



## EPISODE #28

# What is Recovery from Pornography and Sexual Addiction?

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

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*Living in recovery sounds nice, but what does it really mean? Our guest is a young husband and father who spent years entrenched in pornography and harmful sexual behavior until the day his wife discovered what was going on. That's the day he calls the best day of his life. It was the first time he was ready to be fully honest. And even though it was traumatic for both he and his wife, it propelled them forward. He shares what his daily life is like now in order to live in freedom and honesty. Hear why marriage doesn't solve a pornography problem, what single people need in order to be committed to recovery, and the importance of determining WHY you want to live free from pornography. "There's so much potential to improve, change, stop, create a healthy life."*

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Creed:

Welcome listeners. Today, we have a guest who will share his story of addiction to pornography and his thoughts on recovery. This episode will be insightful for listeners to learn aspects of the recovery process, why someone should invest in their recovery now as opposed to later, whether they be single or in a relationship. I'm looking forward to talking about these important reasons as to why to start now and our guests has his own story to

share as well as his thoughts on this process. So thank you so much for being here. Would you be able to introduce yourself a little bit for our listeners?

Anonymous Guest:

Yeah, definitely. So I think the best way to introduce myself and remain, you know, anonymous, which is I think important for people who are working at recovery. And as you know, many recovery programs are based on that fact of anonymity so that we can share our experience, strength and hope without repercussions for ourselves or for our family. So I'm, you know, a young guy, I guess in my early thirties my addiction started really early in life. I was first exposed to pornography when I was about five or six. I know it was before kindergarten. I had older brothers, they had pornography and magazines in our bedroom. And I ended up finding them, actually with a few of my other siblings and we went and burned them all. And we lived in an interesting circumstance where we had an area where we could go burn things. So we went and burned them all. And I remember really early on at that age that I, after we did that, I had this kind of inkling or this urge to want to go back to find those pictures again to see if there was anything left over after we burned them. So that is kind of the early memory that I have from first being exposed to something that at five or six I completely didn't understand. And then soon thereafter, I don't know that it's experimentation or what, but I was, I found out about masturbation. So by the time I was, I would say seven, I had been masturbating and I had been looking at pornography and I started looking for it in a lot of different ways. And I think that that will resonate with a lot of people who've been exposed, both men and women. It might've started with magazines that get sent to your home. People talk about catalogs from, you know, retail outlets like JC penny. And then even some now it might be things like Victoria's Secret where they first get exposed to things that are arousing. Maybe it's not full blown pornography like with me. But that's, you know, once that door was open, I wanted to find anything that I felt that was arousing to me or something kind of ignited, whatever that fire was. And you know, as I look back and that's where my story begins. I knew at a young age I really didn't want to talk about it. I was afraid of it. I wanted to hide from it. You know, my siblings and I, we didn't tell my parents that we found that porn and burned it. I have this vague memory of my parents getting really mad at my brother who had pornography and they found it. And so I you know, wanted to hide from that. It seemed like a punishment or fear that was with that. So I started masturbating regularly at that young age you know, and then pornography

whenever I could find it got involved with friends finding pornography, we would find pornography. And I think this is a shared experience for many addicts as well. You find it kind of in dumpsters, you found it in areas when you walk around in your towns and in your cities, you kind of find pornography that's been left behind by other people or you have friends' parents, friends' fathers or friends who have connections to pornography. And so I continued to get access to pornography and to other arousing materials and continued masturbation. When I was about, well, I guess I would say I was solidly 12. We gained internet access in our home. And I'm young enough that that was actually high speed internet access. And I remember reading a time magazine that the very title of it was porn.com or something like that. It was something that was just a really generic, something that maybe people when they first got internet might've even typed that in. And I thought of that when we got the internet. I thought of that article popped in my head and I thought, there's going to be a way to see this. And I did that. And then that's when online pornography took off for me. So as a teenager, I regularly viewed online pornography, downloaded pornography. And of course masturbation followed along with that. As I got into high school, that relationship to those things led into me pushing boundaries in my relationships with girls. So that led to, you know, acts of a lot of physical touch to premarital sex. And that was really where I was up until I was 18. It was really regular, you know, I would say at times, almost daily, I would say other times, you know, weekly I would try to stop on my own. You know, for me, I think there was a big sense of fear and guilt. A lot of times when we talk about addiction, we talk about shame and I think I felt that as well. But I think the overwhelming emotion that I felt during all of this was a lot of fear that I couldn't tell the truth, that I couldn't be honest with those who were closest to me because I had seen other repercussions. I had a sister whose husband my mom kind of just told me don't ever get involved in that 'cause he was struggling with it and it was hurting their marriage and things like that. So there were a lot of things that just led me to wanting to not talk about it at all. And when I was 18, I found, I went to a school that was very religious based and at that point I decided to kind of open up a little bit and tell some ecclesiastical leaders and tell some people about what I had been experiencing for the last 13 years. But I wasn't fully honest. I was still afraid to be fully honest. I was honest about experiences I was having as a young adult having sex and doing things that I felt were wrong and was taught was wrong. And then I, but I wasn't fully honest about the scope and experience I had with pornography and with masturbation and with what I would consider overall lust. So I went

