

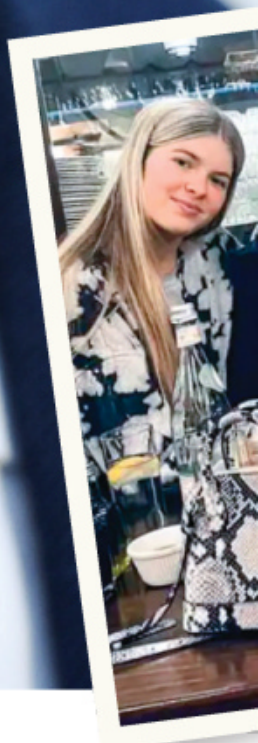
After publicly battling addiction for years, Charlie Sheen decided in 2017 that it was time to fix himself. “I had to go away for a little while, to reprioritize the stuff that matters,” he says. One morning he quit drinking cold turkey. He began working out, eating well and throwing his energy into being a single parent to his twin sons Max and Bob, now 14. (Their mom is his ex-wife Brooke Mueller.) “I’m just thrilled to be in the mix still,” says Sheen, 58, who is making a comeback of sorts with a small role in the Max comedy series *Bookie*, co-created by his old *Two and a Half Men* boss Chuck Lorre. “Most people who lived the way I did aren’t here anymore to continue their own story.”

Born into a family of actors—his father is *The West Wing* star Martin Sheen, 83, and his older brother is ’80s *Breakfast Club* heartthrob Emilio Estevez, 61—Sheen had early success in movies like *Platoon* and *Major League*. But it wasn’t until he took on the role

## CHARLIE SHEEN

# ‘I HAD TO MAKE A RADICAL CHANGE’

AFTER DECADES OF STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION, THE ACTOR IS NOW SIX YEARS SOBER AND LOVING HIS LIFE: ‘I’M JUST THRILLED TO STILL BE HERE’ **By GILLIAN TELLING**





of the delightfully hedonistic Charlie Harper on the sitcom *Two and a Half Men* in 2003 that he became one of Hollywood's most successful stars, earning well over \$1 million per episode at the show's peak. "That television fan base opened up a whole different reality," he says. "My friend used to tell me, 'Buddy, you're popular [with viewers] from age 2 to toothless.'"

As his career took off, his demons took over. He became a tabloid staple for his drunken antics and erratic behavior in interviews. In 2011 he was fired from *Two and a Half Men*. Sheen's personal life wasn't faring better. His marriage to actress Denise Richards, with whom he shares daughters Sami, 19, and Lola, 18, crumbled in 2005, and his subsequent marriage to Mueller ended in 2010 after two years. Following their split, Mueller took out a restraining order against Sheen, and he lost custody of their sons. Then, in 2015, he revealed that he'd tested positive for HIV.

"There's that saying 'It's not about the mistakes you made, but what you learned from them,'" he says. "But I wish I had a good answer for when people ask me, 'What happened?' The thing is, I don't know. The only label that makes sense is that it was a possession. That's not a cop-out. There was definitely a whole mental health component to it too. I got married and divorced twice and had four children while I was making that show. So when I was yelling at [people], I was yelling at the frustrations of just everything that was happening at once, the good and the complicated."

Booze was also a major factor. "I loved drinking in the morning, a little scotch in my coffee," he says. He had a number of wake-up calls, including the time he was unable to drive his daughter to an appointment because he was too drunk, and

## What a *Difference* 20 Years Make

### *Two and a Half Men*

Sheen (with Angus T. Jones, center, and Jon Cryer in 2003) starred on the hit sitcom from 2003 until he was fired in 2011. It ran until 2015 with Ashton Kutcher as Sheen's replacement.

'I felt so bad and sad about the person that treated people like that. It was some alien version of myself'



### *Bookie*

"I was so nervous," Sheen (with Sebastian Maniscalco) says of reuniting with *Two and a Half Men* co-creator Chuck Lorre on the new dark comedy about sports gambling.

one morning he just stopped. "AA and meetings and detox are all great tools, but it's not one size fits all," he says of sobriety. His most useful tool? Memories. "I found it really valuable to keep these three or four or five more horrific drunk memories on a mental mobile, like those things that hang above a baby crib," he says. "It's an instant reminder if I think, 'Oh, having a drink with a buddy is harmless.' Because we get amnesia; we forget. But I decided it was time to refuse to forget."

These days Sheen's life is the opposite of what it once was. Instead of partying all night, he's up at 4:30 or 5 a.m. to work out, answer emails and have quiet time before waking up the boys for their morning routine. "If you can call it a routine," he says with a laugh, noting that they've done well. "Bob actually won a horror-film competition when he was 8, and Max plays guitar, so they're into some cool stuff that isn't just playing Fortnite."

They're also proud of their father. "I think they're grateful they have a dad who's present and responsible," he says. "Nobody misses the other me." And while he's excited to get back to acting, he's not stressing about it. "The stuff that's supposed to happen does when it's supposed to," he says. "Since my priorities have matured, it doesn't take what it used to to make me happy. It's a series of a lot of small things, little victories throughout the day. I'm proud of the choices I've made, knowing I will live a life that will never again look like that other mess." ●

### Not Alone

"My own family never slammed the door on me," says Sheen (with, from left, daughters Lola and Sami and ex Denise Richards in 2021, and twins Max, left, and Bob in 2010). "I've extended that theme to my own children."

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: LIONEL HAHN/PENSKO MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES; E.J. CAMP/CBS/GETTY IMAGES; JOHN JOHNSON/MAX; SHAN/GSI MEDIA