

Chad Evans interview on Wednesday, January 5, 2011, by Jake O'Donnell of Foster's Daily Democrat. (As recalled and written by Chad Evans)

On January 9, 2011, from memory, I captured as much of the interview as I could recall. Questions are not exactly as asked or likely in correct order, but I believe that the general substance of question and answer is correct. Without access to an electronic recording to transcribe exactly, the representation here of a "transcript" tends to sound clearer and more organized than the actual spoken word.

After our initial introduction, I stated to reporter Jake O'Donnell that I was a little nervous, having never spoken to the media before about this case. Prior to incarceration, I was skeptical of innocence claims of others, and would become immediately outraged when I read a headline that started with "Child Killer," believing everything I read. Now, having gone through the process, I know that what you read isn't always complete. It's ironic that what I need now most are people to have an open mind, hopefully spending some time reading the website, because it is all there: the good, the bad and the ugly. (Most people are skeptical but there are studies that show only about 15% of inmates claim innocence.)

1. ***Well, that is a good place to start. It's been nine years. Why come forward and speak to the media now?*** Well, I haven't been sitting idle for 9 years. I've been fighting this conviction in other avenues. I've just never wanted to talk to the media because I didn't believe I'd get fair representation.
2. ***What is it that you want readers to know?*** There is so much that was never told and so much more that was untrue. I loved Cassidy and never maliciously hurt her. I never hit her and never spanked her. Cassidy was loved at our house, just as I believe she was loved while living with Amanda and Jackie Conley, Cassidy's grandmother, in Maine. I understand I have credibility issues having been charged with Cassidy's death. That's why when Morrison asked me if I was still willing to take a lie detection test, I jumped at the opportunity. I took the test and five different professional examiners individually determined that I was telling the truth and that I had nothing to do with Cassidy's death.
3. ***Yeah, I plan to get to the lie detector test in a minute but you have to admit that these tests are not 100% foolproof right?*** No I guess not. But, the fact that I was willing to take one says something. It's likely that we won't know what is 100% truth until we die (with me pointing to heaven). We are always going to have detractors, but I took the test, and it's another vehicle to truth. Lie detection tests were important to the police in 2000. It's part of the record so I think I can share it with you. Cassidy spent her last 5 hours of life with Jeff Marshall. The police asked him if he would take a lie detector test to clear himself. He initially agreed, but on the day of the test, he refused. I'm still the only person in this case to take a test. The bottom line is: I'm willing to do whatever it takes to get to the truth. The granddaddy of all lie detection tests is the brain scan. [Jake nodded his head indicating that he had heard of it, so I don't elaborate on its merits.] This test is very expensive, and from what I understand the most accurate. I'd take it tomorrow if I had the funds.

4. ***There were a lot of stories about bruises. Cassidy getting hit with a ball, something with the trampoline, running into walls with her or hitting a ceiling, etc?*** Well, accidents actually happened. Everything seems so magnified because of Cassidy's death but this doesn't make every act malicious. I had a very low overhang going down the stairs at my home. I had carried Cassidy downstairs on my shoulders 100 times and the morning that she hit her head I had gotten her up for breakfast, let her crawl up on my shoulders and bounded down the stairs. I didn't duck enough and she hit her head. The ball accident on November 8th was completely my fault. I should have never been playing with balls in the house. I had a nightly routine of playing ball with my son. (Numerous people acknowledge this). The evening before Cassidy's death, I had both children alone and Cassidy wasn't acting like her normal self, so I was concerned and didn't want her too far away from me. So I had Cassidy in the room with me while we played ball. It was just one of those freak things. That night was one of those things that I've gone over in my head a million times. I wish I had displayed more common sense. Not only with not throwing that Tee-ball (with Cassidy so close by), but also with Cassidy. It was clear something wasn't exactly right. I had called Jeff several times that evening after picking Cassidy up from him to ask if he had observed anything weird, and if he had done anything to her, etc. I was calling my former wife describing how Cassidy was acting and asking her opinion. I was trying to contact my mom, etc. It has caused great reflection for me because I never realized until then how much my former wife took care of things, (kids' medical needs etc).
5. ***Didn't the medical examiner testify that a ball couldn't have caused those injuries?*** Well, to be clear, we are talking about one spot around Cassidy's eye where the ball hit. Cassidy had several other bruises that had been accounted for to me, but she wasn't covered with bruises the night before she died. Also, only one medical examiner testified to something about the ball hitting Cassidy. It was the State's, (Dr. Margaret Greenwald) and I believe she said that in her opinion it wasn't entirely consistent. I don't believe that Dr. Baden addressed the issue. It's clear from my work with Morrison that the ball issue was very confusing and not explained very well.
6. ***There was some bruising that you did directly cause. Correct?*** I don't believe in spanking or hitting. I didn't do it with my sons and I don't think it teaches kids anything. A big part of discipline for me is obtaining eye contact and explaining something. I could say to my son, "look in daddy's eyes," when he was doing something wrong and he would immediately stop what he was doing and look up. This was difficult for Cassidy. At times, I would hold her cheeks like this to obtain eye contact [I demonstrated holding Cassidy's lower jaw area in the palm of one of my hands to obtain eye to eye contact.] Regretfully, a few times I held her too firmly, or for too long, and it caused several finger tip-sized bruises.