through that process of kind of talking and sharing with others, kind of like, you know, it wasn't with a counselor, but with a religious leader who acted as a counselor. I am LDS, so that leader was a Bishop and that experience was great. But I decided after that first time to just go back to hiding and lying, I then quickly started pushing boundaries with girls again in relationships I had or going on dates and things like that. And I got married pretty young. I got married at 20 years old and I had pushed the boundaries in my relationship before that marriage and was doing things to violate that marriage before we were ever married, with other women. And so, you know, my footing was not even starting off right. And I remembered, you know, committing to thinking, Hey, I've got to be, you know, this is going to be the thing that changes my life. So I've got to start getting practice of being, you know, sober before that. And I was sober for about four weeks before my marriage and then I got married and I was sober a few months into my marriage. And then, you know, I found myself going back to pornography and masturbation and a few years into my marriage I found myself going into online rooms where you pay for sex and things like that. And then that led me, you know, so that was probably for a period of two or three years. And then after that I was exposed to how to find prostitutes through that same process online. And I went on a work trip and connected with a prostitute on a work trip. And then after that I came home determined at that point that it would be the end, that this would be the final nail in the coffin. That was something that truly hurt me emotionally and physically and it was a really hard experience. And then that just continued, like all things that were in my addiction once I opened a door to something that just kind of continued. So I sought out prostitutes for about a two year period and spent thousands of our families earned income and things like that, manipulated my wife to hide things from her. And ultimately that led to finally being discovered by her. And that discovery was the best day of my life. I like to talk about it that way 'cause it was a finally freeing experience. It was the first time in my life that I opened my mouth and was ready to be fully honest. So that was a really heartbreaking experience and we can go more into that. But that really opened the door up to what has led to my recovery now. So I got into recovery, and recovery, what that means is, I got into support groups and I got into some daily habits that have helped me look inside myself and to address the emotional pain that I felt my whole life and to start working through that in a way where I've now lived sober at this point, well a year and a half. I did have a year, a year and a half of sobriety before this as well. And I had two relapses. So, but I know that overall that that door that got opened that day is what's saving

my life now and is keeping me away from relapses now. And that's a really truncated version of my story. So I'll stop talking and let you guys kind of start asking some questions and maybe we can dive into what recovery looks like.

Creed:

Wow. Well, thank you so much for sharing your story. I'm really looking forward to diving deeper and, and talking more about aspects of it. So thank you so much for being here and sharing that.

Crishelle:

I would love to know what your recovery looks like for you. Now when you say you've really come far from where you were. I really appreciate the honesty and your vulnerability in sharing this. What does it look like now?

Anonymous Guest:

Yeah, so I think we need to go back to that discovery day to kind of talk about that a little bit. So yeah. My wife and I were somewhat familiar. We were familiar with what recovery is like and what people can do to get into recovery and things like that because of some of our personal and professional background. And so that really, I was discovered on December 23rd and so Christmas Eve I called into my first online group meeting and no one showed up. But I was with my real life brother. I was with him. And so we spent the hour kind of talking about it and things like that. And that kind of opened the door for me to not only being honest with my wife, but being honest with others. So anyway, that just kind of opened up the doors to what our recovery looked like to me. So what recovery looks like is essentially a daily life focusing on connecting to a higher power and making amends and being honest with the people I encounter with my life and trying to live a life that focuses on addressing maybe emotional rollercoasters rather than hiding from them and going and escaping into lust and sex and things like that.

Crishelle:

Yeah, I really appreciate that and I think that's really beautiful. What do you think helped you to have the courage to walk this journey of recovery?

