

Julie - Protective Factors

Nothings ever perfect but it's much, much better.

I was impressed at your own strength, particularly when you talked about, in the midst of using, deciding not to drive. Where do you think that strength came from for you?

I was just so sick I was afraid that I would hurt my kids, or somebody else's.

I just, I couldn't. I was just scared.

I was really scared about what was happening to me and I, I didn't know what to do about it

And I, I didn't, I didn't know how to look at myself and identify it or even relate to it, I just,

it's all I remembered. It's all how, it's how I remembered living every weekend, every, every other day you know I just, I, I was just so, so used to it as a lifestyle I, and I just, once I started getting really sick, I'd just get sick, and then the blackouts started and I was afraid somebody would hurt me if I went in public and I couldn't remember what happened, you know, there's so many bad people, and then I got afraid to leave my house because I couldn't be trusted and then I didn't think I could take care of my children if I was afraid to leave my house and drive,

how can I say I'm a responsible parent taking care of a young child if I don't trust myself to drive?

But when it's happening to you, you don't have any way of making yourself see it, you need somebody to come and show you that

And that's whenever I needed Sarah to show me that

And to show me in a way that wasn't going to make me and upset and defiant, although I did get defiant eventually, she just really did make me feel like she cared about me.

You talked a lot about what you did to hide it. Do you remember other protective things like not driving that you did during the midst of, of the drinking?

Yeah, I would buy, I would, I would spend two or three times more on “mini’s”, like airport miniatures than get a big bottle so I could count them and I would ration them out because I wouldn’t remember and if I got a fifth I was afraid I would die and that I wouldn’t be able to take care of my kid and if I blacked out I couldn’t take care of my kid so I would spend three or four times more on the mini’s when I would take a cab, so round-trip to the liquor store and then miniatures, I was looking at like 55 bucks and I could have easily got a fifth of vodka for seven or eight dollars and I would buy the individual ones so I could count

And I saw that show “Intervention” and I saw this other lady that drank vodka that did the same thing, and I thought oh, I’m not alone!

That “Intervention” show, I watched that a lot and it is so true about us, I mean it’s just... I think every alcoholic and drug-addicted person that I know, we all watch it!

And we’re all like, we watch it when we’re partying!

I don’t know if we think we’re going to get some help from watching it, I think at one point I thought it might help me! “Oh, I watch ‘Intervention’, I’m okay!” You know! Like going to group or something!

But, I, I did not, I didn’t know how bad I was until I got away from it and it, it scares me, but I’m just thankful that I did have the sense to quit driving.

I did not even know that it had been that many years because my life is just, I got sober all the time, I say got sober and realised I’m old!

But, I, it’s just such, such a blur, you know, it just, you, you just, the days start passing and we don’t even know it unless we have someone shake us and grab us.

Julie - Safety networking

What can we do to, you know, have things to get you out of the house and working together as a couple and a family and doing things.

Bowling wasn't one of them!

But, so I thought well everyone up here's Lutheran, Carl was raised Catholic, I was raised Church of Christ and so they're making me get this network of people, I don't really know anybody, I'm going to have to go up to this church. put on makeup and take a shower and meet somebody and that's what i thought the day I was getting ready, "Well let's go get this done now, I gotta go meet people."

So, I went up and I got it done and I met people and one of them was a babysitter which was able to help me when I went into treatment because Carl works nights, and, but she, I would dodge her, if I was drinking wine and she came by for any reason I was like short, to the point, gotta go phone's ringing, gotta go!

and she is actually one of my best friends now I just talk to her all the time

but I just happen to have a really good group of people at the church

and my pastor at t my class that i took. So I was going to an adult learning religious class during all of this too

and they can't mandate you to go to church, and she didn't like, "You have to go to church, this is what you're doing!", but it was tossed up there, you know , with a lot of other things you could do. 'Date Night' I think was one of them

you know , AA of course was a big one, so uh....

Is Tammy the one you went out in the winter storm and baked cookies with?

No Jennifer.

That was Jennifer.

She's all, "Come on over, it'll be fun!" and I was like, "I guess I'll come." I was like all mean about it. "Okay!", 'cause she like really wanted me over there. It was fun, you know.

Went and... I had to make myself do things at first. I wasn't good at it, you know, there's no beer what are we gonna do?

and I cancelled on a few things and I didn't want to go and I would sit in my house in my dark home and I wouldn't leave and they would make sure that I talked to somebody, you know, "If you don't hear from Julie you call her, find out what's going on, is there a problem?"

and even to this day Jennifer, she's like, "I haven't heard from you in three days, is everything okay?!" and she jokes about it now.

How did you meet Jennifer?

From the church and the school.

She was from the church too? Okay.

What was it like to ask those people to be part of the safety team?

Oh, I hated every minute of it! I was so embarrassed, I didn't want to. I just, everybody up there.

