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Sherrri Shepherd

Healing and helping people through laughter

By Alexandra Anastasio
Photos courtesy of Damu Malik

From the time she was a young girl, actress, comedian, and TV personality Sherrri Shepherd has been making people laugh. You could even say performing has always been in her blood. From the early days of putting on family talent shows, to performing standup in comedy clubs, Sherrri would eventually take her talents to the screen.

The road to success wasn't always a smooth one, but the TV star credits her faith in guiding her through, even on the darkest of days.

"Truly knowing that God gave me the gift to do this, and knowing He was guiding me in this career, if something didn't happen for me, I knew that it was going to, I just had to be patient, push through, and not let the word "no" hurt me," she explains.

Along with making people laugh, Sherrri is inspiring others when it comes to getting healthy. Diagnosed with diabetes 14 years ago, Sherrri, who also lost her mom to the disease, knew how important it was to live a healthier lifestyle.

She's recently partnered with HealthyWage to drop the "Quarantine 15" many gained this past year as a result of the COVID lockdowns. With an incentive to lose money along with the pounds, participants on the website are essentially betting on themselves, which is just another aspect of the challenge that attracted Sherrri the first time around.

"The only person that will stop you is you," she says. "HealthyWage is aligned with what I believe in and I really like that."

As Sherrri prepares to tackle a brand new weight loss challenge, she's also serving up laughter on shows like, "Call Your Mother" and "Mr. Iglesias," along with her podcast, "Two Funny Mamas," alongside close friend and fellow comedian Kym Whitley. This past summer, the former co-host of "The View" joined Fox's syndicated show, "Dish Nation."

In between filming, Sherrri spoke to BELLA about the work she's doing both professionally and personally, and what she hopes to accomplish in the future.



You've partnered with HealthyWage for a second time to not only lose weight but to inspire others as well. What led you to team up with them again?

I like the folks behind HealthyWage, and something about money being an incentive to lose weight is a big deal. It's like getting an allowance—it drives people a little bit more.

I lost weight with HeathyWage the first time but then COVID hit, and 30 pounds hit during the pandemic. I said to them, 'I want do this again,' and I wanted to really focus on why and how you push through, and they loved it.

You talk about your son Jeffrey being your "why" in your journey to becoming your healthiest self. How does it make you feel knowing you're helping other people find their "why?"

To complete a journey in life, you have to get back to the question of 'Why are you doing it?' and 'What is the purpose?' I think that also applies to weight loss. During those times when you want to give up, you have to look at 'Why did I do this in the first place?'

For me, it helps to keep focusing back on Jeffrey. I lost my mom when she was 41 and I was in my early 20s, and it has affected me even to this day. When I think about who my why is, it's Jeffrey because I don't want him to go through the same experience.

You mentioned participants bet on themselves. Exactly how does the program work?

You set your own weight loss challenge, and you just have to commit to six months. This is what I like—it's not a fast, fad diet. If you can commit yourself to six months, you're setting yourself up to make lifestyle changes. You decide how much weight you want to lose and how much money you want to invest.

For me, I'm trying to lose 15 pounds, so obviously I'm not going to get \$10,000 but I'm going to get something. All the participants who hit the goal they've selected are guaranteed to get a cash prize.

Along with the HealthyWage partnership, you have a lot of exciting projects happening right now, one being the new ABC sitcom, "Call Your Mother." Tell me a little bit about your character.

What I love about this show is number one, Kyra [Sedgwick]. I just love her so much—and the fact that this show has so much heart.



I play the best friend Sharon, kind of no-nonsense. I live in Iowa and she checks back in with me so I can keep her straight in the weird land of LA. Kari [Lazer], our writer, writes brilliantly. The show is funny and very touching and I love that she writes for women in their 50s and what we go through.

What do you love about this particular show?

I love the fact that I'm working. I'm so blessed in this day when you don't know where the next job is coming from. We are grateful to be on the set again and I'm grateful that I can make you laugh for 22 minutes. And I love the people I'm working with—they're all so kind, and we have a good time.

You also star in the Netflix original comedy series, "Mr. Iglesias," in the role of Principal Madison. The show delivers comedy but also touches upon important, relatable issues. What do you hope viewers take away from the show?

I love Gabriel [Iglesias]; we've known each other for 20 years from when we were doing standup. Neither of us had any money, and he would give me a ride home from gigs in a car that sounded like bullets were coming out of the exhaust pipe because they had repossessed

my car. So to see where he is now—I'm so proud of my friend and so thankful he asked me to do the role.

This is another show where the family can sit down together and watch it. It makes you think but it makes you laugh as well. I admire everybody I work with, and I love those kids—they are my babies. It's a family show, but it feels like a family on that show.

Last summer you became one the newest co-hosts of Fox's "Dish Nation." How does it feel to be back in that type of setting?

I love "Dish Nation" so much and I get to shoot that one from my house. When I was on "The View," the ladies weren't really into pop culture, and I am a pop culture junkie! This is a gig where I sign on and laugh non-stop. That's why it's been on for 10 seasons—people love the banter and that we're so familiar with each other.

What lessons did you take away from your eight years on "The View"?

I think learning how to talk, because on "Dish Nation" there are eight of us talking all at one time. [There are] seven people in your ear at the same time, laughing, and to sort through all of that and get your opinion out, Barbara [Walters] taught me how to do that with four women sitting

at a table. I used to sit at the table and wait for everyone to quiet so I could get in my opinion; Barbara told me I'll never get my opinion out [that way].

I've learned to find my air space and get in there, be more proactive instead of waiting. And the second thing is I've learned to work with other people, be a team player. Kindness is really important to me and everyone practiced that on the show. Barbara was hard on me, but she was kind to me, and I think I bring that to "Dish Nation."

What led you and Kym to create the podcast, "Two Funny Mamas?"

We've been besties since we were both struggling comics. We lived across the street from each other, and would keep getting eviction notices together. We were on the "Tom Joyner Morning Show" for four years and were fan favorites. I said to Kym, 'We need to do a podcast, we love to talk. Let's just do it for us.'

We're going through so much in the world—people are fighting depression, they're tired, they're sex-starved (...me!) and I think laughter is sorely needed. Someone on my Instagram said to me, 'You're too silly, you're not serious enough...God help us all if I can't be silly and sit down and laugh. Connection is important, however you can make it, and if people can connect through Kym and I, shoot, I'm so happy!'

You've accomplished so much in your career. Is there something you'd like to do but haven't yet?

I'd like to have my own talk show, "The Sherri Shepherd Show." I hosted "The Wendy Williams Show" for two days, and I'm addicted. I would like to do a drama, and create my own comedy—my own sitcom. And I'm going to be in a relationship in 2021, it's going to be a good one!