Anonymous Guest:

Yeah, I had no courage, right? So 20 some odd years or you know, 20 years. I had no courage. I could not, but I think back to those times and I just, I literally could not tell the truth. I was so afraid of saying, this is who I am. This is my experience, this is what I'm going through. That it just never felt like it was going to be possible. So I think that now, what aides in that is the fact that once I opened that door to honesty, it was just blown open. Right. And I think that that may be somewhat of a more unique experience compared to some because some gratefully for them have felt a fear and shame and vulnerability immediately after having an episode of dealing with pornography or lust or sex. Me at age five, I knew I wanted to run away. So once it was finally blown open, really just the ability to be honest and to still be accepted and to be loved as well as to come out of it and not be dead has been amazing. That's what kind of propels me still to this day. And of course that's kind of shifted and changed over time. But really that's the key to getting the strength and hope is being honest and having that honesty received in a good way. You know, that's not always the case for everyone, but for me that was groundbreaking.

Creed:

I so much agree with that. That was a huge aspect of my recovery as well. Just being honest with the right people to get the help that I needed was so freeing. I like how you said that you were able to tell the truth and not die from it because that's so interesting that our body's natural response or that our minds kind of trick us into thinking that if we are honest with the right people with things that we're struggling with, that they'll destroy us or destroy our lives. I mean it sounds like your wife has been beneficial in your recovery process and has been patient, helpful, which is wonderful and definitely helpful. But it always helps to have those types of people to talk to who can kind of respond in a, in a helpful way even while they're hurting 'cause it can definitely hurt them. Right. but ah, those experiences of being honest and having it be met with love, patience, and grace is very freeing and very helpful. I like how you said that.

Anonymous Guest:

Yeah. And I will say just to kind of clarify, I think sometimes when we want to be honest as people or as, or I'll say for me when I want to be honest, I'm afraid of a strong reaction because I think a strong reaction means negativity rather than a strong reaction means they

are going on an emotional roller coaster in response to me not being able to properly cope with my emotions. So it wasn't fun or easy, like, not that that's what we were conveying together there. My wife was extremely hurt. I would say that the emotional pain was so hard on her and was so hard on me because I was now finally at the apex of, you know, guilt and fear and shame that there were literal physical consequences. Like just having felt like running a marathon and your heart fell out. Like I couldn't sleep that night. My wife had traumatic dreams and nightmares for, I would say, months. And those have physical consequences. So it, you know, it definitely does have a physical reaction and it does have a strong emotional reaction. But that doesn't mean it wasn't good. Right. That doesn't mean that it wasn't a good experience. That doesn't mean that it's not something that can propel me and my wife forward and getting through this process or anyone for that matter who has to go through this process.

Creed:

Totally. I can totally understand that, how, yeah. I mean so painful and so hard to go through that process, but overall good and beneficial to both you and your wife's journey. A follow up question I have for that is what is life like now in this recovery process? Having quite a bit of sobriety. How is life different now than it was while you were dishonest and in the midst of the climax of your habits?

Anonymous Guest:

Yeah, so I think one of the biggest benefits for me is of course working a recovery program. I do work a 12 step program. I've worked multiple different types of twelve step programs. So for those specifically involved in sex addiction, we have SAA, which is sex addicts anonymous. We have SA, which is Sexaholics anonymous. We have, you know, in certain regions, different groups that pop up. You've might, you know, if you're LDS you've heard of ARP programs, you may have heard of SA lifeline programs or what we call Sal programs. There's SLA programs, so sex and love addiction 12 step programs. So again, they're all based on the 12 step process. And what that really looks like for me is I've worked the full 12 steps and I still continue to work them over and over. But if you're familiar with the 12 step programs, your first three steps, which are basically like surrender steps. They're steps that are all about learning about your higher power. You know, that you're powerless over your problems, that you need to learn to lean on someone else, specifically your higher

power and start to trust others. And then, you know, steps four through nine are basically amend steps. They're steps coming clean. They're steps that are, you know, admitting our faults that are asking God for help to surrender our character defects as well as steps that focus on making amends with people. And then steps 10 through 12 or what we call maintenance steps. So those maintenance steps are things where you're making daily amends, you're connecting to your higher power, God, on a daily level and improving on your meditation. And then you're also sharing that message of hope with others. So I still work a large portion of those first nine steps, but a lot of my daily life is now confronting the things that I used to be really previously afraid of. Or that I would say, I can act this way because I'm not going to be hurt. I can hurt others. So what that means is I might have attitudes about others, I might have characteristics in which the way I speak, the way that I'm treating others. 'Cause the way that I always dealt with the fact that I might not have been my best self was coping with going to my addiction, right? Going to lust, going to acting out. Because I was saying I can get away with these daily bad habits that I have, not just amongst my addiction, but these emotional problems I have because I can wash that over with my acting out. And that's the process. That's the addiction cycle. I'm feeling fear, shame. I'm feeling upset about the problems I've caused today. I act out. That leads to its own set of shame problems and that cycle goes over and over and over again. So getting back to your first early question, my daily life is much different now because I work a daily, you know, program, and that program is focusing on me getting connected to my higher power. It's on me being honest with others. It's on me treating others better and it's on me no longer escaping my emotions into lust or into my addiction.