What come into my mind at first was just, "I'm not gonna stay here forever, I've gotta get out of here. I'm gonna cross that State Line as soon as I get these people off of me and I am out of here! I'm just playing to get along, get this done."

So, I kinda thought, "I'll probably never see these people again, let them talk about me, I don't care, I'm shameless at this point, I just need these people to get everybody else off my back, get these State people off of me."

So, and I was just so embarrassed to tell the people up there. I just, I...

and then they would add somebody else onto my list from the church and I was like, "I don't wanna tell them, you know, enough people know what's going on!"

We would have a meeting - didn't we go up there and have a meeting I think? Yeah.

Yep.

and we all sat around the table together for the support network. They made a colouring book of my life I think at one point.

It's, it was just something. I mean I was like these people have something planned for me you know, I just don't know what's gonna be next. It was just overwhelming. Overwhelming.

Carl said on the way over when we all were coming over, he was like, "You should get a t-shirt that says: 'I survived Carver County'."

I was like, I was like talking to ?? your management teacher and he was like, "You know, a lot of people kind of want to leave Carver County when they get done with everything you know", and I'm like, "You know, I wanted to stay but I couldn't find a property that I could afford that was right there but I got as close as I could."

You know I would, I would, I would wear a Carver County t-shirt, I absolutely would.

I just, I've got nothing but good things to say about it. I, I really do, and, and I'm lucky. I think if I was in a different state, you know, maybe Texas or another state I wouldn't have received the help at the time that I needed it and I don't know where I would be right now.

I know I probably wouldn't have my kids. I had already had one of my other daughter live with her father, and I probably wouldn't have these two right now or, who knows what would have happened? I don't know.

If I was to the point of having seizures when I quit drinking it uh...

You know as long as I kept drinking I was fine. It was whenever I had to stop

and with you people coming in and bouncing in and out I couldn't sit there for my meeting.

I would plan it, you know. I knew when you all were coming and I would plan it because we do that. We know when we're gonna do it.

We have an idea all the time, always thinking.

So you described kind of feeling shamed to go and ask...

Oh yes.

...people to be a part of your network.

Yes.

What was it like after you asked them and, I mean, in terms of how did they respond and how did you feel after they responded to your request?

I'm trying to think...

I felt silly and I vaguely remember telling them something like, "Oh it'll all be over soon, so it's just for a short time. Sorry for the inconvenience."

I felt like I was being monitored you know and, an adult babysitter, adult day-care.

i kind of tried to shrug, shrug the Social Workers and the State off as this is something I gotta do for now but I'm really okay and they're kind of going through the motions because it's what they do on paper and it'll be over soon so...

i don't really need anything from it and, I'll be fine with or without it but I've got to do it so thanks for your help.

Is that what, is that what they agreed to do then?

The people...

the people that you asked to be a part of your network.

Oh, no they would tell on me for anything. If I wanted to go somewhere you know, if I wanted to walk by some place. One of them worked at the bank you know in Hamburg and if I wanted to walk up to the ATM machine, if I wanted to take a cab some place you know, to the liquor store or whatever, I would have to find out when she was working because I couldn't walk by you know. It was just like they were all over you know! It was everywhere. I mean that why I'm saying if you give people, they're gonna have network that's not healthy it's not gonna work.

Because, and you know it must be so hard because you're gonna get people that half their friends where they're at, and they're gonna take up for them, you're gonna have your enablers that are not going to be held responsible

and I had people around me who just narc'ed me off, you know, and my fiancé being one of them.

if you can get an insider, you know, a family member especially, somebody that's on the inside that, that can get your foot in the door then you kinda, you know...

But it didn't sound like Carl always narc'ed you off 'cause he talked about times when you were drinking that he had to be aware of it and going along with it at some time.

Most of the time he narc'ed me off. Really every opportunity that I think he got, he did and I would beg him not to and he would actually sneak off and go call her,

from the car.

There was probably times that he didn't for whatever reason. maybe I was able to talk my way past him or try to be nice to get by a bit. It was just done. He was done, you have to put the kids first, and anybody that's responsible, Carl quit drinking years ago,

and he actually started to go to AA when we were in Texas and I wouldn't go. He wouldn't go for himself, he went because of me and I still wouldn't go. We lived at my grandmother's.

But he was just, he was done, he was like, "The babies have to come first, you're an adult, you can take care of yourself, they can't."

you know, so he, he had had it too.

that's what I'm saying if you can find a family member or a friend that's actually worried and heartfelt about it that's going to work with you that's really important because then you've got an insider that's in - that's got their foot in the door already,

and you're not always going to have that unfortunately and if they do have that they're not gonna give it up to you.

they're not gonna say, "Oh, my mom is really on me!" They're gonna be like, "My mom's not healthy" or "I don't want to upset her" you know, "It's inconvenient", "She lives out of state" and maybe she lives around the corner.

The more you talk, the more you're gonna find out and the more we're going to not be able to cover our lies consistently to where we'll eventually get caught lying because nobody's a perfect liar, I don't think.

