



EPISODE 20

How to Talk About Pornography with Someone You're Dating

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

Once you get started, how do you keep talking? Creed and Crishelle share some important principles for successful experiences. These conversations work best when it's a two-sided discussion instead of a one-sided interrogation. You don't have to make judgments immediately - work to be curious and learn about the other person. You can have dual emotions going on – compassion and fear, for example. Share your real emotions in an honest way, and be prepared to listen and accept how your partner is feeling as well. It's an opportunity to start a pattern of open conversations on this and other deep subjects. Please be aware that conversations about pornography within marriages can be very different because of the commitment – we'll talk about that in future episodes.

This is part 3 in a 3-part series on talking about pornography with someone you're dating. You can listen to [Part 1 Why Talk About Pornography with Someone You're Dating? \[18\]](#) and [Part 2 When is the Right Time to Talk to Someone You're Dating About Pornography? \[19\]](#).

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Crishelle:

Hey everyone, welcome back. We are so excited to continue the conversation about talking about pornography in dating relationships. Creed and I are going to be focusing our discussion today on how to talk about this fun topic in a dating relationship. And I'm so excited about this topic because it's something that I'm really passionate about. If you haven't already gathered that from the other episodes . . . but also because I think there's some really great principles out there that can lead to great success in this conversation and in really understanding your partner and understanding yourself more fully and even understanding Jesus better.

Creed:

Totally. We want to make sure that with this "how" that these kinds of conversations are two sided. They shouldn't ever be an interrogation from one person to the other and as long as, well hopefully they're coming at the right timing too. We talked in another episode about when, so hopefully both persons are prepared to talk about these topics and are willing to be honest, open, and share their heart. But it's important too, for these conversations to be two sided with both people listening and sharing. Both people just being calm, respectful, seeking to understand, not taking things personally, but just having a good solid conversation with each other.

Crishelle:

Yes, I love that. I think the main principle that helps me in tough conversations is having curiosity be my leading emotion. Like am I being curious right now? Right now I'm just gathering information. I'm not making any judgements. So just being curious about the conversation, I'm really seeking to understand sharing and you're sharing how you feel. It's okay to feel a broad range of emotions in this conversation. In fact, you should feel a broad range of emotions in this conversation, no matter what your history is or your background. These are sensitive and tough topics and especially pornography use can be. And so just giving yourself permission to feel those emotions and honoring them as they come up. And choosing with curiosity to look at those emotions and to understand your partner will help you to know how to talk about it.

Creed:

Totally, and you can talk about your emotions with your partner. For example, I'm feeling afraid to bring this up or talk about this. I'm feeling kind of shaken right now, but I'm doing my best, the best I can to listen. And I really like what you said about not passing judgment in these conversations, Crishelle, it's important to just have openness, compassion, respect, and just listen. Because right now you don't need to decide, Oh, this person has struggled with pornography. Oh, I guess I shouldn't be dating them anymore. Or you just don't need to decide, Oh, it's completely fine. You know, they struggle and it's completely fine. You don't need to make any judgment calls, right? Then just learn, process everything, and take time after the conversation to process things away from your partner, to pray about things, process, talk with others that, you know, that will keep information within the vault of trust. But it's important to process healthily.

Crishelle:

Totally, totally. And I think, I think too, I love that you brought up the compassion, responding with compassion, having compassion within that. I want everyone to know that you can have compassion for someone and feel hurt by something that they say or do. And it's valid. You can have both of those feelings at the same time. And so giving yourself space to feel whatever you're feeling and hopefully you're in a place in your life where you've learned how to not project your emotions onto someone else and you can take ownership of how you're feeling and really be like, okay, this is how I'm feeling right now. You're saying that I'm so grateful that you're being honest with me and that really hurts. And if like you're not in that space, it's OK. That's why Jesus came for everyone in this conversation. Right? And there is hope to have more conversations because again, remember this should not be the only time you talk about it. This should be something that you're just starting a pattern of openness and honesty when it comes to sexuality and pornography forever.

