

# Shannon's Interview with Elizabeth Splaine

November 24, 2020

*Ask God to better your life.*



## SL: Please describe your childhood?

**ES:** I grew up the youngest of five children in North Cambridge, Massachusetts. My parents had me when they were 35 years old and had been married for 13 years. My father is Irish and my mother's family is from Barbados. We grew up going to church, praying before we ate and had great manners. Growing up in Cambridge was great due to its diversity, however, I did attend a prestigious school, where there were few minorities. All of that is to say, I always knew I was different from the kids I went to school with, even though I was very popular and treated with respect and love. I played soccer since I was 4 years old. I always went to my older siblings' sports games with my Mom and Dad. Both my parents worked for Boston's public schools, my Dad was a guidance

counselor and my Mom was a school nurse. I always looked up to my oldest siblings because they were all so driven, smart and confident. Even though I had a great upbringing I went through a traumatic event at the age of 15 that left me with feelings of shame, sadness, truly confused as to why God allowed it to happen to me. I excelled in soccer and lacrosse, I played varsity sports in high school and even earned an athletic scholarship to play Division II lacrosse at University of New Haven Connecticut. My parents were proud because I grew up being told that having an education was the key to success.

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

**ES:** I tried alcohol when I was 13 and didn't love it. I threw up and just felt really, really dizzy and confused. However, when I tried weed at 14, I felt a strong sense of relief. I wasn't stressed about the crazy assignments that were piled on me at school. Through Alcohol Anonymous and step work, I can now admit that my addiction had already manifested itself at the age of 16 with marijuana. I mentioned I experienced trauma at the age of 15 so my coping mechanism turned into smoking weed every single weekend. I no longer had to be stressed or worried about anything because I had my new best friend, weed. Drinking was more popular at my high school. I soon found myself hanging out with the stoners and people that were older than me. I thought I was balancing academics being a tri-varsity athlete, a daughter and a friend, yet my life was becoming problematic.

## SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

**ES:** My addiction progressed from smoking marijuana on the weekends to throughout the school week. Due to poor choices and hanging out with the wrong people, I had to transfer from my private school to Matignon high school mid-

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sophomore year. Matignon was where I was introduced to OxyContin. I experimented with that during my junior and senior year. I managed to successfully graduate and went on to college with an athletic scholarship. Unfortunately, addiction does not discriminate and doesn't care about your dreams. I equate the disease of addiction to Satan himself. In short, I transferred to UMass Amherst and even though I tried out and made it and was selected to be on their Division I Lacrosse Team, drugs robed me of that opportunity. Despite being smart, I found myself using opioids on a daily basis. I found myself alone in my dorm room depressed, unhappy, irritable and discontent. I felt disconnected from my family. I felt ashamed that I had let my life get this bad and truly devasted because lacrosse was my favorite extracurricular activity and opioids took that away from me. My addiction progressed and took me to places that I had no business being. It kept me away from my family, who loved me unconditionally. I wasted years of my life, meaningful friendships, and copious amounts of money. As my drug used escalated, my quality of life diminished. I felt like the girl in the painting "Christina's world" (Andrew Wyeth).

## SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

**ES:** Firstly, I need to say that I am so grateful to be clean and sober. God has given another chance at life and an opportunity to fulfill God's purpose for me. My path entails: attending AA meetings on a daily basis, having constant communication with positive females within this program and attending church so that I can strengthen my relationship with my higher power, whom I choose to call God. I have a sponsor that I speak to every single day and I try to be honest in all of my affairs. My goal is to get my LADC so that I can be of service and work with women who are in recovery. Being a mother and a strong woman who has faced

adversity, I believe that I can be a power of example and help them on their journey. Also, I have a beautiful daughter Victoria who has truly changed my life for the better. She is such a strong, intelligent little girl and she has so much empathy within her little heart. Becoming a mother was something that allowed me to stop being so selfish and begin to better my life and hers.

## SL: What has helped you maintain your recovery?

**ES:** God has truly transformed my life and continues to bless me on a daily basis. My loving parents, Esther and John Splaine, have been so influential and supportive on my road to recovery. I have to give immense credit to my eldest sister, Rachael Rollins, who has been there for my daughter as well as for me throughout my whole life. Words cannot express the deepest gratitude and respect that I hold for her. She is extremely brilliant and literally an angel. Also, my brothers, Jonathan and Mathew, who support me and I love dearly. Lastly, my sister Rebecca, my closest in age, who I always look up to and who is a phenomenal mother and a successful woman. All the people who share their experiences on a daily basis at meetings keep me humble and coming back.

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

**ES:** 1) I would recommend that you make it to AA or NA meetings. 2) Make a commitment to do 90 meetings in 90 days. 3) Keep an open mind. 4) Truly listen to what people have to share and suggest. 5) Be deliberate in placing yourself around positive people. 6) Pray. 7) Do not allow your past to dictate your future. 8) Ask God to better your life.