Crishelle:

That's so beautiful. I thanks for sharing that. And I know that it takes a lot of work to get there. I also imagine that you feel a lot more free than you used to

Anonymous Guest:

That that's a great way to put it. Freedom is how it feels for sure.

Crishelle:

Yeah. Yeah. So there's a couple of ideas out there and I would love to know your thoughts about them. One of them is that some say that single adults don't make progress in

recovery until they're married and have the incentive to make progress in recovery. As well as that marriage solves your addiction or solves your desire for progress. Do you have any thoughts on those ideas?

Anonymous Guest:

Yeah, so I do know quite a few single addicts because I do attend quite a few 12 step. And I've attended 12 step programs actually around the U S 'cause I've gone to some when I travel. So you get to see different people's experiences and what's going on. And I would say that for single people, you know, not that there's a chip on the shoulder or anything like that and it seems like in a lot of groups, so maybe what people perceive as that the people who actually start to solve the problems in this addiction are married because they have someone who holds them accountable. That may or may not be true. Right. So it helps that I have a wife who holds me accountable. There are some things that we do together to help in my process as well on, on a daily level. But for single people, it's about really finding, you know, what you just said is what does freedom from this look like for you? And what is it going to take to do that? And I think that a lot of times, you know, I sponsor people who are single and a lot of the people that I work with, they're too afraid to let go of the things in their daily life that may be holding them back because they're seen as a single person, as a means of something that they need to have. Right? So social media is probably one of the best examples. Social media is pervasive in terms of what it can lead to emotionally. I think more than anything, right? It leads to numbing out the feelings that I'm feeling because I want to go experience something online with others that I think is real. But in reality it's not. And so because we're getting an unreal connection somewhere else, we go somewhere else to get it. But a lot of the people I work with, they start to say, you know, I don't think I'm going to do that. I don't think I can do that. So there's gotta be a level of, you know, I think there are, it's sometimes a hard way of seeing what is actually needed because they don't see the pain that they're causing every day. 'Cause they might not be as honest with parents. They might not be as honest with friends as you have to be with a spouse when working through recovery. So I would strongly encourage those who are single to find someone that they feel compelled to be rigorously honest with, that they can actually see and feel and understand outside of themselves what pursuing sex and lust in porn does in terms of, you know, that relationship so that they can start to see that when you see it happening in others, you can turn it back on yourself and you can start to feel empathy for

yourself. Like, this is what I've been doing to myself because look at how it makes others feel. That's just a thought. There's a lot of things, you know, I recognize that I'm not in the same boat as those who are single, but there are ways to recover. I've known quite a few people who were a year sober before getting married and that's great. And there were things that they did before marriage. They did a full disclosure with their fiancé so that the fiancé knew exactly what their addiction looked like before getting married. And I think that was very successful for them. And then on the other side of your question, you know, why does addiction come back into life once we get married? You know, for, I think for a lot of people who, especially in a community where they might be strongly encouraged to be abstinent, where they might be really, you know, so in religious communities and things like that, they think, Oh, now that I'm no longer abstinent, I'll be cured of this problem because I'll be getting everything I want. And in the book that I read Sexaholics Anonymous regularly, a lot of people share that experience of, you know, I'll finally get to have sex freely without shame, right? And I'll finally get to experience this without any problems. The problem with that is, for one you have already made lust a part of your life where you've pursued fantasies and thoughts of multiple different variations and you've relied on that for arousal in your life. That might, may or may not happen in your marriage, as well as the fact that in your marriage, the expectations of sex aren't just one person's responsibility, right? Sex is a culmination of connection, strong, real emotional connection. And a lot of times when we are coming off of an addiction or we are an addict, we are getting that connection purely from a subjective, selfish point of view. And we get it purely on our terms. We get it purely in our way and we get it while objectifying the people that we're with. And so the fact that we never learned to have a healthy sexual relationship before marriage, then we jump into marriage. Marriage doesn't suddenly change how we treat that sexual relationship because how we've trained our bodies for years, or maybe it wasn't even that long, that's how we've coped. And so I think there's a natural tendency to start to float back to the previous way of life before marriage because it's easier to subject people than it is to make connection and to be honest and to be vulnerable. And so people go there because it's easy and because they need an escape and they never learn how to address their emotions before they got into marriage. So, I know that's a long winded answer to both of those questions, but that's some of my feedback on both of those.

