

PORNFREE RADIO

026 Shame and Porn Addiction

Hey this is Matt Dobschuetz and this will be a short version of Pornfree Radio. So excited that you joined me today. It's been kind of a busy season for me running a group on Monday nights and then also keeping up with the podcast. But it's been a great season and I've enjoyed working offline with guys and I'm enjoying working online with you. I'm looking really forward to the next year. 2015 I think is going to be a big year for us. I'm just looking forward to creating more episodes and also creating some new things to help you in your journey to being porn free.

You know one thing came up this week that I wanted to talk about. It affects us when we're going porn free. When we first start thinking about getting rid of porn, we focus a lot on porn. We focus on the acting out, the computer. We might want to put a filter on our computer or we might want to set up an accountability relationship. We focus a lot on the external things that are tied in with the addiction. It's a little harder for us to become self aware and go a little deeper and a little below the surface. One thing that comes up again and again and again with me, that came up with me when I was getting help and what I see in some of the guys in the group that I've been working with is the idea of shame. That shame plays such a big role in keeping us in the pattern of pornography addiction.

The word shame evokes or invokes, I'm not sure which one it is [evoke: calling to the conscious mind; invoke: call earnestly for]. It evokes a certain reaction in people. A lot of times when they hear it, especially in regard to pornography addiction... And I've seen this on reddit. If you use the word shame you'll get this in the comments. People equate shame with religion. It's kind of like a weird connection. I think they confuse it sometimes with guilt. Sometimes guilt gets tied in with religion. When you use the word shame a lot of times people will say, I don't want to hear anything about that because it sounds like your religion talking. For me, shame has absolutely nothing to do with religion. Even guilt is probably misused and mislinked to religion.

But the simple definition that I would use for shame and guilt, I'll define both of them, is guilt is feeling bad about what you've done. In a court of law, guilt is actually the ownership of doing something that was wrong or bad. Crossing a boundary, breaking a law, it's actually the weight of the effects. So that's guilt.

Shame is feeling bad... Not feeling bad, feeling that you yourself are bad, that at your core, you're a bad person, that you yourself are bad. It's not that you just did bad things; it's that you are bad. The way shame gets in, now maybe there's some religious connection here. But I don't think... I think a lot of times it comes from our upbringing with our parents, and our teachers, and our friends.

Shame comes from getting consistent messages that somehow we're not good enough, that we're not lovable, that we're not... that there's something wrong or broken about us. Shame is when we internalize those lies, when we start to take on that identity: that we aren't good enough, that we're defective, that we're illegitimate, that on the inside there's something actually wrong with us, that we're completely broken. Shame is that taking on that identity.

Why that's important for pornography addiction is because pornography addiction, a lot of times, comes from that feeling of shame. We feel broken, we feel on the inside empty and so we're trying to fill that with the pornography. We're trying to medicate that feeling. What keeps us in the cycle is when we're done acting out, we might feel some of the guilt of what we've done and that just reiterates and sort of reinvigorates the feeling of shame that we are at our core bad. That we are not good enough which propels us to go to more pornography to try to medicate that feeling. So that's part of the cycle. Shame is such a big part of the cycle.

When I just described that right now I feel bad as a person or empty. I feel like I'm not good enough, there's a deficit, so I looked to porn to meet that need to feel better about myself to medicate. Then when I act out I feel bad about what I've done and that just makes me feel like I'm a bad person or that I'm broken on the inside or not good enough which makes me want to act out again.

Now at what point did religion come in there? What point did some sort of dogma? It doesn't have anything to do with that. It's completely an internal process that we go through. So what breaks shame? What breaks shame in our life? What is the thing that helps us interrupt this process, this habit with shame? It's real simple. It's connection at a deep level with other people.

Because shame is this internal process where we believe a lie that we're not good enough or that we're broken on the inside. The only way to counteract that is to test that lie with safe people. To say, do you see me this way? Do you look at my stuff and think that I'm hopeless. Do you look at me and feel like I'm unlovable? It's a continual sort of building of a relationship where we're going into this safe relationship and we're continuing to expose this internal process, this internal connection that we have to shame.

