Shannon's Interview with Kevin "OB" O'Brien

March 8, 2019

It's never too late to change!

SL: Please describe your childhood?

KO'B: My childhood was normal. I was lucky enough to have both parents. I grew up in a nice home in Cambridge with my parents and 3 older brothers. I had a lot of friends growing up in the neighborhood and played sports, and went to school like most kids my age.

SL: How and when did addiction begin manifesting, at what age?

KO'B: I remember being about 12 yrs. old in the 6th grade when I started drinking alcohol and smoking weed. Growing up with 3 older brothers who were doing the same, I thought it was ok and most of the time I was with them and their friends who were also older than me. This became part of the norm for me and back then, I didn't think I had a problem.

SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

KO'B: My addiction progressed in high school after losing my mom. I started taking Oxys and Perks because they made me feel good and forget the pain. Even with a good job, I continued the behavior for years while holding the job and using every dollar I made to buy drugs. All 3 of my brothers died shortly after all related to drugs 2 years apart from each other. That didn't stop me, if anything, it made me want more drugs to numb all this pain. I than moved on to Heroin, lost that job after 14 years, robbed a pharmacy and went to prison embarrassing and disappointing my father. I got high in there as well. I stayed clean for a short period after that and my father passed away in the interim. I robbed a bank not long after and ended up back in prison.

SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

KO'B: My path was similar to most. Prison, detox after detox, halfway houses, holdings, CSS, TSS, Sober living, I have done it all. I tried Suboxone and Vivitrol thinking if I have some drugs its better than none at all but that wasn't the case, I ended up addicted to most of those as well including overdosing more than once. What changed it was me being sick and tired of being sick and tired. Being an addict was a full time job. Me getting counseling for all that trauma I spent years covering with drugs, becoming grateful for the help and support and AA, wanting to live more than I wanted to die. I went back to meetings on a regular basis, went off any meds, as a start and completed a long term program in the Charlestown Recovery house. There I felt included and part of something bigger, it is also where I was forced to get counseling which I am so grateful for. I was 49 years old and my life was just starting.

SL: What has helped you maintain your sobriety?

KO'B: Regular AA Meetings, Praying daily, going on commitments, speaking to other addicts or alcoholics, my sponsor who always kept me honest, and always giving back to others including the house that helped save my life. I think giving back is very important. It makes you feel good as well as anyone else struggling you can give help to. I put my Sobriety before everything else. I also now work in the field as a Recovery Coach and spend time at the Charlestown House working Sundays. I love both of my jobs and I haven't been able to say that in a long time.

SL: What advice would you give to someone just beginning their steps towards recovery?

KO'B: Always, always come back no matter what. Show your face at meetings, high or not. Make calls, embarrassed or not. Do not give up on yourself. Believe it or not, you always have support even if you don't feel like you deserve it. It is never too late to change or live a better life and even at 52 I believe that and try not to focus on all the losses I have had the last 40 years and more on the gains I have had in the past 3 years while living a sober life.