence, who, we confided in each other in college of what we were going through, he gets this wild hair of like, Hey

Wes, let's tell the entire world that we have pornography challenges. And that sounded like the best idea ever. And so we started the Eternal Warrior podcast. And by virtue of that, we've met hundreds of people who are in the same fight with us. And it's not like what you'd think a porn addict would be of like some 30 plus year old in their parents' basement watching video games, drinking mountain Dew and having Cheeto fingers. It's the elite of society. People who have such high expectations and high aspirations for themselves but are so ashamed of this deep, dark secret that they're afraid that their community would turn on them if they knew. And so we allow them a friendly and welcoming atmosphere just like you guys do here at Reach 10 and on Breaking the Silence, to give people a voice to help them see, Hey, you know what? Like you're not alone and you can do something about what you're going through.

Creed:

How old were you when, when you spoke with Spence and you both confided in each other?

Weston:

Oh, gosh, we were probably, we were at the Merrill Cazier library one evening, I think it was February of 2016. We were sitting, I had this beat up old 4runner and I just turned to him and I don't know what came over me. I do now. Totally the Spirit, just like, "Spence, I'm struggling with pornography issues." And he just stopped dead in his tracks and looked over at me and he said, me too man. Me too. And like, I dunno, just some special bond that—and Spence and I we were talking about this earlier today actually, and he was like Wes, I don't know if you would have ever said that if I would've ever got the help that I needed. Or I ever would have been able to confide in someone. And I mean like, I don't think, I don't know if I would've ever been able to do that unless my mom had the courage to confront me, you know? And so like, yeah, it's really scary. But I think a good way to be able to measure how we're doing in life is how willing we are to have those uncomfortable conversations. How much do we care about each other? How precious is our mortality to us? So we don't want to waste it. We don't want to look back and realize, man, I have destroyed a marriage for 10 years or 15 years or lied to my family for 30 because I profess to be something that I'm not. Or there's an incongruence of character. And when you have community and people know the score and know what you're up against and know that you're fighting, you also have accountability, not that people just care about your

pornography recovery. They actually know about it and that they can ask you about it. And there's that level of accountability that's so, so crucial. Sorry, I hope that answers your question.

Creed:

I love your, basically a testimony of how courage, humility and just talking to someone that you care about, your friend, your family members about a struggle that you're going through just connects you both, creates a bond creates a structure and a community that can help you progress and grow and continue fighting with hope, with vigor. I just love, love, love that story. And testimony, how we just, we gotta be courageous to talk to our friends, talk to our family, and about what is actually going on in our lives. It can bless us so much, I love that.

Crishelle:

I just want to say amen. I love what you're saying. I think that what you're saying is true of all struggle. Like I recently have been struggling and I opened up to some friends that I hadn't talked to in a long time, and it was so validating to be able to have them be like, I was there. I've been there. And I was so grateful because I'd been like, I felt so alone. I thought I was the only one going through this, but just so silly because we're all going through this dang quarantine thing and all of that. But that community, I just think that you said that so beautifully.

New Speaker:

That one of Satan's greatest weapons in this battle is shame, and shame loves shadows, loves, loves, loves it. I mean, lies and deceit cannot exist when they're brought to light. And so, I dunno, there's just something so magically powerful. Confiding with people that you really trust to be able to help you. And I love what you guys are doing at Reach 10: reach out to 10 people and if you can't reach out to 10, reach out to one. And it's amazing how in my entire life, ever since I decided, Hey, I'm going to be do something about this. I have not had someone who I really respected and really cared about when I've confided in them, I have never had someone love me less and I've been met with so much love and humility and respect. People who are grateful that I'm doing something about it and I'm willing to champion a cause in a community and we all have that opportunity. Whatever your cause may be, you know, everybody has a God-given, very divine part of their identity where they

can and should and must do something about it in their mortality, buddy. And I would challenge all you listeners to find out what yours is and then go for it.

Crishelle:

I really loved that. And I just want to add to that, that's always been my experience with the Savior. I feel like often I get really nervous to like come to God and to come to Jesus Christ with my weaknesses and my shortcomings. And like they're going to just be like, you're fine or they'll just brush me off or like a million other stories that I tell myself. But I think you just said about what your experience with other people has been and I think consistently is our experience with God when we come to him is that we only receive more love, more respect and more help and grace and that he is just waiting for us and not even waiting, but reaching for us. Like his hand is reaching for us to come to him and to really connect with him and to receive the help that he has for us.

