

## **Amputee puts her best leg forward to empower the masses**

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A simple conversation with Donna R. Walton Ed. D., 49, can turn into a motivational speech. Initially, she is intimidating but that anxiety quickly turns into admiration for her life and her story.

Walton, of Washington, D.C., is a motivational speaker, life coach and the founder of LEGG (Lessons of Empowerment for Achieving Goals and Greatness) Talk - a company with various components with the goal of empowering people. Walton's stature is only enhanced by the fact that she is an amputee; a sign of battles fought and won. At 18, she was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma - a life-threatening form of bone cancer. To keep the cancer from spreading, doctors amputated Walton's left leg above the knee. According to Walton, her life did not end - it began.

"It was now time to focus on living and not dying," she said. With the belief that she was divinely protected, Walton did something that was medically unprecedented - she stopped chemotherapy, a drug treatment used to kill cancer cells which can also harm healthy cells and lead to death.

"If I was going to live, I wanted to live well," she said and added, "Everyday I got courage and belief in myself."

The process of living with her new condition was not an easy road traveled. She had to learn to walk with a prosthetic leg - an artificial limb used to replace a missing body part - and build her self-esteem without the help of a mental health professional.

"[At the time] the psycho-social aspects of disability were not thought about," said Walton. "Since I did not receive that help, I had to create a paradigm of life for myself."

That paradigm included putting education first. She earned a bachelor's degree from American University, a master's degree from Syracuse University and a doctoral degree from George Washington University.

As Walton built her academic portfolio, her self-confidence trailed behind. According to Walton being called "handicap girl" and "cripple girl" and dealing with rejection from men because she was "different" was difficult.

However, these experiences prepared her for the blessings that were yet to come.

Walton does not fit the stereotype of a disabled person - she is very well-spoken, impeccably groomed and fearless.

She is not "handicapped" or "disabled" in any way - she just walks with an artificial leg. Her intelligence and savvy make you forget what she does not have. Instead, you are intrigued by what she does have, a strong spirit.

According to Walton, she has always gravitated to service oriented professions including teaching children with special needs. This was a prelude to creating Dream Reach Win, a company that provided disability awareness and diversity training to government agencies and various corporations.

This was not enough for Walton. Dream Reach Win evolved into her present venture, LEGGTalk. LEGGTalk provides counseling, life coaching, career development in addition to diversity training. Walton also travels across the country as a motivational speaker.

LEGGTalk also offers empowerment salons. These are interactive workshops that address low self-esteem, poor decision-making, and the fear of failure.



According to Walton, she is not married and has not children. She said her life never took that direction.

Walton said she is writing a book called, *What's a Leg Have to Do With It? A Woman's Triumph over Limb Loss*.

For more information about LEGGTalk, visit [www.leggtalk.com](http://www.leggtalk.com).