7. ***The prosecutor, Will Delker, has acknowledged that this was a circumstantial case. No eyewitnesses, and no physical proof, yet he claims there was a significant amount of circumstantial evidence against you. What do you say to this?*** Unfortunately, there are cases like this all over the country, and this sounds like a standard response from the prosecutor. This was an emotional case for everyone involved, and the main reason a reinvestigation is needed. If Cassidy was beaten to death, it had to be one of four people responsible. From what I can tell, the bulk of their "evidence" resulted from stories and what they were able to get out of a distraught 18 year old mother, who has admitted since almost immediately after Cassidy's death and their police interviews that she said whatever the police wanted to hear in order to get them to leave her alone. In fact, I had an investigator that met with Amanda in 2007, after she had started a new life and had married a different man, and Amanda emphatically stated that I never hit or spanked Cassidy and she originally told the police many things that were not true, and that they wanted to hear. Amanda is hardly alone in this matter. There is a 2009 Stanford Law Review article by Brandon Garret that showed of 252 people that had been cleared by DNA evidence, 42 had confessed to the crime they could not have committed with vivid detail, often due to psychological pressure placed upon them during police interrogations. Of these 42 people, 17 of them also falsely inculpated others. If a person's desire to tell the police what they wanted to hear is so great that they will make a false confession against themselves, (often to get it "over with"), how much greater are the possibilities that they will share untruths about another person?
8. ***Why did the police zero in on you immediately if you weren't responsible?*** This was such an emotional case for all involved. I've had family and friends in law enforcement and in a large percentage of these types of cases, it is often someone in the household, more often than not the father or father figure. On top of that, I had a domestic assault on my record against my former wife. Even though the two are not synonymous, it's not hard to make the leap, " Hey, if he can be abusive to his spouse why not a child?" The sad part is by leaping so quickly the police likely missed valuable evidence. I was just reading some of the chronology that we've put together for the website of the day Cassidy died, Nov 9, 2000. Within 2 hours of Maine State Police arriving in Kittery they were making statements to Amanda and others that indicated they "knew" it was me who was responsible. Saying things to Amanda such as . . . "When was the last time you saw Chad hurt her? I think you know that he killed your daughter. He beat her to death. I need you to tell me what's been going on. Cassidy deserves that." With the type of abuse the police were alleging happened at my house there would have been some physical proof if true. The police spent hundreds of man hours at my house and found nothing. Conversely, one Maine State Police Officer spent less than 4 hours searching the residence in Kittery where Cassidy spent her last 5 hours of life.
9. ***What was the voice stress lie detection test like? My understanding is that it is one of the latest versions of lie detection available. What types of questions where you asked?*** It was very brutal because I was asked many difficult questions about Cassidy. It's hard to listen and not visualize such terrible things. I was asked questions such as, "Did I ever punch Cassidy?" "Did I kick her?" "Did I cause any injuries that killed her?" "Did I ever cause blunt force trauma?"