I was thinking of a good metaphor and this is the metaphor. When we're struggling with shame, and I tell you to press into relationship, you know what it

feels like? It feels like telling someone with a sunburn that the way to get over sunburn is to go out and get in the sun. But it's actually not like that at all. When I'm saying because when someone feels shame you want to hide, so exposing shame feels very it feels like going outside with a sunburn.

But it's actually the opposite. Shame is much more like having seasonal affective disorder where you're inside and depressed because you're not getting exposed to the light. You continue to stay inside because you're depressed. But the secret is to get out and get exposed to the light. You've heard about the stories of people with light boxes where they sit in front of the light box for 30 minutes a day and it has an emotional effect. That we feel more upbeat in the summer or in the months with more sun because there's an effect of the sun on us.

That's much more what it is with shame. What we have to realize is that the sun and the exposure is what we really need. Sitting in a dark room by ourselves just continues to keep the habit and keep the depression going. So with shame it's the same way.

The way that I see that, I just did a short group for eight weeks, we're on week 7 of 8. Here's the thing I noticed. We haven't always had the best teaching I've taught. We haven't always had the most greatest connection in small group time, it's not like every week we've had like... been hitting home runs with connection and everyone feels completely safe and everyone feels completely like... is having breakthroughs every week.

But here's the thing I noticed. After 7 weeks of meeting every Monday night together, there's a lightness. There's a tangible shift in most people who've been coming. It's not because we've been solving all their problems with addiction or figuring out all their childhood wounds. It's literally just the exposure of safe community on a regular basis. That's had a powerful effect. I can tell.

Is it everything, is it complete healing, are they completely in freedom, do they need anything else? No. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that just the consistency of being in the light the exposure in safe community of shame actually starts to eliminate shame. It erodes shame's power because shame flourishes in aloneness. Shame flourishes in isolation. If you're continually isolated and you're continually alone shame will just grow and grow and grow. It's like those leftovers in the back of your fridge that you forgot about. The longer they're back there the more mold the more icky stuff kind of... I just said icky stuff, I don't even know what that means. Yucky stuff, the more yucky stuff thrives in that environment.

So that's the key to overcoming shame. It's easier said than done. It's hard to find safe community. It's hard to reach out, especially when you're stuck in the dark room. So I totally empathize with that. That's how I was for about 31 years of my life. Every once in a while I'd come out of the dark room and expose a little bit but

it wasn't until I started going to a group in 2001 consistently that there was that shift in me.

As you shift away from shame and away from the lies of shame. You know what? You find out one of the benefits. One of the benefits is pornography's lure and call is diminished. It actually... just by being in a loving environment where you're being exposed and you're exposing your shame it actually turns down the volume on the pornography hook. It doesn't turn it all the way off. Hear me out. Believe me. It's still out there especially in our culture right now. The hook and the lure is still out there. But some of the needs that I have to cover up shame are not there anymore. So there isn't as much of a pull.

Think about that. Think about what role has shame played in your struggle and what role is shame playing right now in blocking your freedom? We're talking about being porn free and free is the key word there. How is it keeping you in bondage? How is it keeping you caught up? One thing shame does is it blocks us from really experiencing love from others. Again it's like staying in the dark room keeps us away from the light that will actually heal us. Shame keeping us in isolation keeps us away from the love of others.

Be thinking about that this week. If you want to reach out to me you can reach me at [matt \(at\) pornfreeradio.com](mailto:matt@pornfreeradio.com). Tell me about how shame has impacted you. What's and how is it still impacting you? If you could really think about what's what am I doing that looks like hating myself. What does it look like rejecting myself? What are the messages or words that I'm hearing about myself when I act out or when I make a mistake?

Be kind to yourself this week. If you catch yourself acting out or if you catch yourself making a mistake or having a failure point take a minute and interrupt those messages that kind of default that you're a bad person that you're unlovable that you are a pile of crap. Whatever the message is for you, take a moment and go, is that true? Or is that a shame response to my guilt or a shame response to just making an accident or making a mistake?

All right, that's about all the time I had now. It looks like their doing leaf work around the corner from me so I don't know what the audio of this is like so I'm hoping that it came out OK. Looking forward to talking to you soon. We'll see you in the next episode.