Weston:

You highlight something so powerful there, Crishelle, in the book of Isaiah and again in second Nephi, the prophet Isaiah says for many, I mean, he'll outline a whole bunch of sins or wickedness of the children of Israel and then he'll end his admonition with these words, they'll say for all of this, the Lord, His anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. And our Heavenly Father can't look on sin with any degree of allowance. And he knows like, he'll let you know that too. What I love about connecting with God in terms of recovery is he won't stand for any type of misbehavior. He will not allow for sin to persist in your life. Like his anger is not turned away, but it's not against you. It's against your actions. Satan would have you believe that you are broken, that you are wrong, but the truth of the matter is that you did wrong and that you can do better. It's a really powerful understanding between shame that attacks identity and guilt that attacks actions that because we are divine creatures because we are incredible people or part of such an amazing community of the human family, that when we betray our values, then yeah, we should feel a little bit guilty. We should feel a little bit bad because it doesn't jive with who we are and when it's hard to be accountable when it's a little bit, when you, I don't want to say ashamed because shame is couched in the word, but when you are maybe reluctant to be accountable when you maybe slipped up or relapsed, which everyone will in recovery, it's a journey, not an experience, but that, like that little twinge of guilt. Like it's because you're on the right path. It's because your heart has changed because you no longer desire what

this addiction or what this challenge is brought to you before. You no longer want that. And so when you act against that value, it doesn't sit well with you. So like when things do get hard, that's such a good sign. It's such a good sign that you're on the right track.

Crishelle:

I really, really love that. And again, just want to shout amen and hallelujah from the rooftops.

Weston:

Stay inside be part of the solution, Crishelle. Stay home, save lives.

Crishelle:

From my living room only.

Weston:

Your own rooftop. Nobody else's, that's right. Six feet away at least.

Creed:

Yeah, I really like what you have to say, Weston and I recently listened to, I mean, like I said, your podcast and I really like some thoughts you had about Covid-19 tips. We are currently in a time where it's easy to be disconnected from others than those within our household. And I just had a question for you of what is most helpful for you to have self-compassion or what you've learned from other people to have self-compassion? When we do slip up with pornography or with something else that we're not fond of, how do we have self-compassion, but then also use that as a way to gear up better and to strengthen ourselves better for the next time, especially during this Covid-19.

Weston:

Yeah. So if I understand your question correctly, how do we not internalize maybe some of those healthy corrective feelings of guilt when we do make mistakes?

Creed:

Correct. That's definitely a part of it. And especially during this Covid-19.

Weston:

Yeah, so in our current scenario, we were in a super scary state, right? We, it's hard for us to connect and it's super easy to just vege and consume, right? You guys can see via zoom over my shoulder, those are all seven Harry Potter books. And I know you guys are Harry Potter fans and I just read them all in the last three weeks because that's what I needed to do and it was the best, worst decision in my life. But if I'm alone and don't have people around me and I have the internet at my disposal, it's so much easier to just be non-intentionally non- deliberately consuming media. That of my own experience and the experience of millions of other addicts. That's how you get into trouble. That's how you go back to what your brain already knows and what it's wired to do. So in the episode, Creed, that you're talking about, we outlined three really important things to help you in a pandemic crisis like this. First, quarantine the sources of evil in your life. Like if you know, like Netflix is a bad source for you, just don't even get on it. If you know that like Instagram or Snapchat is a source for pornography for you, don't even go near it. The second thing is to develop a really, really good routine. Have a really strong day to day schedule. The third thing is to connect whether that's virtually or physically with those in your life and those that are in your support community.

Creed:

Thank you so much for those awesome tips and I really love the fact that you're reading Harry Potter too.

Weston:

Well I'm done baby. I'm going to be watching now.