10. **What does this DNA that Morrison Bonpasse found mean? Why is it helpful?** First, when you are accused of something, the US Constitution guarantees we have a right to see all evidence against us as well as that which can be helpful. In this instance, it would have opened up an entire line of questioning. Finding blood under every one of Cassidy's fingernails is pretty significant. We could have asked the doctors how the blood got there. Every person that had contact with Cassidy that morning could have been questioned, and certain witnesses statement called in question, etc. In addition, had my attorneys been aware of this evidence, they surely would have requested further testing be done. I bathed Cassidy the night before she died. After her bath I rubbed Johnson & Johnson Baby Lotion over her entire body. I certainly didn't see blood under her fingernails nor did I see bruises all over her body. My roommate, Travis Hunt, didn't see bruises all over, and neither did Amanda when Cassidy was naked, and she changed her diaper the next morning. They both could have been questioned about blood under the fingernails, which may have helped pinpoint where the blood under the nails occurred. In fact, I believe Amanda and I were staring right at Cassidy's fingers when she opened the cereal baggie in the car that morning, because I was in disbelief that she could open it.
11. ***If you didn't kill Cassidy then who?*** I don't know. All I can tell you is that I didn't and this is why a true investigation needs to take place. When Morrison first told me about his Accumulated Accident Theory, I was skeptical, but in the past year we've discovered so much more is known about the body and head injuries in particular. There is an early 2000 study by a Dr. Plunkett that contradicts much of what was known about head injuries in children. For example, a fall of one foot onto a hard surface can kill a child under 2 years old whose head is not fully formed. Such a fall is 50 -100 times more forceful than it is possible to shake a child. Also such a fall can cause a "brain bleed." It is now known that a rebleed can occur with little or no impact. I believe the autopsy showed Cassidy had an older "brain bleed." In the past year, Natasha Richardson died after a freak fall on the snow and more recently it was ruled that a lady died as a result of injuries she sustained in a beating in Atlanta, 14 years earlier. We know of one significant accident that happened at the end of October. Cassidy fell approx 4 feet out of the window of Jeff Marshall's pickup truck and landed on her head in his driveway. It caused two huge eggs on her head. Amanda and I were unaware of it until she returned home nearly 2 days later. We assumed she was suffering from flu-like symptoms, but we clearly should have brought Cassidy to the hospital. It would be a shame to blame someone if it is someday determined that this accidental fall was the cause of Cassidy's death.
12. ***Why did you agree to speak with me?*** This happened in the Seacoast area and this was the paper that gave me what I considered the most biased reporting. Since your paper was the most critical of me. I wanted to start here. I felt the people in the Seacoast deserved to hear the truth and hopefully realize there is so much more to this case then they know.
13. ***The prosecutor, Will Delker, indicated he has not seen anything you've presented yet that would change his mind and is skeptical of your efforts?*** We'll just keep chipping away at this, searching for truth and hoping others come forward. (After thought - does Mr. Delker have any suggestions or items he does consider worthy of his consideration?)
14. ***I've spoken to Morrison a couple of time and he indicated that lie would leave immediately if he ever found any evidence that you were responsible for Cassidy's death. He's still helping a year later and maintains his belief that you are innocent. That must be encouraging?*** Yeah, it is, but it's kind of what I expected, knowing I had nothing to do with Cassidy's death. Actually, from our first communication this is an agreement we've had and I appreciate it. I have expressed a similar view in that after a certain amount of time to review everything, if someone doesn't believe 100% I am wrongly convicted I don't want them working for me.

