

Shannon's Interview with Doug Bergeron

April 30, 2021

I never want him to feel the way I once did



SL: Please describe your childhood?

DB: I would always say I had a good, normal childhood to be polite to all the adults involved in my life as a child. Truth is, from as long as I can remember, I always carried a heavy burden on my shoulders perpetuated by fear, guilt, and shame without the understanding of why or from where the root of these issues lay, or as some would say “the monkey on my back”. My single mother did her best driving me all across New England during the early hours in the morning, for I learned at the age of two I could channel these inadequacies into a positive outlet through ice hockey. Hockey was my identity through the middle of high school, playing on two to three different teams at a time taking us to Lake Placid, New York and Montreal, Canada. These are my brightest memories and happiest moments I can remember. All the while, I can remember wondering why my father wasn't around like all the other kids especially when I would be chosen as MVP of a tournament or given the game puck. These reasons, compounded with my mother and I having to move around a lot trying to find the right financial fit we could afford, all contributed to this growing monkey on my back mentioned

earlier. Being the new kid, everywhere I went coupled with maybe not having the newest Nike sneakers or latest cool apparel of that time, made things quite difficult for me. Which resulted in me being bullied and made fun of often, again adding to the baggage and strengthening the monkey on my back. Over the years practicing being new, I learned to deflect attention and defend myself pretty well when needed, which I also discovered helped my status amongst my peers. I was always my mother's best friend and often the man of the house as early as age 12, and would become the oldest of 4 boys. Some would see us having different fathers in one light, however we bonded over this fact, solidified with our mother's love and commitment to our happiness and forever sheltering us in her maternal love.

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

DB: For me I didn't realize my addiction manifested until my identity was stripped from me, leaving me feeling bare naked and vulnerable. As if my shield was taken away and everyone could see right through me. I injured my knee playing football, tearing three major ligaments in my knee, benching me for hockey season around age 15. Without my shield to protect me, a stand-out hockey player, my identity at the most crucial time in my life, freshman year, ultimately introduced me to my addiction. I learned drinking and fighting with the guys down the park bonded me closer with a different kind of team. But most importantly, when I drank no one seemed to focus on all my inadequacies, or so I thought. Drinking alcohol and doing drugs became my new shield. This new way of life I've found took all that pain, fear, and shame away and put me in a place of total numbness. At the time I thought the monkey was gone!

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SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

DB: Once I discovered the effects of these chemicals along with the illusion of being in control, and not feeling that heavy burden on my shoulders anymore, it wasn't long before hockey eventually took a back seat. I bought into the false sense of security the drugs and alcohol provided. It no longer mattered if I was ever going to be good enough for my millionaire father, growing up poor no longer mattered, and while encapsulated in intoxication I became someone very different. In fact, I would be told years later that my persona was unrecognizable even to my family. I became an animal in the streets and would do whatever necessary to feed my addiction and never feel those feelings of vulnerability again! I refused to be a victim of anyone or anything ever again. This mentality cost me many years in prison. Many missed holidays and birthdays, so many that people even stopped noticing and asking where I was on special events. My absence and the pain on my mother's face spoke volumes to all. Never mind the precedence I sent for my 3 younger brothers. I certainly owed them much better than what they got from me. This lie was so profound, mysteriously planted as an inception in my brain that my very values I chose to live by, my street code that I would live by the sword and die by the sword, was the epidemic of what would continue to destroy me. This conduct which I thought made me a good man only would oscillate right back to jails, institutions, and death. Over a course of roughly 25 years, I have visited all three many times.

SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

DB: My journey to recovery has been enlightening to say the least. It isn't something that comes naturally, quite to the contrary it's the polar opposite for me. I would go through a

detox, program, or finish a lengthy prison sentence and find myself hopeless for I'd be right back at it, drinking and drugging again. It wasn't the abstinence for me, my journey really started once I began to realize (in segregation naturally) that my life was a fraud. I had been misinformed by older gentlemen who were also misinformed. I prayed for the courage to look deep into my soul, to search the motives of my actions. I asked myself who was I really? This was the beginning of my recovery. I owe my son Anthony abundantly more than what my father could have done for me. Noticing where my life style had taken me and the absence left behind for him was enough pain, shame and guilt to motivate me to be honest with myself and face that scared little boy who had just lost his hockey shield. And I started to grow. I started humbling myself to take suggestions from others and be responsible. I took the good from my past and left the rest behind. I apologize when I'm wrong, and work the program of Alcoholics Anonymous to the best of my ability.

SL: What has helped you maintain your recovery?

DB: Maintaining honesty, I believe is the biggest key to my recovery. And of course, honesty with other people is what I strive to do, however I can't even do that if I'm not honest with myself first and foremost. I need to be vigilant with self-examination and honest with the results in order to stay in recovery. It certainly is an internal job. And if and when a moment of weakness presents itself as is promised when living inside my head, I think of my son Anthony and how the consequences of my destructive behavior affects him. I never want him to feel the way I once did without having his father to coach him and guide him through those terrifying moments life inevitably throws our way.