

Name: Shannon Lundin
Sober Date: May 15th, 2004
Hometown: Charlestown, MA
Age: 38

OL: Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood?

SL: I grew up in Charlestown, born and raised. I grew up in a dysfunctional fatherless home for the most part—he was in and out of my life until I was 10 and I haven't seen him since. My mom didn't drink or do drugs. All she cared about was taking care of her kids.

There are four of us and I'm the second oldest. I remember waiting in bed and wondering if it would be one of those nights when the cops would come or if [my dad] would just fall asleep. When my father became abusive, which was on a regular basis, the cops were always called to my house. My older sister would run to the neighbors, my younger sister and brother would hide under the bed, and I would sit next to my mother when he hit her.

One specific memory I have is once my father came back to hit my mother one more time, and I was trying to block the door and he kicked it open and split my head open and my mom had to hide me in the bathtub because she was scared the cops would take me.



OL: How and when did you first start using?

SL: I had my first drink at the age of 12. My mom used to have this friend come over and drink a lot and she would try to coerce my mom to drink with her. My mom would pretend to drink it but then put it in the kitchen cabinet. I took [the alcohol] and brought to the school yard "pit" by the Edwards to drink it. I just liked that I could loosen up and flirt and was funny and couldn't wait to drink again.

From there on it progressed and I started stealing cars, shoplifting, taking Klonopin, Acid, Angel Dust, Percocet and Vicodin. Cocaine was my drug of choice for the longest time and what I loved about it was that I could drink more on it and tell you what I really

thought of you because it was like this truth serum.

I would still use other substances though because if it was put in front of me I would do it. In high school I was still going to school and stuff and got a diploma, but just barely.

OL: Could you speak a bit about some of your experiences in active addiction?

SL: I was in detoxes and other programs and I would always want to go to Somerville Detox. Think about that—who wants their goal to be getting into a specific detox? I was also in a wet shelter (a place where you don't have to be sober) and I remember the first day I walked in there it smelled horrendous and I started crying. Then, however, I got comfortable.

I got pregnant with Laneigh at 19 and had her at 20. I was partying and my mother always took care of her. Eventually I started doing OCs to come down from the coke and I fell in love with them and didn't want to spend money on coke anymore. That progressed and then I turned to heroin because it was cheaper and more potent.

I told myself as long as I don't shoot it three days in a row I'll be okay, but obviously that didn't happen. At that point my

mother called DCF and got temporary guardianship of Laneigh because I was using. I wasn't allowed near Laneigh because I was using and had warrants and was on probation. My mother got really friendly with my probation officer and she was the type of mother who if she saw me she would call the court house and let them know what I was doing. I started losing a lot of friends to overdoses and that affected me greatly but then it started happening so much that I became desensitized to it.

I started getting dope sick all the time and tired of running around and hustling just so I wasn't sick. I had also overdosed multiple times myself. I went into detox again and decided to go to the Meridian House, not knowing the level of care and the structure—it's not your traditional halfway house.

I only went [to Meridian] because it was in Charlestown and there were boys there. When I went I asked how long the program was and they said 9-12 months and I was like I'm only here for 30 days. I figured I would get everyone off my back and probably go back to doing what I was doing. I did want to be sober and change my life but the bigger part of me just didn't think it would be possible for me to not do drugs every day. I couldn't fathom that even being possible for me.

OL: Can you talk a little bit about your experience at Meridian House?

SL: In Meridian House they design their program on behavior modification. It's resident run where residents can confront each other based on their behaviors. Everyday residents confront each other on things, which are called "slips" to gain learning experiences for behaviors. Slips on Shannon lasted 30-45 min every day. They told me I was a sneak, a liar, manipulative, entitled. I would flip out but all those things were true.

One of the "Learning Experiences" that the Meridian House is famous for is called an "All Day." You had to sit in a chair for 12 hours and you couldn't talk. People used to say to me that the All Day was so degrading because you had to wear a sign saying "don't talk to me" but that was no less degrading than what I was doing on the streets as a young mother. In the all day chair I learned how to identify feelings, sit with self, and take responsibility for what got me in the chair in the first place.

The design of the Meridian House and the way that they run their program was really the best approach for my treatment even though I didn't know it. I was there for 14 months.

OL: How did you maintain your sobriety in the early days about completing Meridian House?

SL: I had a Get Well job (first job out of treatment) at Fantastic Sam's as the receptionist and lived in sober living for about a year. And then I moved back home with my mom and daughter and regained custody of her. I went to meetings and I got involved with the church.

I really feel like my relationship with God and being part of a church family is what has given me the strength to continue being successful in my recovery.

OL: What has life in recovery looked like for you?

SL: I went to UMASS to do the alcohol and substance use certification program and then I worked at the Cushing House



in South Boston with adolescent girls for two years and then the Charlestown Coalition was formed and Beth Rosenshein who was the initial director hired me as admin assistant and had me trained in teaching LifeSkills in schools. Then a grant came out and the community really wanted someone to help people struggling with addiction navigate services. People in the community wrote letters asking for me to be considered for the position. I was hired and I've been in the position for 9 years.

When I got sober I decided I wanted to find [my father] and tell him I forgave him. Although he may have influenced me, I ultimately had to take responsibility. It was then that I found out he was dead for 5 years from AIDS but we didn't even know. I have some good memories of him. The reason why I love the Rolling Stones so much is that the first time I ever heard them was sitting on his lap in the kitchen. I try to focus on those things other than just the bad stuff. Even though he is part of my story, I don't let it own me because he had a really rough upbringing himself.

I was three years sober when my mother was dying and I got pregnant with my younger daughter, Olivia. Although being pregnant at that time was one of the hardest things, it was kind of like my daughter rescuing me again. Laneigh was the one who really rescued me from addiction but being pregnant with Olivia gave me the strength in my weakness.

My daughters are my life. My main priority, my everything.

I've suffered a big loss this past year with losing the father of my children and although that hurts a lot, without God, my job, and my children I wouldn't have been able to make it through that.

My 13th year of recovery was yesterday on May 15th and I'm getting married in November. I have a lot to look forward to and I just have to keep moving forward one day at a time.

To close, I would like to say my favorite scripture:

***"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.
Plans to prosper you and not for harm. Plans to give you a hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11***