So what was it like to find out that these short-termers, these networkers, are really long-termers with you? What's that like?

Well it's, it's good, I mean it's neat, it's really neat too because we have a history, we've got that history together. They know all of my issues, they know me for what I am, they helped me at a really bad time in my life and now instead of being embarrassed I consider it like, a history of they were really there for me,

and they, they still are y friends even though they knew I was this louse and you know, really, really in bad shape and they didn't, they didn't treat me like I was afraid they would but I'm sure in some places that it's not gonna be that way, that you're gonna be judged harshly and there's gonna be people that frown on you and that to you look down.

and that, and there are people that do and I'm sure that they don't all say it to my face and I'm sure that I'm aware that it's out there,

but the people that I kept closest to me are the ones that are still around now,

and the ones that didn't come through, well it's evident that they're not around now, but they're acquaintances but not friends.

I remember this whole process Julie being a very long process with the whole network thing

Yes.

but one thing I do remember is at the beginning you were more connected to your out of state people.

Oh, they were far away, sure!

'cause they were far away?

Yeah.

What was something that Michelle and I did to break down that barrier?

You made me have people around me that were local also and you kept on and on and I started out I think with one and then we went to two and three

and before we knew it what we had ten people on our list at one point I think.

I started with the farthest people and the coolest people that I knew, that I'd be like, "Oh, these people are gonna call - tell 'em, you know, 'Oh, you know, she does good most of the time.'" you know and they're like, "Sure, no problem" you know. High school friends, whoever, far, far away.

and then the good ones that I put down, they were out of state. I just simply wouldn't call them when I was buzzed. They don't know, you know, that's what I did.

So, you need to make sure it's something you can check up on and, and you're not always gonna have this and you're gonna have to maybe find another avenue like, something else

to keep them in check and that's when you can always work with probation or any kind of a court order thing or situation.

You know, do drive by's. I think if y'all could do drive by's that would be wonderful. If you y'all would have done drive by's at my house...

I live in the country you know, I would have lived way out there and I was always fearful that I was gonna be in a liquor store and see Sarah driving to the grocery store or something.

You know, I, I, I would see what kind of car she drove when she came over.

Sure, It's a small world you know and you plant these little spies out there and it just makes us paranoid and then the more paranoid we get the worst we mess up.

It just happens. The more pressure you apply, the more...

we're gonna start freaking out.

and then we're really gonna start hanging on to our addiction, what we want. Really gonna try at that point and then you'll start feeling us pushing and then you can, I think you could probably feel it couldn't you?

I started that lie, "I don't know what you're talking about, he's lying, he's mad at me. He's mad at me and he's accusing me of drinking and I wouldn't."

You know, I 'm curious how you got the person at the bank.

Huh?

The person at the bank.

She was the one who that always stopped by when I was sitting out on the lawn drinking beer.

Oh, okay, okay.

Yeah, just a neighbour. A lady riding her bike and walking her dog, and I would just talk to people, anybody.

You know they were absolute strangers, they really were and I incorporated them into my life somehow and it was odd that I, I wanted absolute strangers on my list 'cause they couldn't get to me. You know, I thought these are people that I could avoid.

They're not close. Carl, he was hopeless, he was gonna tell on me. So the farther I could get anybody away the better for me.

Julie – Thankful

...if I didn't have some help I think I would have just kept going down

and it's so scary to think about what would have happened to me if this didn't happen when it did

because I'm not getting any younger and the older I got, the harder it was getting to do something and to make a move

and to still have the ability, to not have lost everything before I made that decision.

I was still to the point of where I, I could say, "Hey, it's not too late."

and, I'm just so thankful. So very thankful and I know my two kids are too. I have a daughter that's 12 now

and she is so thankful. She, we'd talk about it very openly and she asked if she could be on the video and I said, "No, you may not" and she said, "Why? I had to go through it all too!"

So if we were able to talk to Camille today what sorts of things would she tell us about you?

Today, or from the past? About the changes, the changes she sees now.

Oh, she's just happy. She had to watch me get up and I'd have to take her to day-care to go to anger management too. We'd just talk about everything all the time and she's very aware of it,

and she's just doing well with it, just...

I'm sure she's happier. I can't speak for her but I know that things are much better.

Her father had had to come pick her up from my house before in Chaska because I was drinking while she was on vacation. For summer she would have to go home and she would cry.

So, you know, she witnessed quite a bit. She witnessed my first seizure.

That's why she asked if she could be in the videos. She was like, "I was there too, I wanna be on TV!" you know and I'm like, "We're not gonna be on TV!"

Well she, she would of, she would talk to you guys in a second. I mean I...

I would actually have no problem with you guys talking to her if you ever wanted to and I'm, I just, you know, she was like, "I wanna do it! I wanna do it!" and I was like, she's not even here so it wasn't an issue.

Just so you know, my family is, is really happy and my mother is very happy she doesn't have to worry about me any more

and so it's, it's good. Everything is really good right now.