

Talking the Walk

After heart trouble nearly claimed his life, FOX News Radio host Todd Starnes.

From the time he was a kid, Todd Starnes wanted to be a journalist. At 13 he became the staff cartoonist for a small weekly paper outside New Orleans where his family lived.

His journalism career eventually led him to the West Coast, where he became a news anchor and senior reporter for KFBK in Sacramento, Calif.

It had been a whirlwind ride for Starnes. Everything was falling into place.

Except for one minor detail. Starnes was dying. Only he didn't know it.

"Over a period of a couple of years I'd been putting on weight," Starnes, 38, says, adding that at 300 pounds in May 2005 he carried twice the weight his body should have been supporting.

"I was covering a hostage standoff at a hotel in Sacramento, and I came down with a bad cough—so bad that I headed to the emergency room.

"There they found that my heart was enlarged, and my aortic valve, the main one, was beginning to close up. As a result my heart wasn't getting enough blood."

Imminent death was the furthest thing from Starnes' mind. Sensing a story, Starnes' news director at KFBK approached him with the idea that he put together an audio journal of his experience.

Starnes was up-front with the station.

"I told them that if I did the audio journal that my faith would be a big part of it," he says.

It was agreed to, and Starnes started recording. After his recovery, things started to really change.

First, he began walking to get in shape and lose weight. Next, he started working for FOX News Radio in New York City, where he serves as an overnight news anchor.

His audio journal turned into a 10-episode series that fetched the 2006 Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Journalism and the 2006 Associated Press Mark Twain Award.

"I got a lot of e-mail from people who listened to the series and were encouraged that I relied on my faith while going through a crisis," Starnes says.

These days he isn't merely exercising—he walks to and from work, jogs and works out. He's even a marathon runner and finished the New York City Marathon last November.

He has been able to shave off more than 100 pounds after his surgery. But he still has about 40 more to lose, he says.

"Our bodies are truly the temples of God," Starnes says, adding that his downfall came by being undisciplined with food—a common thing among men. "We have to work hard and watch what we eat. I was addicted to fried foods. ... God's given me a second chance."

Starnes' advice? Don't wait for your health to take a downturn. Act now.

“If you’re at risk for having a stroke, getting diabetes, or other health issues, see your doctor,” he says. “You don’t have to live like a monk. Eat a cheeseburger every now and then. Just be sensible about it.

“I’m the Adam Sandler of the running world,” Starnes adds, laughing.

“I mean, it took me seven hours and 43 minutes to finish my first marathon; just behind the street sweepers.

“It wasn’t pretty. I walked it, and I ran it, I think I even crawled—but I finished the 26.2 miles.”

That’s the key, he says. Never give up.

Check out Todd Starnes’ blogs at [toddjames](http://toddjames.com) .