Creed:

And also for sure this conversation will look different if it's, you know, right now we're talking about a dating relationship. You haven't been married to this person for many years. Obviously there's going to be so much hurt and betrayal if someone has finally opened up about pornography issues. But for dating at least, it's the opportunity to get to know someone. And so hopefully you've been having the other conversations necessary to get to

know someone like finances, like other like family issues. Other personal stories. But dating is a time to get to know someone and, and so hopefully by up to this point, when you have these conversations, you don't take upon someone's pornography issue as a part of yourself. For sure, everybody should understand that someone's pornography struggle is their struggle. If you're a partner in it and you're not the one struggling please do not think that you're not sexy enough or enough to prevent your partner from viewing. Pornography has nothing to do with you. It's all about the person struggling with pornography. They have issues with sexuality that they're still trying to overcome or work through and it doesn't have to do with you. So trying to remember that, to not take it personally as a personal attack that someone's been struggling with pornography can also help.

Crishelle:

Yeah. I love that. I also love that you brought up like there should be other conversations happening in your relationship too. If you are at a point where you're considering being committed to this person and progressing. I hope that you're talking about other things like finances and in fact, I love to use finances as an analogy here. Like, if you are considering sharing your life with another person, that means that you're sharing everything. You're going to be sharing bank accounts, you're going to be sharing credit scores, you're going to be sharing cars, you're going to be sharing a bathroom, you're going to be sharing everything with this person. And so it's important to understand where they're coming from and what their history is with those things. Again, I don't think any of these conversations should be an interrogation, but in looking at a relationship, I would want to know the history of a person's spending. Like, do they have a ton of debt that they're bringing into our relationship or do they have a history with their credit score? Do they have reliable income? Like all of those things, like you want to find out as you progress in your relationship and same goes for sexuality and pornography. You're going to be sharing everything with this person and this person is going to really be the closest person to you and so really understanding them is why. And I think when you consider it that way, it will help you navigate how to have this conversation. Like the first time you talk about it, you might not go as deep as you will later on when you talk about it again and you understand more and more. And in fact like there are things that I still learn about my husband and we've been in a relationship for years now and I'm still learning things about him. And I'm like, Oh, that makes so much sense and that's why you're responding that way. And there's

things that he's learning about me and there's things that I'm learning about me that I didn't even know until later on that I'm like, Oh, that's why I respond that way. Or that's why I have a hard time with this. And so keeping that curiosity and focusing on the why will help you know how to talk about these things.

Creed:

Totally. And as you're talking about these things, some questions that you can gauge or some things that you can start to figure out with your partner that are important to figure out as you start thinking about continuing the relationship doing and it's engagement or marriage. Some questions that are good to figure out are how does he or she treat me? Is this person open and honest with me? Are they currently using pornography or what other sexual issues may they have? And are they currently striving to stop their sexual problems or their use of pornography? How so? Are they doing it healthily? Do they have a therapist? Do they have an addiction recovery group? And how is he or she striving to follow Christ? These are all good questions that one should be asking themselves, asking their partner over time. Once again, this doesn't have to all happen in one sitting, but at least over time. A relationship is not a one and done deal if the person struggles with pornography, but it's really important that the partner knows full head on what is happening so that they can make the best decisions possible on both sides. There's many relationships that thrive with one partner who still struggles with pornography, but they're open and honest and striving and improving little by little. And there's others that are having a really hard time, other relationships having a really hard time because a partner isn't being open and honest. So it's really gauging the person, where the person is, and all this that's important.

Crishelle:

Totally. I think it's also important to recognize that you both come from different emotional contexts when it comes to this topic. And I think we talked a little bit about this in the "why", but I just wanted to reiterate that it's important to remember that you have a history and you have people that you know that have been affected by pornography and if you don't, then you've heard stories of people that have been affected by pornography. You don't personally have already been affected by it. And so because of that you have, I don't like to use the word baggage, but we're going to use that word because I think you have like a backpack or you're carrying stuff that, that affects your emotions because of different

experiences that you've had in the past. Your partner also has that. And what we're looking for in relationships is not perfection. I don't think that is realistic at all. You're not looking for someone who's like never been touched by it or never been affected by that. The fact of the matter is we're sexual beings and the fact of the matter is like, we all have sex drives and so pornography is very appealing and thank heavens that works. And so what we're really looking for are patterns. We're looking for honesty, we're looking for where the person's heart is and we're honoring the experiences that we come from. And when you recognize that and you really introspect, I think you can know what you can handle and you can know how to move forward.

