

Name: Caitlin Gillespie
Hometown: Ashland, MA
Drug of Addiction: Heroin
Clean Date: Sept. 28, 2016
Age: 32

OL: Can you start by describing how and when your addiction began?

CG: My drug of choice was heroin but I started with oxy when I was a junior in college, about 19 at the time. I smoked weed and drank and stuff like that but I wasn't really experimenting with any other stuff at the time. It was just that a boyfriend that I had at the time introduced me to oxy so I tried it and it escalated very quickly.

OL: How did your addiction progress?

CG: I was sniffing oxys at the time, on the weekends, and then I realized that I was liking it more and wanted it more often. Over the course of the year it got to the point where we were selling to support our habit. After I graduated college in 2006, that summer I got arrested and was sent to jail for the first time in the beginning of 2007. I was stipulated to a therapeutic community at the time and I was really naive when I went in there. I was probably the youngest person there and the only one there for pills. I became friendly with people there and when I graduated I hung out with someone that I was friends with there and started using needles out of curiosity. Since 2007 it's been an up and down battle.

OL: What have been some of your most significant challenges to maintaining sobriety?

CG: Relationships were always a thing for me. As was working and overwhelming myself too quickly and not really involving myself in a network, I kind of just always took shortcuts. [For example] Going to meetings but not talking to anyone. I would just go and leave, never really involve myself. From 2011-2013 I moved to Florida because a friend of mine lived there and I stayed clean. I was going to meetings and stuff like that but when I moved home I started drinking and relapsed on heroin.

OL: How did you get to the place of recovery you are at currently?

CG: This last run was probably my worst. I was homeless, literally living under the Zakim Bridge. I was stemming to support my habit and then I started stealing from stores and I got arrested a few times. My family had completely stopped talking to me and I was just living pretty much like an animal. I was so far gone and as much as I hated what my life had become I couldn't stop. Instead I needed to be stopped.

In September, 2016, I got arrested for stealing purses and I found out I was 13 weeks pregnant at the time. I was in jail for three months and then I went to a program in Mattapan for women and children for five and a half months. I had my daughter Harper on March 28 and completed the program in May.

OL: Can you talk a little bit about what you're up to now?

CG: I'm currently living in Lynn in a family shelter with my daughter and her dad. I recently started working again and I am strong in my recovery.

I'm also a part of Charlestown drug court and have been since my release from jail in December. I didn't know what I was getting myself into [with drug court] but it really hasn't been as bad as what I had heard from other

people. It's a small group of people that attend right now and I can say they're all really invested in me. It has been a great source of support and they have been able to watch me grow and have been there from being pregnant to having my daughter and now she comes with me. It's actually a really personal experience.

Another pretty cool thing I was a part of was something called the Lullaby Project that my social worker hooked me up with through BMC, when I was in the Mattapan program. I wrote and recorded a lullaby for my daughter and then I actually got selected out of 300 moms across the country and invited to sing it at a concert at Carnegie Hall in New York City at the beginning of June.

One thing I can say is that although I have done a lot of damage and burned a lot of bridges I've been really lucky to have a best friend, Nicole that I've known since 7th grade. She never gave up on me and has never judged me and has always been a really awesome source of support. Also, despite all our ups and downs and the fact that we did use together, my boyfriend and daughter's father Patrick is also a great source of support and motivation.

Things were really really bad and my life was so different only a year ago, and I never really thought that things could be so amazing in such a short time. For me, it really was about getting rid of one simple thing to make everything else better.