

## **022 The Biggest Warning Sign of a Relapse**

Hey, this is Matt Dobschuetz. Welcome to Pornfree Radio. This is the podcast for people who want to live 100% porn free. I'm excited to talk to you again today. In this episode we're talking about the biggest warning sign of a relapse.

So, it's been a couple of weeks from the podcast and I'm back. I'm happy to say I started a local group for the fall season and so I've been working offline with a group of people. And it's really exciting to be in a room with someone and kind of talking, breaking through, kind of working with them, collaborating with them, helping them, and sharing my story. It's great to get that feedback.

I love sharing my story here and I love getting feedback from you online but sometimes you can't replace that one on one contact. So it's been great. It's been taking up some of my time but I'm excited to come back to the podcast and share things that are happening, just even as I'm teaching and kind of working with people in my local group.

Today we're talking about the biggest warning sign of a relapse. Before we get to that, I wanted to ask you to consider doing something this week. And it's taking a survey for Pornfree Radio podcast. You can go to [pornfreeradio.com/survey](http://pornfreeradio.com/survey). [Thanks for the responses! Survey is now closed.] It'll take you about 10 minutes.

I'm doing it for a couple of reasons. One, I've been getting emails and talking to people and people are obviously downloading. I think we just went over 13,000 downloads this week. And I'm excited by that but I also want to know more about you and I want to know more about your struggles. I want to know more about what's working for you. I also want to get some ideas for things that might help you whether it's starting an online group or starting, creating some resources like ebooks or guides, anything that will help in recovery. Those are the things I'm trying to determine. If you'd go and take that survey this week, that would be great. I'm looking to get about 20 or 30 surveys. It's been exciting so far just to read some of them just to kind of hear what's working for you. The more good ideas I get from there, the more I can share on the podcast.

I was thinking about this idea of relapse and I was thinking like what if there was one thing I could tell someone was a red flag or a warning sign for an impending

relapse what would it be? Would it be a powerful trigger like seeing someone beautiful walk down the street in front of you? Would it be a stressful day at work? Would it be all of a sudden the pay per view channels in your hotel room are all unencrypted and free? Would it be someone sends you a link to something inappropriate, NSFW, and you look at that and you go to the rabbit hole? What are those other types of things? I was just going through those on my mind.

But what's the one thing that happens in every relapse, regardless of the trigger, regardless of the access, regardless of any type of technology or magazines or any sort of media. Like what is the one component of every relapse? And I realized what it was. This is actually different, I think than some of the other addictions and soft addictions in our lives. This is unique to porn and masturbation, the habit of porn and compulsively masturbating. And it's this: isolation. It's getting isolated.

It's really difficult to act out with porn to act out with masturbation in community with people. It usually is always precipitated; every relapse is precipitated by getting isolated. When I say getting isolated, it's not just pulling away from people or hiding. That's what we used to do a lot when we were really in the addiction and hiding. We were avoiding people in order to act out and things like that.

What I'm talking about is in active recovery, when you're inviting others in to your struggle. When you're sharing whether it's online or whether it's in a one on one group or... I'm in a one on one type relationship like an accountability friendship or whether it's at a support group. What I'm talking about is when you actively choose to pull away from those structures, either to not make a call, or to not check in, or to not be honest with your wife that some temptation or triggers are coming up.

When those things start to happen, when you start to just sort of make subtle choices to pull away from those structures and isolate, that's the red flag for a relapse. Even if there's no porn in sight, even if there's not anything stressful in your life, or even if you've had a good day and you're happy. When you isolate, when you withdraw, when you stop checking in, when you stop going to group, even if it's just for a week, that's when you're prone to a relapse.

Why is that? I think when we get alone we're tempted to listen to some of those voices in our heads that tell us that we're unlovable or that tell us that when we're alone no one can see us and no one loves us. That was a big powerful lie for me that always tripped me up when I was alone. Whatever the reason, when we withdraw, when we pull in to ourselves, we're more prone to those voices.

When we feel those feelings of being alone, when we feel those feelings of being unlovable, that's when we start looking for sources to compensate and to cover those feelings. The thing that always precipitates every relapse is some isolation.

It is a subtle choosing to bend into yourself, pull away from the structures that in the large part keep you free from porn and from addictively masturbating.

You have to ask yourself, do you have a porn problem? Do you have a compulsive masturbation problem? Or do you really have a problem, habit, of isolating? A habit of withdrawing and a habit of sort of indulging your aloneness and feeling like you can just disconnect from others whenever you want to sort of medicate.

That's a tough question. That is a really tough question because if you put a filter on your computer and you get some safeguards on your TV and you make sure you don't come across any pornography. With masturbation, if you take some steps to kind of not give in to masturbation when you're vulnerable. If you do all those things but you don't deal with this idea of isolating or this pattern of isolation it won't help you. You'll eventually go back to that covering and to that acting out with porn.

I've learned this not through reading a lot of books or through watching videos on YouTube that explain addiction or the way the brain works and stuff like that. The way that I've learned this is through my own analyzing relapses. My last relapse, I've shared [in [Episode 2](#)] on the show, was about 4 1/2 years ago. I was in a hotel room traveling for work and just was isolated. I had kind of retreated back to my hotel room, wasn't hanging out with my coworkers, I wasn't calling and checking in with some of my accountability partners. I kind of avoided my wife.

