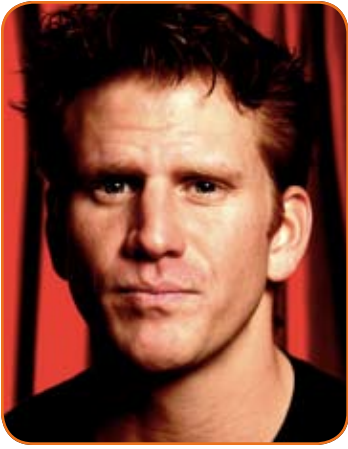


Dash Mihok



The actor Dash (Dashiell) Mihok has appeared in many television shows and films enjoyed by members of the TSA family including: *The Day After Tomorrow*, *Perfect Storm*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Firehouse Dog* and *I Am Legend*. He has also participated in two West Coast Champion of Children Awards Dinners and appeared in TSA's 1989 educational video, "A Guide to Diagnosis."

true. I was open to sharing, but only in certain formats.

It was a good experience. It's always kind of hard to talk about what you're going through and I look at the kids in the recent TSA videos and think they are inspiring. There's an age when sometimes you're open to talk and sometimes not. I was always more open to talking to adults than to other kids. But there was always that classroom meeting when you had to share. That was harder than talking to adults in a video.

TSA: When were you diagnosed?

Dash: I was six. My sisters had already been diagnosed. A very observant teacher, Lucy Rubin, noticed something going on with them and told the principal who had a brother with TS. Once they found out what my two older sisters had, they were watching out for me. All three of us have it. I wasn't alone in it, but each kid is different and I was the boy. It was difficult. I was in the New York City public school system. Kids are not the sweetest anywhere — let alone there. But in New York, if you're flipping out on a subway train, you're flipping out with everybody else.

TSA: How were things at school and at home for you?

Dash: I didn't have to explain it at home, just at school. Both my sisters are older than me. I had it the worst and as a boy my

experiences were different. We all had our own tribulations. I didn't feel like the lone wolf, but sometimes it's hard for other people in the family to see you suffering because it reminds them of what they went through. My parents were watching every day to see if I had it. It broke their hearts but they persevered and dealt with yet another child with TS. My parents are real heroes.

TSA: What do you think of the way the media portrays people with TS and other neurological disorders?

Dash: I have yet to see a portrayal that I could give a thumbs-up. I know it's hard and open to interpretation, but they always use the worst symptoms, violent motor tics and coprolalia, to show what TS is. So I'm not excited by the way TS has been portrayed so far. I'm trying to work on my own project, in order to show what it's really like to live with TS. There's a lot of pain there, but there's also a lot of humor and creativity, too. I haven't seen that yet, just the whooping and hollering sensationalism. But I'm working on it!

TSA: Do you have any advice for kids with TS?

Dash: It's really easy to just say be yourself and don't care what other people say. But I remember as a kid the biggest thing was what other people thought, and now

I'm an actor so I guess I'm into a kind of torture (laughs). So I'd say don't be afraid to tell people about your TS; don't hide it. The stress of hiding it is too much. If you're afraid that people won't understand, then they probably won't be in your life, anyway. Be as open as you can. It takes it off you and alleviates the worst of your TS.

Don't be afraid. You can do anything you want to do. If you think you can, you can. There are top neurosurgeons with TS. The sky is the limit. Don't limit yourself.

TSA: Do you have any stress relief tips for adults with TS?

Dash: Get sleep. The number one stress reliever and tic reliever is a good night's rest. Sleep is the most important, the other is that when something seems utterly stressful and you get all wound up, take a breath and sit back and reinterpret it. Everything is an interpretation. I ask myself how I can look at this differently. Ask, 'what's the worst that can happen?' and it's usually not that bad. Right away, everything opens up and the original problem works itself out.

Oh, and playing a monster was a stress reliever (laughs). Banging my head against a glass wall 600 times trying to get to Will Smith (in *I Am Legend*) — now that relieved stress! ■

Seeking Leadership Nominees

TSA is building a roster of individuals interested in working with us at the national level. If you are interested in submitting a name for this roster, please contact the President at the national TSA office and ask for the form used for submitting recommendations. Ideally, for individuals to be considered for nomination to the TSA Board of Directors, they should have prior experience working directly with national TSA, e.g., by serving on a national TSA committee or working with a TSA project such as the National Conference. If you know of individuals who do not yet have such experience, you are invited to recommend them for participation on a national committee or in other national TSA activities. Contact us at 718-224-2999; fax: 718-279-9596; e-mail: ts@tsa-usa.org.