

## Shannon's Interview with Amanda Marino

September 30, 2021

### "Nothing in Your Life is Beyond Redemption"



**SL: Please describe your childhood?**

**AM:** My childhood was a very layered experience. I had two loving parents who cared deeply for my well being. I lived in a great neighborhood in the suburbs, full of neighborhood friends. I was the youngest and quite the follower at the time. However it was very chaotic at times in my home. My parents were definitely "yellers". Although my parents did the best they could prior to their divorce, at the time there was a lot of dysfunction and chaos. I played sports up until middle school. I was very inconsistent with school. I never finished anything I started; I was notorious for that. I was put on an IEP and into special education classes. At one point my school work declined and never really improved all the way up until dropping out of high school.

My mother was a very private person. Always keeping things under wraps to protect us from unwanted opinion or judgement. She was never really open with her family or friends about my father's addiction and she was the same way when it came to my addiction. No one ever really knew what was really going on in our home. My father is a recovering addict

who got sober when I was about 3 or 4 years old. I have no memories of my father in active addiction and for that I am very grateful.

Holidays were the best. Full of family fun and laughter and old school Italian tradition. My grandparents were the family pillars. They paved the way for the tradition that still exists in my life today. I was saddened when our families started to fall apart. After the passing of my grandparents, affairs, addictions, lies and deceit all came to the surface. I believe these things were already going on but kept a secret to not disappoint my grandparents at the time. They were just so big on loyalty and family.

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

**AM:** When I look back on it, I think my addiction manifested at a much younger age than I realized. I was about 17 when I was full blown addicted and about 14/15 when I was actively seeking things to help soothe myself. I was stealing, cheating, and lying a few years before I ever picked up a drug. Mentally I was heading down the wrong road at a much earlier age than I had realized.

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

**AM:** I dove headfirst into poor choices and decisions. I was in a relationship from 15-years-old to 22-years-old. The relationship was beyond toxic. Although I try not to dwell on the past, I do wonder what my high school experience would have been like had I just focused on myself. I lost a lot of good friends along the way, who really tried to be there for me. I chose the relationship above all other

things. I truly think that was my first drug, the relationship!

I missed out on so much of my high school life. I was ditching friends, missing fun school events, never went to prom or a high school dance. I never even had the thought of applying to college. I was sickly codependent in this relationship. I was first introduced beyond alcohol and marijuana to Percocets, during this relationship. I hated it the first few times I tried it. I got very sick from it. Being the classic follower I was at the time, I fell into the peer pressure of doing what everyone else in my friend group was doing and tried it a few more times. It was at that point I fell in love with the high. It was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. The immediate relief of my own self, my thoughts, my self-opinion and self-respect. None of that mattered, I had arrived, or so I had thought. From that point I was actively seeking that feeling for years to come. Trading my mind, body, and spirit for the drug on a daily basis.

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

**AM:** Believe it or not my path towards recovery this time was really through the pressure of the courts. I had picked up some charges along the way in my addiction. I was eventually put on OCC, which is a drug testing system. You're given a color, you call a phone number daily, if your color is called you go and submit a drug test. I hated it. It made it so hard to hold a job or commit to anything else. Eventually I missed tests or failed tests and was sent back in front of the judge. I was due to get 60-90 days in Framingham. I pleaded with the judge. I told the judge I had called an outpatient program and to give me the chance to do the program before locking me up. The judge shockingly agreed. I couldn't believe I had another shot. I had a huge fear of prison, of detoxing in prison, and even more so I had a huge fear that I would come out even worse than how I went in. I started my outpatient program, I was very shaky and

inconsistent at first but then something changed. I started to open my mind and listen to what the program was trying to teach me. I believe this change was the divine grace of god. Slowly but surely I put one foot in front of the other and started to accumulate some time. It took some time for me to fully commit to the AA fellowship, slowly but surely I got there and I thank god every day for that.

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

**AM:** The AA fellowship and people have helped me maintain my recovery. Most importantly the big man upstairs, my higher power. God has continued to light up the path, giving me direction on a daily basis. I try to keep an open mind and be vigilant and willing. Constantly checking myself, my behavior, my words, my actions and my overall intentions. This has helped me create stability and a sense of peace in my life. Peace is necessary to maintain recovery. I created peace by prayer, meditation, making amends and ridding myself of all the garbage I was holding onto inside.

Going to meetings is a crucial part of my recovery. Raising my hand and sharing things, sometimes deep dark things I would never share anywhere else. To have another member approach you afterwards and let you know they have been through the same thing and provide suggestions as to what helped them and worked for them. This is the definition of "one addict helping another." I have truly grown the most by being active in the AA program.

Another big piece is service work. Giving back to the AA community. Sharing my story, making coffee, showing up to events or giving out my phone number. I believe God only serves us if we are serving others.

**SL:** What advice would you give to someone just beginning their steps towards recovery?

**AM:** Give it an honest shot, no reservations, no excuses, take the suggestions! Find a few great people in the fellowship who are truly living the life you want for yourself. Remember we aren't just trying to tell you the way, we are trying to show you the way.

Be patient with yourself. The self-destruction happened over time so it only makes sense that the reconstruction will indeed take time. Most important, know that redemption is possible, very possible.