Creed:

Something, a point that I really want to make here is that if you do struggle with pornography, we can sometimes, I know I have at times felt like, well, I'm not ready to get close with someone because I'm not prepared yet. Meaning I'm not completely away from pornography, therefore I shouldn't date because I'm not ready for that kind of thing. That isn't, I don't think that's a good thought because we all need connection. We all need good relationships. We all need people to come to help us and support us. Even if you don't feel like you're ready to date, at least have good friendship connections with people that you can talk to this about. Connect with people of the opposite sex people you're attracted to, even just because you don't isolate yourself, don't think, Oh, I struggled with this and so no girl or no guy's going to be ready for me to be in a relationship because I'm still working on this. No, you need to interact with people. Connect because that's such a big part of recovery is connecting with people on a very intimate and deep level. So go out there and meet people and get to know people. Be honest, and open, and trusting as time permits. But please don't seclude yourself from the world just because you don't think you're perfect enough to start dating.

Crishelle:

Really, really love that. I think also there sometimes is this idea that I'm broken or because these things have happened to me, I'm unlovable or I am beyond having a healthy and good relationship and I just want to punch those lies and Satan in the face because those are not true. No matter what you've been through, no matter what family you came from, no matter what choices you've made in the past or that even that you're currently making,

you are not beyond hope. And you can have the relationship that you want to have. You can have a healthy, beautiful, fulfilled, loving, compassionate, wonderful, intimate relationship with a partner. And that will come as you, as you change. And as you open your heart and as you . . . and I have to include the Savior in this conversation because as you find Him, your heart will be healed. You are not broken. You are not without hope of, of being healed. And so, as you're having this conversation, I think it's really important to understand where someone is spiritually and to really understand where you are spiritually in this conversation. Because what you're really looking for is where this person's heart is and what they believe about themselves and that right there, I think really helps you to know and make wise choices moving forward.

Creed:

Love that Crishelle, thank you so much for sharing that testimony of Christ that he is always there for us. We're never far enough gone. We're all in this together. We all take steps towards perfection if you don't get in this life, hopefully in the next one. But it's all a work in progress and that we have to be compassionate, courageous, and connected with people to overcome any struggle that we have. So that's kind of the takeaway that we want you to get from this "how" is be sure to be courageous to have these conversations with those who are dating at the proper time be about the other person's story and history and seek to connect with them and work with them on things.

Crishelle:

Definitely. I love all of those things. We also just want to point you to a couple more resources that can help you. One of those resources is, we've mentioned it in our other two podcasts about the same topic, but is the outline or the lesson or however you want to think about it, the guide of how to talk about pornography when you're in a dating relationship. Again, it's called "Love, trust and truth: Talking about pornography when you're dating." Really incredible. You can find that on our website, reach10.org under the "help" section. Really great resource there. Another really great resource— a couple months ago is, so in 2019 the end of 2019 there was an Ensign [magazine publication] that had multiple articles dedicated to talking about dating or talking about pornography and dating relationships dealing with pornography as a young adult. And all of those resources were so spot on. I wanted to shout them from the rooftop and make sure everyone had a copy of

this Ensign. So that's why I wanted to share it with you. I'm going to figure out which Ensign it is right now.

Creed:

Yeah, such a good thing to reread, learn about and continue getting resources for us. So thank you so much for joining us today. Please leave a review. We love to hear what you have to say. Also, leave us with your anonymous stories. Submit those through the link that we have in our show notes, which you can find on your podcast platform, which is just a description for the podcast episode. So please talk with us. Go to our website, reach10.org. Thank you so much for your support and thank you so much for joining us today.