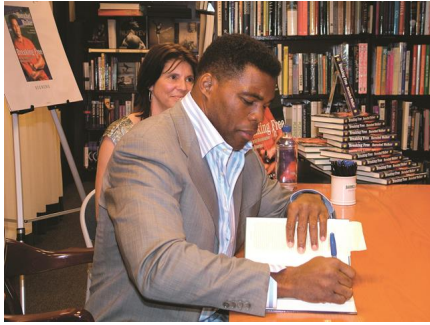


MASK's Dialed In Dad: Herschel Walker

Written by Michelle Jacoby



Check back each week for MASK's Dad Dialed In and Minute with Mom series.

He was an all-American running back at the University of Georgia where he set 10 NCAA records and led the team to a national title. He won the Heisman Trophy in 1982 and went on to sign with the Dallas Cowboys, who he started and ended his career with. He set a single-season professional football rushing record with 2,411 yards and ranks in the National Football League's top 10 for most all-purpose yards of all time. There's no questions Herschel Walker is a sports legend.

But in 2008, Walker revealed the overwhelming challenges he's faced living with dissociative identity disorder (DID), formerly known as multiple personality disorder. In his 2008 memoir "Breaking Free: My Life with Dissociative Identity Disorder," Walker shares stories of what he endured as a child, the self-destructive thoughts he had as an adult, and simply living a life he felt was out of control.

Growing up in Georgia, Walker says he was shy, spoke with a stutter and was larger than most kids his age. He was the victim of relentless bullying up until the eighth grade when he decided to focus on getting fit. His plan worked and he was soon breaking high school sports records and being scouted by college football teams.

Despite is transformation and inevitable success, Walker still tried to cope chaotic feelings in his everyday life. From being the model husband and father one minute, to playing Russian roulette and becoming a danger to himself, Walker's life was anything but stable.

But when he had thoughts of killing someone, which he describes in his book, he realized he needed help. Walker sought treatment and was ultimately diagnosed with DID. There are no drugs to treat the condition, but Walker attributes his successfully dealing with the disorder to therapy.

Dedicated to bringing awareness to DID and helping those living with it, Walker has become active in helping people with mental health issues—especially military members, and service men and women. Today, he is the anti-stigma spokesman for The Freedom Care Program, a specialized mental health and addiction treatment program for service members who are dealing with everything from post-traumatic stress disorder and addiction to sexual trauma and eating disorders.

In 2012, The Freedom Care Program became a part of the Patriot Support Program of Universal Health Services Inc., and Walker's tour has continued with the Patriot Support Program. Since 2008, he has made 62 visits to military installations sharing his story of hope to more than 25,000 troops.