

Stylist Spotlight

Recovering Out Loud: Overcoming Addiction, One Day at a Time

By Dana Berry | May 2, 2023 |

**Editor's Note: This article was originally published in May 2022. In the intervening year, Sport Clips created and offered a sober celebration at their National Huddle in Texas, in May 2023, and will continue with Sober Pros events, making it clear that the party's not over just because you're sober. The sober celebrations are just part of a comprehensive umbrella of assistance the franchise has rolled out this past year that includes 24-7/365 SupportLinc counseling services as well as the team member recognition platform THNKS.*

The story of stylist **Meghan Blanchette**'s life reads like the screenplay of a made-for-tv movie. Growing up in Connecticut, successful in school, acing tests, she began planning for college followed by a business career. But that all changed during her senior year when she made the decision to take her first drink. It may sound dramatic, but she knew she had a family history and says the addiction gene kicked in with that first drink.



"I began to feel comfortable in my own skin when I was intoxicated, I started running with the wrong crowd and soon I WAS the wrong crowd," Blanchette says. "My grades plummeted, and I went from third academically in my class to 73rd."

As her interest in school diminished and her drinking ramped up, one thing that remained constant for Meghan through the early haze of addiction was her love of doing hair. She says from the time she was young she was the one who cut the hair of her dolls and always wanted her own hair dyed pink. In high school, she even started a little business with other friends who did nails and make-up to ready classmates and friends for dances and proms. But as the graduation parties were wrapping up her senior year, her future seemed to be fading. She hadn't applied to a single school. Blanchette's dad intervened and encouraged her to apply for beauty school, and she was accepted.

HITTING BOTTOM

Partying faded the memories of that 1500-hour training year, but she managed to graduate with a 97 on her cosmetology exam and start work in a full-service salon. She says after graduation and getting her license, when she was finally behind the chair - that's when her love of hairstyling really grew. But her addiction took over causing her to be fired from the salon, and soon after she made the decision to move to Boston. Now 21, it was legal for her to drink, and she found herself working in another salon where she stole money to support her addiction. It was also the first time she realized she had a problem.

She began attending 12-step meetings, even twice a week, but says she wasn't ready to stop the addictive behaviors. She was forced to move home. Through what she describes as co-dependency, Blanchette became a "serial dater" and was introduced by a boyfriend to heroin.

"I held it together for short bursts of time," she says. "But I started taking money from co-workers and stealing to support my addiction and found I couldn't stop. I eventually wound up homeless and a full-blown IV heroin addict living in a tent in the woods just a few miles from my mom's house because no one would take me in until I was ready to get help."

"I was in an emotionally abusive relationship and cut off from everyone else I loved, just a shell of a person. My days became about walking around, trying to find ways to get my next fix, and when withdrawal symptoms started kicking in on June 3, 2015, it was on that day that I wanted to die. I found myself stepping into a roadway, hoping to be hit by a car. Something snapped in my mind and caused me to step out of the road, call a detox center and the next morning, I walked an hour to a local emergency room where a ride was waiting for me to take me to get help."

CAME TO BELIEVE

After Blanchette completed the three-month inpatient program, she moved into a halfway house where she was required to find work. She says hairdressing was the love she chose to return to, but she was fearful, thinking being under the influence was what made her work more creative. As it turns out, she says with a laugh, she actually does hair much better sober. It was a [Sport Clips Haircuts](#) store manager who gave her the opportunity to prove it.

"I was honest with my manager and store owner about my situation, and never once did they question me, they believed in me," Blanchette says. "It was a breath of fresh air to get to do men's hair and step away from the chemical services. Cutting is something I've always been good at; I know how to use and manipulate the tools to get the look my clients want."

Blanchette was hired before the new Sport Clips location was ready to open, so her team leader (store owner/franchisee) asked her to market the upcoming store opening. She says she walked each morning to a donut shop near the new store location where she could stay warm and hand out coupons. "I was willing to do anything to help them succeed. I wanted to be a worker among workers, and it changed my life when I was trusted enough to become a keyholder after the location opened."

IN RECOVERY

She proved herself and soon became an assistant manager saying she was affirmed in her decision to finally "show up for my life." Blanchette saved up enough of her earnings to buy a car and was eventually hired to manage a new store her team leader was opening in a nearby community. But her real goal was to become a coach, Sport Clips' term for its professional training team.

A coaching position opened up in 2017 and a former manager, who'd actually fired Blanchette from an earlier job, crossed paths and soon became her biggest supporter. She encouraged her to "go for it," and after an intense interview process, she got the job. "I was nervous traveling with others, but I had been sober for two years and had lots of safe people I could call.

"My biggest challenge was my first Sport Clips National Huddle that was going to be held in Las Vegas," she continues. "So, I put a plan into place to find and hang out with pregnant women...I figured they would be the ones not drinking and going to bed early, and it worked."

A SEMI-COLON INSTEAD OF A PERIOD



As Blanchette continued to succeed in her work with Sport Clips, she set her sites on a new challenge...to try out for the brand's Artistic Team, a select group of stylists chosen to travel the country showcasing the latest curated men's styles on hair show platforms. In 2018, she submitted her video and was disappointed when she wasn't among those chosen. She says she knew in her heart she wasn't ready and that the feedback she got during the process really helped her better prepare the next time she applied. When the 2019 tryouts rolled around, she says she was doing personal work on humility and that she really wanted to get her "ego in check" before trying out again for the team. Fast forward to 2021 when Meghan once again auditioned, and this time was selected for a coveted spot on the Sport Clips Artistic Team.

She recently attended her first National Huddle as a member of that team and was asked to share her story of hope and healing from addiction before a crowd of more than 3,000 gathered in Nashville's Music City Center. She used one but didn't need a script when she shared how the story of her life could have ended with a period, rather it continues much like a sentence with a semi-colon; the symbol she uses to remind herself and others that one's story can continue with a much happier ending.

"I want to recover loudly and remove the stigma of addiction," Meghan says. "After my time on stage I had so many people reach out to me, several have gotten semi-colon tattoos and one store had shirts printed with a semi-colon inside a heart that says 'You Are Enough' for its team members to wear. Even Gordon Logan, the founder and chairman of Sport Clips reached out to me to talk about what the franchise can do as a system to support other team members who may be struggling."

As for what's next in the story of Meghan Blanchette, the one that's continuing beyond the period when it almost ended on that Connecticut roadway, she says she wants to keep spreading the message of hope through her work and eventually public speaking. For right now, she's basking in the love she's receiving, "My cup is pretty full in the most wonderful way."

RESOURCES

If you are dealing with any of these issues or others, Blanchette suggests contacting: Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Hotline - 800-839-1686

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 800-273-8255 Cut It Out – 800-799-SAFE (7233)

Original article hosted and written by Modern Salon available at: <https://www.modernsalon.com/1081712/recovering-out-loud-overcoming-addiction-one-day-at-a-time>