

Shannon's Interview with Ty Hunt

November 30, 2019

Get uncomfortable to Get Comfortable

SL: Please describe your childhood?

TH: I grew up in Brockton in a house with both parents and 3 older siblings. My mother and father took us on vacations and to church when we were kids. My parents had different views in terms of what was acceptable behavior and the levels of punishment; my mother would ground me for certain misbehavior where my father was more of the physical discipline type. I was always involved in baseball and basketball leagues to just pickup games with kids in the neighborhood. Being super competitive and the youngest led me to quite a few losses and fistfights with my older brother. Being the "runt", I caught it the worst of it. I in turn brought that anger with me everywhere and wanted other kids to feel what I was feeling at home. Since I can remember I just wanted to fit in and would do pretty much anything to be with my closest/older brother and his friends. When my oldest brother started doing something it got passed down to the middle child and then me. There's an 8-year age gap between me and the oldest so I was pretty advanced in whatever was trending at the time for my age.

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

TH: When I was a baby my Nana gave me a blanket and that became my first addiction. If I didn't have my blanky I couldn't sleep. I would cry, kick, and scream until I had my blanky. As I look back that blanky made me feel warm and safe and like everything was okay. I eventually grew out of my blanky and became addicted to sports and winning. My new addiction was in 3rd or 4th grade when I started smoking weed and cigarettes. I used to wait outside of the store and ask people to buy me cigarettes, rolling papers and cigars while everyone was waiting at the park for me to come back with the order. I remember stealing a pack of cigarettes out of a

carton my nana had on the backseat of her car. I was ten years old, and I was diagnosed with ADHD, ADD and Bipolar. I was taking 3 different medications to help me concentrate and level out the side effects of each medication. If I didn't smoke weed by 5 pm I would become filled with rage and depression. I remember skipping detention one Friday, my friends and I saved up our lunch money to get a bunch of weed; then my mother showed up to my friend's house chased me around and into the car. I punched out my mother's windshield, became suicidal trying to jump out of the car while she was driving on North Quincy Street in Brockton. Two years later at age 14, I was in a car accident with my brother's friend Jesse on that same street. Jesse died, and I was in a coma with a broken skull and neck. I was in a wheelchair for 6 months. Had to do physical, occupational and speech therapy while inpatient at Spaulding Rehab. My friends used to push me around the block even though I could hardly talk; they would smoke weed with me, so I could get high in peace. The doctors told me I shouldn't play contact sports, I did anyway.

SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

TH: At 4 months clean I went to a hotel in another state with the 3 other people and had the time of my life. I heard a speaker share at the convention that there were no levels to addiction; that weed is crack, alcohol is heroin that its all the same. I also heard him say that he thought about using 1000 times a day then 100 then before he knew it he went a whole day without thinking about using. I wanted what he had and could identify with so much of what he shared. That night I went to the dance and reawakened my spirit. Now I look at the dance floor like recovery. It takes courage to get out on

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the dance floor. The winners don't judge and the people who judge usually aren't dancing or working a program. You must get in the middle of the floor like you have to jump into recovery. You must get uncomfortable to get comfortable to enjoy life as other people do.

SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

TH: When I went back to school I was special education with an Individual Education Plan (IEP). I had to have a teacher sit next to me in class to help me learn. I felt ashamed, guilty and embarrassed. I kept getting high to numb the pain. I blamed my accident and used it as an excuse to why I couldn't do things or be successful. I threw it in my parents face and told them I wished I had died in that accident instead of Jesse. I thought about and attempted suicide several times on the anniversary of the car accident. When I look back every time I tried killing myself I had drugs in my body. My brother was an IV heroin user by this time and I hated his guts. I got involved with people who sold to my brother. By age 23 I started using almost everything he did. I was found overdosed from prescriptions at my worst. I tried to just smoke weed and said I would never do another hard drug in my life, but I was unsuccessful. It wasn't until I had a spiritual awakening that I stopped using drugs. By the time I stopped using I had been off my bipolar meds for years. I didn't understand the need for bipolar meds and just wanted to be like "normal people". Until not using anything led to a manic episode. Some symptoms I was experiencing were HypoMania Grandiosity, Hyper Religiosity, sleeping an hour a night if at all, flight of ideas, and an urge to save the world. I had just gotten a settlement and started feeding and bringing cases of water and clothes to the homeless, I was preaching at gas stations, the park, family dollar, DTA Office, Social Security Office and at family parties. My family was scared for me and thought what I was

saying was unworldly and didn't make sense. By this time my older brother was coming up on 3 years clean. I remembered my brother used to go to these meetings with a bunch of addicts who were sick. So, I took my beliefs and ideas into those meetings thinking I could save people. What I found out later on was that they were sick, and I couldn't save them. I also found out that I was sick myself and I needed some saving. They told me that day I walked in the meeting to get a sponsor and a home group. I joined that group and asked this guy Eric to sponsor me. They told me to greet people at the door and I loved it because I believed I could heal them from the disease of addiction with a hug if I hugged them tight enough and long enough. What I found out later was that I was truly healing them at least in the moment from any pain, loss or sad feelings. I joined another homegroup and another homegroup and another until I held the greeter position at every homegroup in my city. I would say I had the best hugs in the fellowship and I was the best greeter in the country. Having a service position made me feel a part of with a purpose. I was raising my hand and sharing 3 times a meeting until my sponsor called me and told me not to share for a month. He told me I need to learn to listen and listen to learn. Take the cotton out my ears and put it in my mouth. After listening for a week, I came to the realization that I might be an addict too. I became depressed and couldn't get my hand up. Good thing I had that greeter position because I had built an army of recovering addicts who showed up for me when I couldn't for myself. They called to check in on me, picked me up, brought me to meetings, events and finally my first convention.

SL: What has helped you maintain your recovery?

TH: Then I went to the talent show and did a little hip-hop song I wrote. The people roared for me and made me feel like a superstar. That's an example of recovering addicts believing in me

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until I could believe in myself. This is one of the many blessings I have been able to accomplish. I have been writing songs since I was 12; this is when I wrote my first verse. At this point in my life I felt as though I could only write and record when I was high. There became a point that I thought that Hip Hop led me to using drugs, and using led me to jails, institutions and wanting to die, therefore I quit listening to Hip Hop altogether. I put my studio in storage for over 18 months. However, today my addiction has manifested in making music sober. I write and perform clean not under the influence of mind-altering substances.

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

TH: I fell in love with recovery and not too long after that convention I lost the desire to use. I chased the meetings like I chased the drugs. I became a convention junky and went to as many as possible. I stored dozens of phone numbers in my phone from every convention and a number at almost every meeting from Boston to San Diego. A problem shared is a problem cut in half and I have 1000's of people I can call now if I need to get something off my chest and out of my head. I'm not cured and I'm not sure I ever will be but if I don't pick up the drugs, have a meeting I can go to and a person I can share with, I will be alright. I heard one addict share "stick and stay because it gets greater later" and I couldn't agree more. God has blessings for me around the corner and if I remain positive I will experience those blessings. God brought me to recovery and recovery still brings me closer to God. I'm still recovering, becoming the man I was always supposed to be. Since I put the drugs down and started getting involved in recovery I found a family I never knew existed, I joined the union, moved into my own apartment, traveled to San Diego by myself, I released an official hip hop album by the name of Holy Mania. Come January I'll be driving and attending meetings all the way down to San Diego.

