

A Conversation with Daytime TV's Tamron Hall

Written by Kiley Warren

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Broadcast television has had no shortage of drama over the years, whether it be in executive firings at Fox News or a number of pop culture scandals at NBC. Amid the daytime spectacles that incessantly absorbed the news cycle for a brief period of time, the lot of quality, high-profile TV personalities suddenly seemed to be few and far between.

But then that begs the question: what makes a good television host or news anchor? One might believe that the role is best served by someone who can simply carry a level of on-screen professionalism, and who can hold an audience's attention for a fair amount of time. Though I'd argue that the profession demands much more than that.

It takes a certain sort of character to balance wit, charm and warmth all while on television, but it requires a profoundly beautiful and gracious person to seamlessly share those traits with an audience, in a way that breaks down the barrier between an audience and host, and that completely transcends the idea of what is considered to be truly good television. That person is Tamron Hall.

As an accomplished and award-winning journalist and TV host, Hall (TODAY, Deadline: Crime with Tamron Hall) has spent the majority of her career at the forefront of some of the world's most prominent news stories and cultural events. As a new mom, a newlywed and a consistent force within the world of daytime television, Hall is bringing her unparalleled sincerity back to the small screen with her new series, "Tamron Hall." The show, which is executive produced by Bill Geddie and Hall herself, will be broadcast from New York and will feature original content that is both topical and meaningful. For a small time slot each day, viewers will have the chance to connect with Hall and her guests in a substantial, intimate way—regardless of whether you're perched in the live studio audience, or indulging in the fun of TV's new favorite show from the comforts of your home.

Ahead of the series premiere, we had the chance to sit down with Hall to talk with her about motherhood, redefining her destiny, and her refusal to see life as a formula—after all, some of the best things in life happen after you turn 30.



AFM: Going back to what you said earlier about how you're talking about real life things with this show, how hands-on are you in the development of things like content and scripts?

TH: I'm the executive producer of the show, along with Bill Geddie, so I'm very much involved and that's very important to me as a woman, and as a black woman in this business, to have that stamp. It's just not a title for me—to have that responsibility because I earned that from working my whole career and to have this creative process with this phenomenal team, for me, that's the stamp. Much of the show will be about my journey, but the team that I picked and that I'm lucky to have, all of them add something. I won't win because of me; I'll win because of this team. So, I have been very fortunate to have some of the best in this business come in and interview for jobs.

We have assembled people from all parts of this country, who've had journeys. We have someone on our team who's a new, single dad. And some of the ideas he's shared with us about navigating his dating life and navigating his now co-parenting is phenomenal perspective that I would never have. So, to have him on our team and in our pitch meeting, that adds texture. To have my co-executive producer who is one of three women of color to have ever reached that level of daytime executive producer title—she's a child of Jamaican immigrants, she's now a mother of two—to have her texture. To have Bill Geddie, whose been a veteran in this business and who created the view 25 years ago, to have his texture. That's a recipe, and hopefully we're cooking up something really good.

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AFM: You garnered a lot of your success through your work with TODAY—were there any specific lessons that you'd learned from that job that you might like to apply to this role in particular?

TH: Ultimately my role at TODAY was more of news journalist, but it's kind of more infotainment. You have fun, but you're also there for journalism. And it also taught me the appreciation—which I've always had—of the audience. I've been in morning TV before the TODAY Show, local morning TV, for 10 years. And I told people, there's a very special relationship with your morning TV family whose watching you because it's the most vulnerable part of our day. You just woke up, your hair's a mess, your teeth aren't brushed, your kids are screaming, and no one wants to go to school. You're so vulnerable in the morning, that you really don't have time to be phony. It is what it is. And that's a very special bond and that helped me build this relationship with viewers who are still rooting for me to this day. So, that's what I take with me, is how much people view you and accept you as their family. And that's a great responsibility. So, in building this show and building this community, I wanted to keep that same energy of family—a safe space where you can express your fears and you can seek help and inspiration all in one spot.

AFM: So, you have a new TV show, you have a new baby, and you're also recently married. It feels like the culmination of all of these really wonderful things that have just recently come together in your life. What would you say to people who feel daunted or worrisome that their dreams aren't going to come to fruition?

TH: Listen, there's a quote that I read that was attributed to Will Smith—I don't know if it's true or not [laughs]—but it said that the great thing about life is it's like a book. You're following this character and you don't know how it's going to turn out. So, whether it's the desire to be a parent or to get the dream job, or to get married or to not get married, whatever it is—you're ultimately a character in your book and you're watching your life progress. There are unknown variables that are waiting for you, there are victories and there are setbacks. But it's not a formula. We're not Benjamin Button; we don't get to live in reverse. We don't get to script it out. My partners are Disney, but it's not always going to be a Disney ending. For me, I could not have planned any of this. I saw, perhaps, some of it coming because I knew I was going to get back up.

So, it is embracing that, we really don't always have the answer. And I can tell someone to follow exactly the steps that I've done every day, for the 48 years that I've lived, and it'll turn out different. You can't plan it. You can work hard, you can go to school, you can do this and that. You can put all of these things into it, but the ultimate outcome is beyond our control.

But you can enjoy it. You do have some choice and you have free will to enjoy it. You have free will for how you treat people and for how you pursue your goals and your dreams. But how it all plays out? That's the unknown variable. So, you've got to just watch your character.

AFM: You're someone who I have personally admired for years, particularly for your authenticity as a journalist and for the work that you produce. Whether you're discussing your personal life in a magazine spread or you're on-air doing a segment, there's so much sincerity in your deliverance. With that, who do you look up to?

TH: I've obviously had many teachers. But it was also my mother. My mother was a single mom at 19 and my stepfather raised me, so my parents were a great influence in my life. But over the years, when I first saw Lola Johnson on the ABC affiliate in Dallas-Fort Worth; she was the first black woman to anchor the news in the entire state. Seeing her made me aware that it was possible and that I could do it, and that it was in reach. Seeing Diane Sawyer do these amazing interviews and follow in the footsteps of Barbara Walters. Even seeing Oprah Winfrey—all these women in TV, of course it's monumental. For me as a young journalist I saw that, and I know that there are young women who see my life and look at the things that I have accomplished, and will be inspired. And if that is a part of my legacy, I could not be prouder.

"Tamron Hall" premieres Monday, September 9, on ABC15.