

Shannon's Interview with Julian Abraham

June 30, 2020

The Beginning isn't Easy



SL: Please describe your childhood?

JA: Looking back, my childhood was normal. No one in my family has a substance abuse issue, I don't recall any childhood traumas. I actually had more than I needed and basically everything I wanted. I grew up in a suburb outside of Boston so my experience as a child reflected that. My family instilled good values, respect for others, and education was important. If asked if I could change anything about my childhood, I probably wouldn't.

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

JA: My addiction/alcoholism manifested itself at around age 16. I remember using club drugs at first. I just enjoyed the feeling of getting out of myself, being present. It was the first time I truly remember not worrying about anything going on in my life at all. By that time, I had developed a need for more. I had never thought I was enough and always tried to fix that feeling with outside

things. The best of this, or the newest that. This was the first time I actually internally felt that I was enough. I chased that feeling

SL: How did your addiction progress from there?

JA: My addiction from that point progressed quickly. Before graduating high school, my alcoholism and drug use had developed into a weekend habit of binge drinking and taking whatever was put in front of me. It was fun in the beginning but continued to progress to the point where I had lost all control. I was unable to not pick up, and when I did, I was unable to stop. I began to feel shame and began using to drown out that shame along with any other feeling. I used to not feel. I didn't want to feel happy or sad, I just wanted to feel what I can only describe as a numbness. When something was no longer giving me the effect I wanted, I would switch to something different or combine several substances. In the end, I had done things I never said I would do and it led me to places and points in my life I never thought imaginable.

SL: Can you describe your path towards recovery?

JA: In the end, I was broken. I had pushed every loved one away, I had never thought lower of myself. I had zero hope and I just didn't see any way out. The pain that was dulled by using just wasn't dulled anymore. I locked myself away in a hospital bathroom and tried to end my life with a fatal overdose. Needless to say, I failed in that attempt. I was awoken by a phone call. This call from a loved one was not the usual berating call, but a call showing care and compassion. Something nobody had shown me in a long time, something I believed I didn't deserve from anyone. That was a key moment in starting this road to recovery for me. A small act of kindness saved my life.

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SL: What has helped you maintain your recovery?

JA: After that moment, I checked into detox and stopped doing what I thought was right for me and did basically everything I was told to do. Every decision I have ever made has repeatedly brought me the same results, never better, only worse. I went to further treatment, I joined a 12-Step fellowship, and through that process of finally listening to others, taking their suggestions, and ultimately doing what was uncomfortable for me I have learned more about my true self. I have a network of friends that I can rely on, I am trusted to show up when asked, I am accountable for my actions and see my part in them, good or bad. I am able to help others. I no longer try to control everything in my life, but rather accept things as they come along and have faith that I am where I need to be. I finally live a life where I am consistently present, not worrying about what may or has happened, but doing my best now, moment to moment. Something I chased with alcohol and drugs for a long time.

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

JA: For someone who is just beginning their steps towards recovery I can suggest that you surround yourself with people who have what you want. The beginning isn't easy, but with the support, you can rely on others to give you the hope and strength you need to get through. I didn't need to believe that I could do it, I just need others to believe that I could and to show me a way that worked for them. It was by asking others for help that I was able to build relationships with them, myself, and a power greater. Without which I wouldn't be here.

