

Shannon's Interview with Kerianne Caccavaro

May 30, 2019

It will get better!

SL: Please describe your childhood?

KC: As I child I grew up in Winchester, middle class, with both my working parents. Neither of my parents used drugs or drank more than socially and always did their best to provide so that I did not go without. I was always more of a tomboy, I loved being outside, getting dirty, playing sports, and found it more comfortable proving my strength with the boys then playing dress up with the girls. I had an extremely hard time in school, with learning, sitting still, and paying attention which caused more negative attention then positive. Looking back on it now I was like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. I never really felt like I fit! At 10 years old my sister was born, which was an adjustment, but I absolutely loved having the responsibility of being her protective older sister.

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

KC: I believe the behaviors associated with my addiction started very young and stem from feeling insecure in a lot of areas not just in school, but not feeling quite good enough from as long as I can remember. I started acting out with aggressive behaviors very young, fighting instead of vocalizing my feelings, lying, hiding events or situations from my parents that began in elementary school. I even remember glorifying the field trips to the prisons the D.A.R.E. program would take us, not understanding the severity whatsoever and that too was in fourth grade. So only naturally by the time I was 12 or 13 I started smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol at sleep overs with my friends. By the time I got to my early teens I had found a group of friends I felt were like me, I was more comfortable to doing what my friends did then not.

SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

KC: I think things really started to change when I was around 15 or 16 years old. My family decided to move my sophomore year to Arlington. At that same time my parents split up and my father moved out. Quickly after, I started getting arrested, failing in school, drinking during school and spiraling down a dangerous path. I started to date the "bad boys" looking for attention in all the wrong areas. Around 19 I tried my first prescription pain medication Percocet. I had no idea what I was in store for! By 20 years old I was addicted to OxyContin, I dropped out of college, moved in with my dealer boyfriend and could barely hold a job. My addiction was running the show, by 24 my progression grew to heroin. I had been arrested multiple times, I couldn't hold a job for more than a month or two and the same goes for housing. I lived like a gypsy out of bags, always ready to pack up and move to the next spot. I had tried therapy, intensive outpatient programs and medication, but I wasn't ready. My entire 20s was consumed by my addiction. Even when moments came that I truly wanted to stop getting high, this became my way of life and I didn't know how to handle living life any other way.

SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

KC: Recovery was introduced into my life through the courts. I would attempt detox on my own, but I could never complete or even consider aftercare. It wasn't until I was stipulated to a residential program when I was around 25. I would put a few months together in a program, and then relapse. Each time I learned areas of myself that I needed to work on. Anger and relationships were two areas I constantly struggled with and always lead back to a relapse. It got to a point where I was always either

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homeless and getting high, in jail or in a program. I had tried recovery so many times, if it was a program in Boston or Brockton, Lowell or Salisbury, Tewksbury or Lynn the result was always the same... until I surrendered, I continued to suffer. I was placed into a female behavioral modification home in 2014 by Drug court. I was taught accountability, self-worth, honesty, and responsibility. With time I learned how to deal with family stressors, how to feel comfortable with boundaries, and integrity. I was very gifted to have a team of people in the courts and in the program to not give much room for error and for the first time that strict structure allowed me to build my road to recovery. I have not found it necessary to pick up a drink or a drug since June 3rd, 2014.

SL: What has helped you maintain your recovery?

KC: Respecting my recovery, and my addiction! It's my choice which one I feed! I've learned to stay connected to my mentors that guide and support me in different areas, and at times have held my hand through recovery. Both my sister and husband have motivated me immensely along with my family support. I've learned getting brutally honest with myself and speaking about it in meetings with my network and therapy has taught me how to stay in recovery. Learning who I am, what I enjoy and embracing my insecurities allows me to grow in recovery. Along the way, I have found purpose in my recovery by helping others. Volunteering, helping in the community and just not being so self-centered. And, without gratitude I would not be able to appreciate my recovery whatsoever! I have unfortunately like so many others, have lost a great deal of people I've loved due to addiction, so I've carried various unexpected forms of grief since getting sober. What it has ultimately taught me is to love. Forgive, apologize, listen and tell someone what they mean to you.

SL: What advice would you give to someone in early recovery?

KC: Don't let go! Hold on as tight as you can! Some days will feel horrendous, but most are AMAZING and if they weren't none of us would be doing this. I can promise it will get worse if you let go, but if you continue to hold on and try ,IT WILL GET BETTER! We will love and support you the entire way through and when you feel like giving up, take the suggestions, pick up the phone, call someone in recovery! The feelings always pass but they usually don't when act out on them and give up! Pray, meditate, workout learn positive affirmations, or go to meetings. It doesn't matter what path you choose in your recovery just choose one!