Creed:

Yes. We talk a lot about Harry Potter here on this podcast. There's so many good tips we can get from that too. I mean, if you read the fifth book, I think that's when it happens, but, Voldemort, AKA Satan. One of his biggest tactics is separating Harry Potter from all of his friends has, tries to make Harry Potter feel like he is alone and doesn't have anybody to rely on. He is this miserable human being who's lonely. And I think that's definitely what Satan tries to do with us all the time, is try to make us feel alone and separate us. And we have to fight that with courage, compassion and connection, right? Talking with our friends and family about what we're going through, you know, be intimate with one another with the

way we share our values. Share our stories. We need to fight. Voldemort, Satan, they're a bad team.

Weston:

You've got to make your, make your own Dumbledore's army.

Creed:

Exactly.

Weston:

Get a community involved. Get a team. I love that. Yeah. And like I think it's in Luke, I'm actually trying to look for, I think it's in Luke 22, but I can't find the exact passage. I think it's Christ instituting the sacrament. And he tells, again, I think it's Peter, it is Peter. He says, Simon, Satan hath desired thee. I have prayed for thee and when thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren. Right. He hath desired thee, that he may sift you as wheat. And like that's so important to know like Satan is, he is hell bent on destroying our families and destroying those that we are responsible for that we took a divine, you know, admonition before we came to this earth to take care of and he wants to disrupt that plan any way that he can just as much as we need community so to Satan, misery loves company and he just wants us to be as miserable as he is, but he's not, we're not going to let them do that. If you're listening to this podcast, you're not that type person. You're obviously listening to this for a reason. It's because you care about the people and your life and you, you want to develop community. So think of the people that are coming to your mind right now. Yeah. God is inspiring you to reach out to. Like you wouldn't be listening to this if you didn't care. And if you didn't want to do something.

Crishelle:

To kind of close up. Is there anything else that you want to break the silence with today?

Weston:

Just be brave. You guys are, you guys are BYU, right? So you're, you're definitely Ben Rector fans. One of my favorite Ben Rector songs is called "Fear." And I think like, especially in church culture, we were taught that like, Oh, fear is a bad thing and, and you know, faith and fear cannot coexist or whatever it is. And there might be truth to all that. But I think

fear in those contexts is fear that keeps us stagnant, that inhibits our ability to act. But fear can also be a very strong indicator of what we are about to do or what we really want to do is what is best for us. And Ben Rector says "chase me down outside of Georgia. I was sure that I was done, but something in me would not turn around and run. I heard the Lord in California and I remember who I was and I learned to dance with the fear that I'd been running from." And when we really start to face that fear, we of necessity become brave. We develop a courageous heart and preach my gospel does a really good job of outlining Christlike attributes. And I think kind of hidden amidst all of those is courage. I don't think there was ever a braver soul than Jesus Christ. I can only, I mean, we, we know in the garden that he was, he was scared. They're a little bit timid or apprehensive and worried. And as you guys go to reach out and develop community, I promise you that Satan will strike fear into your heart that people will disown you and be scared of you and think you're the biggest creep show that they've ever met. But therein lies an opportunity to be brave and it developed courage and to exhibit that in your life. I do not believe that it's possible to be brave without confronting fear and you guys are doing some really great stuff here with Breaking the Silence. Crishelle and Creed. Thank you so much for having me here. Appreciate your bravery and what you guys do to help build such an incredible community and to be a leader and be a light and giving us permission to share our stories. You guys are incredible.

Crishelle:

Thank you, Weston. It's been so awesome to have you. Yeah, thank you. It's been such a joy and a pleasure to have you on our podcast today and to learn from your wisdom and to hear from your story and to just connect with you.

Creed:

Once again, thank you so much for this amazing discussion, your amazing insights. The biggest takeaway I got from it was to challenge ourselves and our listeners to, like you said, think of those people we want to and need to connect with and have the courage to do so by being open and sharing with them the honest intentions of our hearts, our honest stories, and that no matter what, if one person, it doesn't work out with that first person, keep trying, keep reaching out. There will be people that you find that will love you no matter what. And it's so important to find those people who will love you and sit with you, walk with you. And if you're having a hard time finding people, talk to us. That's why we're

here. Like, go to our link, put in your story, let us know. We'd be happy to talk to you. So thank you so much, Weston, for your faith, your inspiration, it's been great. I've been feeling great from this discussion.

Weston:

You guys are awesome. I appreciate it. Feeling's definitely mutual.