

**Name:** Caitrin Houlihan  
**Neighborhood:** Charlestown  
**Sobriety Date:** 3/30/13

**OL: At what age did you start using?**

CH: Literally it started off smoking weed and every year it progressed to a different drug. I started late in the game with the heroin, I was almost 34. That's what really took me down pretty quickly. The other drugs were just pretty much a little trouble here and there. At 13 it was weed and pills, at 14 PCP, 15, Cocaine. I've experimented with a lot of drugs.

**OL: Describe your childhood and growing up in Charlestown**

CH: I'm the youngest of 5. I have a brother who is a year older than me but we were in the same grade and grew up as twins, we were partners. At 11 or 12 we tried weed. I had already drank by then but by 13 I was literally smoking weed every day. It wasn't easy growing up in my house. I had a very violent house. It wasn't that I was neglected, it was just tough. We had to be the toughest on the street.

You had to have the best of everything and present yourself in a certain way. You also had to fit in with your friends and drugs and drinking came along with that. Charlestown has a lot of overachievers and go-getters but then you have the drugs and the alcohol that take that all away.

I went to school and played sports. I had a lot of friends all around Charlestown. I always had a job, was a good kid, and never really got in trouble until I was older. But every time I got arrested drugs and alcohol were involved.

I got pregnant a month after I graduated and had my daughter at 18. I left and moved to Florida. Things were pretty calm and kosher down there, no drugs.



Caitrin and her daughter

**OL: Was there a point when things started to get out of hand?**

CH: I stayed [in Florida] and [my oldest daughter's] father went to prison for 10 years. We split up and I met my ex-husband. That was terrible. He was an alcoholic and we had a bad marriage that was very abusive. DCF started getting involved and there were a lot of problems with domestic violence. That was really tough, really not a good period in my life. I was very young and codependent. Marriage was new to me and it just wasn't good from the start.

We divorced and I came back home in 2007 [to Boston]. I literally thought life was going to be good and things were going to change. I lasted one month and was back in jail. I flew back to Georgia and did a year in jail.

**OL: Describe some of the challenges you've face in attempting to get clean**

CH: When I was [in jail] I had a lot of reflection time. That was in 2007 so I was 32. My life wasn't changing; everything was still messed up. That's when I came up with the idea of reaching out to somebody who I used to use with, who used like me. When I came home I asked my friend to take me to a meeting.

I didn't do anything that I was supposed to do. I tried to sell drugs and still live that lifestyle without using. But in the end, I started using again. It just progressed, I started using dope and that's when things changed; the overdoses, selling a lot of drugs, poisoning my community just to feed my habit.

**OL: How did things start to change?**

CH: I got arrested in 2013 on a big trafficking case and I was looking at a minimum of 5 years. I was out on bail and still doing the same thing and I just didn't care about anybody or anything in life. I was down at the mall and this guy introduced himself and he was like "I'm Attorney Joseph Perrulo, I hear you have a really big case."

*Caitrin had a good feeling about Attorney Perrulo.*

[The next day] I ended up going to court and they detained me because I was so high. I met with my lawyer, fired him, and met with Attorney Perrulo and he was at the jail the next day. I mention him because he's a very important part of my recovery.

I wasn't the best client, wasn't the easiest to handle. I wanted to do things my way and sometimes it just doesn't work that way. I had Attorney Perrulo there to help balance that. He thought that Drug Court was a good fit for me so he signed me up for it. I flipped out and called him Benedict Arnold.



Caitrin at Drug Court Celebration

I was adamant about not doing it, which was all out of fear because I didn't want to fail. I said "If you fight for me not to go to drug court and you win I'll go."

*Attorney Perrulo won the case and Caitrin started Drug Court.*

Fast forward, I'm the first female in Drug Court, and the first female graduate. [Attorney Perrulo] stayed my lawyer throughout.

While I was in Drug Court I did further treatment, I was at Meridian House for nine months and then got kicked out for a cell phone. I then went to a sober house and during that got custody of my older son.

I've also been seeing the same therapist for four years. She moved to Concord and I go there to see her. I didn't want to start over with someone else

I had to deal with other stuff outside of Meridian House. By going to therapy and doing Step Work, I was able to handle everything that was going on at that time.

**OL: What have you been up to in the three years since graduating Drug Court?**

CH: A while ago my lawyer told me "Caitrin, get your shit together and you can work for me." I now have two jobs. I'm an assistant for my former lawyer, and I work for a salon on the weekends. I've been working at both places for 3 years. I have a lot of experience with criminal law, whether it is for me, someone in my family, or one of my friends. So I know the court system very well.

*Caitrin has also been going to school to become a paralegal.*

I prayed for these days to come, it took awhile but I've helped a lot of people, went to school, got my license back after 13 years of suspensions, bought a car, bought a better car the next year, and got an apartment.

God is very good to me; I have a great relationship with God. I have a lot going on but the key is I just don't get high over it. I just don't stress over those things anymore. I know God will take care of me. In the end, things always turn out well.

**OL: What has been the best part of getting and staying clean for you?**

CH: Being able to get to know myself again. I lost myself in drugs. Through getting clean, going through Step Work, healing through the inside, and doing and trying new things, I was able to make myself better and make good choices about who I want in my life. I don't settle for less and I don't deal with bullshit. This has enabled me to not make the severe mistakes I've made in the past. For me that is probably the best part because I'm more aware of me and everything around me and then everybody else can depend on me.



Caitrin at her job at the law office