Creed:

Thank you for that. What came to mind while you were talking is that both single people and those in relationships really need to find their why to stop using pornography. What is their why? And that can be for many religious purposes, factual reasons, reasons for connection with real people and people in your relationships. I love this book that I have it's called *The Porn Myth* by Matt Frat and it addresses the reality behind the fantasy of pornography and talking about reasons and arguments for why pornography is not good from a nonreligious standpoint. So I think there's many ways single people and people in relationships can find a why and a purpose for not using pornography, but until you find that why I don't think much work will get done. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Anonymous Guest:

Yeah, that's definitely right. I think what you just said is a better way of what I was just saying. I think a lot of people can look into those who've had this problem in their marriage and they can say that it's easy what their why is because there's things at stake, there is a spouse, there is children potentially. So it almost feels like that that's a built in why. But for a lot of addicts, that's not a why for them. You know, they have a marriage that they've now disillusioned themselves from and so they don't find themselves successful. Same thing with single people that why that you're talking about is going to be something to the effect of, you know, I want freedom from this. I'll do it at any cost. I noticed myself not being able to be myself because of this addiction. I can't fully be vulnerable with others in other aspects of my life. That's, I think one of the things that is maybe one of the big myths, and I don't know if this is in your book, but I'm going to say it's a big myth, is thinking this can be compartmentalized, that this can be something that can be put in a box. It's my computer. I open up my computer, I open up my phone once it's put away, it's now no longer a part of my life, but it will infiltrate people's life. And if they pause to actually assess that, and when I look back on me when I was just being completely dishonest, completely hiding why, and I look back on that assessment, there were other things in my life that were going terribly wrong in terms of the way that I was interacting in my relationship, in terms of the way that I was being productive in school. You know, I, fortunately enough I was able to get multiple degrees out of college and still cope with this addiction, but that isn't the experience for everyone. And so that's exactly what you said. They need to find their, why. Do they want to be a better person? Do they want to be more productive? Do they feel an inherent wrong that's going on? And I think that's important as well. 'Cause a lot of people may not feel

that and that, you know, that's something that has to be discovered for each and every individual.

Crishelle:

That's so beautiful and I really appreciate that. As we wrap up, is there anything else that you want to share with young adults, married, single men, women who want to make progress in their recovery?

Anonymous Guest:

Yeah, I think it can't be overstated. And I think those who have dealt with addiction have heard this before as well, but there's a tremendous amount of hope and there's an amount of freedom or there's a tremendous amount of potential to be free to live a life that you want, that doesn't have to include sex, lust, pornography, you name it. And that's one thing that until people can be truly honest, I think feels okay. I'm trying to think of the right way to put it. It feels almost ethereal. It feels like some concept that cannot be grasped, that life can be better, that you can actually stop doing this, that there actually is hope until it's achieved in a grain. Right? And then once you've achieved that grain, you've got to keep that progress going. And so I think for anyone, whether you're a spouse or you're an individual or you're an addict yourself and things have happened in your life that if you were to write what a great life looks like, that this isn't included, that's okay because there's hope for what's happening next. Right? I can tell you my story tonight when, if we were talking three or four years ago, I would have said so many things about why you're all kooks and why you shouldn't be making a podcast like this that you know, like there's not hope or that we shouldn't talk about this because I wanted to stay submerged and hidden. So that's one thing that as much as it may be cliched and over said, it cannot be overstated in my book that there's so much potential to improve. And change and stop and make a healthy life for yourself. That doesn't have to include this. And I learned that because I was discovered on December 23rd, it changed my life and it's a way better way of living.

Creed:

I love that. Yes. there is a different life. There's a life more fulfilling, more free, more full. I felt that when I broke away from my addiction to pornography, masturbation in my adolescence and yes, I can only say amen to that because it's so true. There's so much more

to life. If you can break free from these habits, you can choose to have them if you want, but you don't have to live with it. Love that.

Crishelle:

Thank you so much for sharing your story, for sharing your wisdom, your thoughts and your hope with us. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Anonymous Guest:

You're welcome. Thanks for having me.