

AUGUST 2021

Today's Mental Health Magazine

RENEWED AWARENESS

Memory
101

*The 7 Types
of Rest*

Wisdom
&
Inspiration
from
**Derrick
Gordon**





From Jersey
to Germany:
**Blazing a
New Trail**

written by Nick Romano

"You are loved at the end of the day, even if you don't feel that or believe that you are loved. Just keep fighting, just keep staying positive."

Derrick Gordon

Professional Basketball Player

Römerstrom Gladiators Trier

Derrick Gordon is a professional basketball player and a former Division 1 NCAA basketball star from Seton Hall University.

Derrick's success on the court led him to become the first and only Division 1 'baller' to make the NCAA Tournament with three different universities; Seton Hall University, Western Kentucky University, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. From playing the game he loves at the bright lights of Madison Square Garden in New York City to Cyprus and now, Germany, there is not much on the hardwood that Derrick Gordon has not already accomplished.

Derrick is a trailblazer away from the court and tells an amazing story of inspiration and motivation. He is proof that it is worth pushing through obstacles because of what wonderful reality is on the other side: the authentic YOU.

In 2014, Derrick made history as the first openly gay Division 1 basketball player. By giving the authentic version of himself to the world, Derrick continues to inspire people. Derrick spoke with Renewed Awareness to discuss his journey and helps spread awareness about the importance of mental health.

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First things first, how is your mental health today?

"Actually, it's great. When I really started to hit a roadblock with mental health was when the pandemic started. I have never been used to being by myself, but also, I don't mind my own time, I don't mind being by myself. I think, as time went on, months, and months at a time, that's when things really started to affect me. But one of the reasons why it was affecting me was because I've just gotten back into basketball last year. So I haven't played for three years. That process of trying to find a team and a country to go to, it was probably one of the most stressful and hardest things I've ever been through.

And I've never experienced anxiety until then. I still go through anxiety 'til today. But that was probably one of the hardest things I went through like it, it puts your mind in some very dark places where your mind should never go. But in a sense, I got a glimpse of what people actually go through."

What are some of the techniques that help you better manage your anxiety?

"Now I'm able to deal with my anxiety because I meditate a lot. I've been meditating for the past three years, even before anxiety was a thing in my life."

"I think you should never try to deal with it by yourself. Because you'll never fix anything, if you try to deal with it by yourself; you have to talk to people. Talk to people who you can trust and where you can vent. Whether it's your mom, dad, or friends, talking to others helped me a lot. I know everyone is different, but that was just something that helped me."

Can you discuss the similarities between your journey of coming-out in 2014 with how you feel currently as a professional athlete living in foreign country?

"I'm not ashamed to talk about it. A lot of people feel that if they share this information, people are going to look at them differently. First of all, it's not anything that changes who I am. It is something that a lot of people who are close to me go through.

How does talking about mental health make you feel?

"If sharing my story can save that person's life, then I'm happy to do the same thing with mental health. And that was not just for basketball. But ... one of the main reasons why I came on publicly, is because I love helping people. I love helping people find their true selves and to just let them know that it's okay."

Can you tell us your coming-out story? What surprised you the most when you came out in 2014?

"It brings back so many memories and just hearing from so many people, like so many people who I never thought I would hear from, you know, a lot of celebrities, and just a lot of people just being so supportive. It was like, wow, like, I should have done this a long time ago. It took a lot of time for me to do that. Like, it took four years. But if I could, I would do it all over again."



"I'm the only openly gay professional athlete, whether it's in Europe, or the NBA, the only one. So it's even more of a duty for me to let others know that if I can do it, then so can they."


What motivates you through the rigorous training that comes with being a professional athlete?

"My best friend passed on, say, a year and a half ago. He always wanted me to be in the NBA and to play professionally. He just wanted me to play professional basketball. He passed before he could come see me play and everything like that. So he's one of the reasons of why I'm doing what I'm doing. He motivates me every day... motivates me to get in the gym and just work and just not take it. It's important to not take playing too seriously and just go out there and have fun. My community is one of the reasons why I play."

How do you deal with stress before a game?

"What I do is my breathing exercises, which help a lot. One thing I've learned from last year, because it's my first year planning professionally, so you got to carry yourself professionally, you got to make sure you get sleep at night, you got to take care of your body: so many things that go into being a professional.

So it's like, I'm living life right now. I'm happy. I'm doing what I love to do. I get to play basketball at a high level and get paid while doing it. I have nothing to complain about. If it is anxiety, it's just this excitement, you know, the thrill and the love for the game."



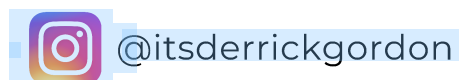
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"There are a lot of moments where you feel that things aren't going your way or there's not anyone that can help you, [and there's] even people who feel like ending their lives. It's not worth it, there's another way."

Lastly, what words of wisdom would you share to a person contemplating coming out?

"Every time I talk about this is such a sensitive topic, it always brings back emotions and what I've been through in the closet and everything... and to see where I'm at now. I just never gave up. There are a lot of moments where you feel that things aren't going your way or there's not anyone that can help you, or even people who feel like ending their lives. It's not worth it, there's another way. I always tell people this: ending your life isn't gonna change anything. You are loved at the end of the day, even if you don't feel that or believe that you are loved. Just keep fighting, just keep staying positive. Because just know that there's light at the end of the tunnel."

To keep up with Derrick:



<https://xn--rmerstrom-gladiators-39b.de/>

"Just keep *fighting*,
just keep staying *positive*.

Because just know that
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