

Shannon's Interview with Paul Myers

April 4, 2018

Don't Ever Give Up Hope

SL: Please describe your childhood?

PM: Growing up in Charlestown I always felt like it was the greatest place in the world. My sisters, Erin and Kellie, and I were afforded opportunities like most of the other kids we grew up with. We played sports, went to Catholic schools, on family vacations, and pursued any other interests we had.

I really enjoyed playing hockey and baseball. As a kid I wouldn't leave the house without a hockey stick. It's all I wanted to do. In my early teens I loved spending my days and nights with friends up the Boys and Girls Club. Our home life and family wasn't the "Brady Bunch" by any means, but our parents did the best that they could raising my sisters and I.

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

PM: When I started to gravitate towards "The Corner," hanging on Main Street, my curiosity grew and gradually I progressed from a few beers here and there at 15 (which was late by Charlestown standards back then) to trying different and more dangerous drugs.

Things that should have been important to me back then, like playing hockey and baseball or school, all slowly and then rapidly took a back seat to my partying ways. As a teen growing up in Charlestown I was simply very misinformed by some very misinformed people.

You don't want to feel "left out" or the only one not doing something. I always knew that what I was doing was wrong but I had the mindset of "well, everyone else is doing it too." When I had that first drink at the John Harvard Park and had that first drug up the back of the Bunker Hill Park, never in a million years did I think it would take me to the places it did.

SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

PM: My goals in life weren't to disappoint my family, my kids or go to detoxes, treatment centers, and federal prisons, but that's exactly where my alcoholism and addiction took me. When you're caught up in that vicious cycle of alcoholism/addiction and trying to control it, you think you're not hurting anyone and only having fun but the truth is you are simply too blind to see the truth of it all, and that's exactly what happened to me.

I don't know if I was born with the illness of alcoholism/addiction or if I developed it somehow and crossed some invisible line during my teenage drinking and drugging days, but I do know I have the illness. I do know today that there is a way out and there is a solution!!!

SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

PM: My path and journey in recovery, like most, has not been an easy one. When I truly found recovery back in 1999 and I was fortunate and blessed to get sober at 23yrs old and stay sober for 5+ years. Unfortunately, like a lot of us do, we get too busy with life and not busy enough in our recovery programs. We forget that our lives have turned around and are so good in the first place because we're clean and sober. God rescued me and blessed me again when I came back into recovery in 2014 and that has not been without its challenges either.

Since 1999 I've taken a 9-year detour and 90-day detour from recovery and there was always more pain and more heartache waiting for me each time I went back out to use.

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Today I'm not willing to pay the price, so I stay on the path and continue my journey in recovery slow and steady, a day at a time.

SL: What has helped you maintain your recovery?

PM: There are so many elements to maintaining my recovery today, there is so much help and love I receive from others who are on the same journey.

For me, it's all about self-care today, which includes spending quality time with children Paul, Conal and Lilly and being available for them. My greatest joy in life is being a dad to my kids- watching and participating in their lives. Other important parts of my life I've rediscovered are traveling, exploring, music, arts, exercising, reading, and healthy eating. Recovery has unlocked so much more life for me.

As an alcoholic/addict no one has beat me up more than I beat myself up. In recovery I've needed to learn how to forgive myself, love myself, and learn how to live life again without putting a substance into my body.

There has been only one way for me to get to that point, that's to trust in God and being an active member of a 12-step program. God has always worked through people in my life. I'm learning the more I give of myself to others on this journey, the more I receive and it's absolutely amazing. It's Not always easy but it's always worth it.

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

PM: I try not to give advice to anyone in recovery (though I'm not always successful) but I love sharing what has worked for me and the

suggestions I've gotten along the way that have been helpful.

Relapse is not a requirement in recovery but more of us do relapse than don't. If you fall you can get back up. Learn to trust, be open-minded and honest with yourself. It doesn't matter if it's a friend in recovery, an in/outpatient counselor, case worker, or a recovery coach.

You don't have to walk one step of this journey alone.

Do not listen to yourself! You have a mind you can't trust and your mind is going to lie to you and tell you it's not worth it, what's the sense, there's too much damage done, you'll never be any good.

You are worth it and you are a good person. We aren't bad people trying to get good, we are simply sick people trying to get well. Staying in the middle of a fellowship and participating in 12-step meetings have been vital for my recovery.

There's going to be days when everything will feel like it's going wrong and you won't feel like carrying on in your recovery. Those are the days you must hold on just till midnight.

Those are the days we grow the most. Don't ever give up hope!