15. ***What has Morrison brought to this process?*** Leadership, direction, organization, integrity. Morrison has helped me see that media doesn't have to be the enemy and that the people of NH deserve to hear the truth from my lips. I'm a flawed human being who has certainly made mistakes, but had nothing to do with killing Cassidy.
16. ***What has this experience been like for you?*** I think it's been extremely tough on everyone involved. My son has grown-up with a dad in a part-time role. My former wife has had to shoulder additional financial burden. My family has suffered a big loss, as has Amanda's. There is no bigger victim than Cassidy in this, but many suffer. I feel everyone's pain.
17. ***What is it you hope to gain from this effort? Morrison mentioned something about a pardon.*** I don't know enough about a pardon right now. We are looking into it. My understanding is that a pardon forgives you of your sentence, but that doesn't help explain what happened to Cassidy. I'm seeking a reinvestigation. I want to know what happened to Cassidy, if answers can be found. I think others want this too.
18. ***You have committees in Keene and Rochester that believe you are innocent and working to free you. 150 people so far have signed your online petition for reinvestigation. How does all this support make you feel?*** I'm blown away. I'm so thankful that there are some open minded people out there willing to give things a second look. It's kind of embarrassing how close minded I was, prior to incarceration. Hopefully, I'll get a chance in the future to make a difference in people's lives. I hope even more people will be open minded and ask questions when things don't make sense.
19. ***Why didn't you testify at your trial?*** I discussed it with my lawyer, Mark Sisti, and he advised me not to. We didn't believe the State had come close to proving their case. Too many things that didn't make sense. Trials are an adversarial process. Why go against a trained professional prosecutor if they hadn't proved their case? I think we all failed to take into account the emotional impact of Cassidy's death. It's our job to protect our children, and when it appears that we have failed, someone needs to pay.
20. ***If you are granted a retrial would you testify now?*** Absolutely. The jury needs and wants to hear from the person on trial. Judges can say not to infer anything by a defendant not testifying all they want, but that jury is going to wonder what a defendant may be hiding. The jury needs to hear as many facts as possible.
21. ***It seems you have made some strides in the past year but have a ways to go. The governor hasn't responded to your letters yet. What is next?*** Keep digging for truth, compiling facts and getting more and more people involved.
22. ***It seems from Morrison that more evidence may lead to freedom. Is that your ultimate goal?*** Yes. I hope to get all the facts out, for people to see the truth after a reinvestigation, and get home to my family.
23. ***Is there anything else you want to discuss or for our readers to know?*** I think we covered quite a bit of information today, but we can't begin to scratch the surface in one interview. I just hope more open minded people will come forward and ask questions if things don't make sense. The website is full of information and there is a comment section for any questions.

24. ***You had one defense witness. What about all the people that testified against you?*** There was no physical evidence, so all that is left is a collection of different interpretations of the truth. Often something started out with a grain of truth, but by the time it reached the police it morphed into something crazy. Let me give you one example. One day Cassidy was crying hysterically and when that didn't get a response she was looking for, she started banging her head on the floor. Not wanting Cassidy to hurt herself, I picked her up and she started crying so frantically, she was gasping for breath. I became worried and the only thing I could think to do was flick cold water from my fingertips at Cassidy which refocused her attention and helped her breathe. It was similar to something you'd watch on television where a prizefighter gets knocked out and they dump water on him to wake him up. Only, I didn't dump a bucket of water. Instead I flicked a few drops. Amanda stood there and observed the entire situation, aware that I was not hurting Cassidy, only trying to calm her down. Amanda shared this with her sister, Jennifer, who shared it with her boyfriend, Jeff. By the time Jeff relayed it to the police, I was holding Cassidy's head under the faucet. (Is there any wonder why the police thought I was a monster?) There are MANY details in this case like this. Was it the smartest thing in the world to flick water at Cassidy? Probably not, but it's all I could think of at the time to help her - and it worked. It certainly wasn't what it was made out to be to the police or the jury.

25. ***I guess we can finish with a final question. It's been over 9 years. You claim you're innocent, but the jury convicted you. How?*** As I stated earlier, this was an emotional case for everyone. A small child just died. I don't want to disrespect the jury or the process, but they didn't hear all the facts, and many alleged facts they did hear were wrong. This is hardly the first time we've had a miscarriage of justice in this country. The Innocence Project has now had a hand in freeing 265 people who 12 jurors independently believed were guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. What happened to Cassidy was horrible. How can I not feel some responsibility? But there is a big difference between failing Cassidy and killing her. If society said my sentence was going to be 20 years in prison for not having my eyes open and being neglectful, so be it. But 43 years for a murder I didn't commit? How can anyone have peace?

Thank you for your time.