

Shannon's Interview with John Flaherty

July 31, 2019

Don't Give Up

SL: Please describe your childhood?

JF: My childhood wasn't too bad. I grew up in Charlestown with a functional drug addict mother, and a father who was given a 30-year federal sentence when I was 2 years old. It was just my mother, my sister, and I for most of my life. My mom was addicted to crack, and my sister was addicted to heroin. Drugs were normal in my house, a lot of things were, that looking back on wasn't normal at all. My main escape as a kid was the Boys and Girls Club.

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

JF: My addiction started with a doctor's prescription of 175 5mg Percocet at the age of 15. When I was in the 10th grade of high school I was shot through the leg crossing the street on my way to the boys and girls club. The bullet was a quarter inch away from my femoral artery. I was never the same mentally.

SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

JF: As a teenager, I experimented with Benzos, Oxycotin, PCP, and MDMA to self-medicate the anxiety and PTSD that followed being shot. All the while still maintaining a job, and my own apartment after my mother died when I was 21. For years, I used drugs as a crutch to work harder, longer and better than others knowing the whole time it would eventually catch up with me. Years flew by, and I found myself on 1 or 2 Percocet 30mg per day consistently for 10 years 'til I had the bright idea to increase my habit to 10 a day, but the 10 a day I was doing were pressed pills of fentanyl.

SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

JF: I was settling for less and had given up. My addiction was costing me \$1500 a week, every relationship I had, and the best years of my life. I realized I needed to do better and should be further in life. I kicked on a friend's couch and went to the doctors to get outpatient care. On the same day I walked into my first AA meeting, and was welcomed by great people.

SL: What has helped you maintain your recovery?

JF: They tell you to do 90 meetings in 90 days, but I went to 90 in 30 days. I got active in the groups and made AA my new addiction. When I was getting high I thought everyone was, but when I got sober it was like seeing the town through different eyes. Just celebrated my 4th month sober and wouldn't change it for anything. Wish I did it 10 years ago.

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

JF: There is a better life out there, don't give up. I'd also like to recommend books titled, Lost Connections and Chasing the Scream both by Johann Hari.