That night I didn't have a particularly engaging or connected conversation with her and when I went to bed I ended up – listen, I said ended up – it sounds passive, but I chose to pull out my phone and actually I think I listened to – look at me, I'm trying to hide – the way I said it. I'm trying to be deceptive in the way I'm talking about it. I chose to go on my phone and I actively looked for an erotic story to listen to and that's what caught me.

I kind of used a little bit of self denial, a little bit of edging behavior. Thinking well, I'm not really looking at porn, making it really technical. Like in a court of law, I might not be liable for looking at porn. You know the stuff you do when you're choosing to act out or when you're edging and you're kind of getting on the edge of crossing the boundaries. But that's the funny thing. I didn't actually look at something pornographic but I listened to this story. I only share that because it doesn't matter how I acted out or how I relapsed. What matters and what the key takeaway here is the isolation.

It's the choosing to not be accountable. It's the choosing to not follow the plan to not follow the structures that really help. So we've talked about that on some other episodes about accountability. We've talked about planning. But all those things involve others. If you keep relapsing, if that's your thing, it may not be your

computer that's the problem. It may not be the Showtime on your TV or whatever your thing is.

It really may be that you want to be left alone. You want to isolate. You want to pull away and continually going back and asking for help and checking in is the worst thing to you and the scariest thing for you to do. It's tough. But that's what you really need to get past in order to get free of this. You will not conquer this in your own head. You will not get freedom from this just listening to the podcast and kind of hoping that things change, hoping that you'll make a different decision when the loneliness comes next.

Now this is a little shorter than a normal podcast that I've been putting out, the normal length. For some of you, you're like hallelujah, thank God, Matt figured out how to do a podcast in under 15 minutes. Some others of you maybe who are just real gluttons for punishment are going NOOOOOOOO, only 15 minutes? But yes. I'm going to bring this to a landing today and you know I think that's helpful sometimes. Sometimes it's helpful to just kind of make things a little more brief and be a little more focused.

Today, add some focus to your life. Think about the last time you acted out and think about what went into that. I'm sure you always focus on the triggers and the way that you acted out. But think about where did the isolation or aloneness play into it? There's probably some emotion in it. Sometimes we think about our sadness or our stress or anger, but where did you actively choose to pull away or to not be accountable to avoid bringing someone else in?

I've shared this story of my friend [in [Episode 14](#)] who is so good at sharing things and bringing others in to his internal life that he shares things before they even are a problem. He'll just say something like, you know if we're in a meeting and there's a woman in the meeting that is kind of catching his attention, he'll just come and say, you know I feel drawn to this person. It's his way of saying, listen, I haven't done anything wrong, I haven't crossed any boundaries, but I want to bring you in to my internal thinking. So whenever we relapse, we make a choice to not bring others in and to not ask for help and to not do the things the structures that help us stay free. So think about that. Where do you choose before you act out to pull away and to isolate?

Hey, so I want to thank you again for just going on [iTunes](#) and leaving reviews. We've had a couple of great reviews in the last week – really excited about those. Actually, I think we're up to 36 ratings and reviews now which is great. Couple of these good reviews came in and I'm proud to say that we have a five star rating on iTunes, which is awesome. So I'm really happy about that.

Again, if you go to iTunes and subscribe and leave a rating and a review would be great. That helps get the word out. As some of these surveys are coming in I'm seeing that people are finding out about it through iTunes. And we are

showing up in some categories like the Sexuality category. Don't go in that category if you can avoid it. We're showing up in the Self Help category and in a couple other places. If you look really far in some of the Christian categories we pop up there too just because some of the faith content of this podcast. Love those reviews. Keep them coming.

Once again, you could really help me out this week by taking our survey, our 2014 survey. So that's at [pornfreeradio.com/survey](http://pornfreeradio.com/survey) [thanks again, the survey is closed]. Go ahead, fill that out you can fill that out on your desktop. It should only take about 10 minutes and that's going to help us just make this show better and help create resources to support your recovery.

Thanks for listening again. This transcript will be available sometime this week or next at [pornfreeradio.com/22](http://pornfreeradio.com/22). That's [pornfreeradio.com/22](http://pornfreeradio.com/22) and that is a great thing I've been meaning to mention. Believe it or not, we have been transcribing all of these shows.

So there may have been something that caught your ear a couple weeks ago. Maybe it was the media episode from [Episode 10](#) or maybe it was the episode that Craig Perra did with us, the couple of episodes [[16](#) and [17](#)] and maybe there was something that stuck out to you: a phrase, some sort of learning or quote and you can go back and get those transcripts.

The other thing that you can do with those transcripts is you can download them and you can send them to your friends who don't listen to podcasts. I know it's crazy. There are people out there who don't listen to podcasts. Believe me, I found out when I started doing a podcast how many people don't listen to podcasts. But, if you have a pastor in your life, if you have a friend, if you have someone who would benefit from some of the content, feel free to go to that show episode, download that PDF and email it to them.

You know? This is great stuff and I've read a couple of them just to... I think I read back the Craig Perra interviews. I think it was from Episode 16 and 17 just because it was interest— Craig talks really fast and it was interesting to just read what he was saying and kind of digest some of it. So, definitely go back and get those transcripts. That's something that I think is just a great resource on the website.

Thanks again for listening and we will talk to you soon.