

# Shannon's Interview with Kim Costa

January 31, 2020

*The more I do for myself and others, the better my life gets.*

## SL: Please describe your childhood?

**KC:** My mother was from Mission Hill, so I started out in Roxbury, Hyde Park and Roslindale after my parents got divorced. For a while it was just my mom, my sister and I. When I was about six, she remarried and they had two more kids. My step father raised me like I was his own and treated me like a son, which to me has always felt like a gift. I grew up with three younger sisters so it was a pretty rowdy house. This was before I found my lifelong friends though I got picked on a lot. I spent a lot of time reading and going through medicine cabinets. In spite of being raised by a great man I always felt there was something missing, my father had pretty much disappeared. One day when I was 12 years old, he just showed up with pictures in hand of his other kids. As I looked through them it enraged me that they had him and I didn't, I always felt like he kind of just fed me to the wolves. Being 12 years old and knowing he was out there raising other kids it just set me off somehow. I didn't even meet them until I was 40, that's how long I held on to that. Side Note: he left them not long after.

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

**KC:** The feeling I had that something was missing was there at a very early age, I was looking even at eight or nine years old for anything that would fill that void. I was the friend that had to be dragged home or yelled at. I'm sure you'd all be surprised to know that I was a nuisance. The consequences came early for me, as every time I walked in to my house my mom knew that I was wrecked so for several years it was a repeated cycle of going out, getting destroyed in broad daylight, coming home at the ungodly hour of 9pm on a summer night (phase 1 of any punishment is an embarrassing curfew), catching a slipper or a Dr

Scholl from my mother, and getting grounded. My mother never wavered on whatever insidious punishment she handed out. So, there I was in my room at 15 years old, no tv, no friends over, and the most unjust of all, I was stuck babysitting my sisters. but at least I had those books.....6 weeks later I'd walk out the front door and do it all over again.

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

**KC:** For me what basically happened is I stayed the exact same person for about 30 years. My friends went off to college or found careers, all I cared about was using. My son was born while all my friends were in college. My daughter was born while they were backpacking across Europe. no matter how hard I tried I could not keep it together. Everything that was wrong with my life I made it to be somebody else's fault. I was a mental case. Everyone thought I was bipolar. My family knew I drank too much but very few people knew I was doing drugs. Everybody would tell me I was so smart and had so much potential and they were so baffled at how I could just never finish what I started or accomplish anything. My kids eventually went to live with their dads which gave me seven or eight years of uninterrupted drug abuse, at least when they lived with me, I would wait until they got out of the bathtub safely. If my kids or their dads called, I never answered the phone, I never did anything for them I didn't do anything for anybody. They would stay with me on the weekends and we wouldn't go anywhere we would just sit in my apartment with the shades drawn most of the time. Also, in the last couple of years of my using, I hadn't talked to anybody in my family.



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

**KC:** I have two nephews that are in recovery who helped me find my way towards it. It took them a couple of years to get me to do anything but they never gave up. There was never a period of time where I tried to get clean and then relapsed, I just used and used until one night at about 3:30 in the morning I finally gave up. I called my nephew and they helped me.

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

**KC:** I'm always looking for new ways to strengthen my relationship with God, because that is actually what filled the void I described earlier. The void is gone but could return at any time if I slack off on my recovery. I belong to a 12-step fellowship, I hang around with strong women, meditate, do positive affirmations...you name it. I made a million mistakes in recovery, but when I trip up or when things go wrong, I have to be aware that I can learn something from the experiences, especially when there is pain involved. I've been through some things, especially the last two years, a lot of loss and disappointment. I thank God every day for those experiences and lessons because huge blessings came from all of it. I'm a woman with integrity today and that is something I want for all women; everybody deserves a beautiful life no matter how long you've been out there or what you did to survive.

This year I decided that in order to grow yet again I had to get out of the city, I moved to Billerica, I have a dog and my life is amazing. I have a beautiful relationship with my family, my kids and my grandson. I could say it doesn't get any better than this, but the more I do for myself and others, the better my life gets.

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

**KC:** If treatment is an option, take it. If further treatment is an option... definitely take it. Don't rush, there's no need to sign up for 5 classes at Bunker Hill with 60 days clean or demand immediate custody of your kids or whatever. First few months you have to let your head clear. There's a lot to do but there's always someone a little ahead of you to show you the way. And I'm always here to help.

