



Message Boards

General Hospital

Interview: Maurice Benard Opens Up About His Memoir, Being Bipolar, Finding Joy & Learning From Sonny



Rande Dawn

About 55 Mins Ago



Image: HarperCollins Publishers

General Hospital actor gets personal about melting down behind the scenes...

For nearly 30 years, Maurice Benard has been known best as *General Hospital's* Sonny Corinthos, the mobster with a moral conscience, a role that's earned him two Daytime Emmys. But fans also know something else about Benard – that he's struggled with bipolarism since his 20s – and that has also become part of Sonny's ongoing

mythos. Now, Benard has written a memoir about both his history in the soaps (he also played *All My Children's* Nico) and how he learned to live with being bipolar in [Nothing General About It: How Love \(and Lithium\) Saved Me On and Off General Hospital](#). He spoke with Soaps.com about Sonny's unique heritage, melting down behind the scenes, and finding joy.

Soaps.com: What's it like in quarantine?

Maurice Benard: Not my favorite thing at all. But you gotta make do with what you got, know what I mean?

Soaps.com: I assume everyone's in the house with you – your wife Paula, your four kids....

Benard: That's the best thing about it, but it can get to you after a while.

Incorporating personal experiences into Sonny

Soaps.com: What's kept you continually interested in playing Sonny, even after 27 years?

Benard: I just like the character. He's cool, unpredictable. Dark, but he's a good guy. When I started playing him, I wanted to turn a bad guy into a good guy, and it just became fun. I always said unless I was bored I wouldn't leave, and it's never gotten boring. And the last two or three years I've been able to do other things – movies, TV movies – so that keeps me alive. Otherwise, I get bored.

More: [Interview, Benard on playing Sonny vs. John Gotti](#)

Soaps.com: It's always tickled me that Sonny has a Greek surname but acts like he's in the Mafia – and has been ably played by someone with Hispanic heritage. How American can you get?

Benard: Right, I know! When I first started playing Sonny, I didn't know if he was half-Greek or half-Cuban or what, I just played him Italian and now everybody thinks he's Italian. [Sonny is in fact of Greek, Irish and Cuban descent.]

Soaps.com: Your own experiences with being bipolar have been incorporated into Sonny. What's the benefit of being able to play your mental struggles on camera – and what are some of the drawbacks?

Benard: The benefit is I don't even have to method act. It's pretty much written right there for you. The drawback is that sometimes stuff can get to you. A storyline can be two or three months [long] and at the end you might start hearing your mom and dad on the set talking.

Soaps.com: That happened to you early on, even though they weren't there, correct?

Benard: I'd taken it a bit too far. So my wife called the producers and said, "You have to cut the story short" and I went home and had a panic attack. I got through it.

More: *Maurice Benard connects with fans through positivity*

Soaps.com: Are you a fan of *Homeland*? On that show, Claire Danes has played a bipolar lead character for eight seasons.

Benard: Yeah, I watched that show just to see her. She draws on so much emotion, but she's done her research. One of my favorite portrayals of bipolarism was Richard Gere in *Mr. Jones*; he was absolutely phenomenal. He got the energy, the fast talking, the emotions. I would have given him an Academy Award.

Reasons for writing memoir and reaction to its completion

Soaps.com: Bipolarism is a major focus of your new memoir. Why write about that now?

Benard: People have been saying I should write a book for years, and I decided to do it. It was hard work, but well worth it. What really hit me was the audio book. I did the audio book, and it was like I was reading somebody else's book – but I was also living in every moment, because that's the kind of actor I am. By the end I was crying and I said, "Wow, this is intense."

Soaps.com: What have you learned from Sonny over the years?

Benard: That it's OK to be a family man, and a good thing to be loyal and protective of your family. Also, it's not good to be so wound up. Two years ago – I can't exactly tell you why it happened – something changed in me and I learned how to find joy. I've always had this thing in my gut that wasn't the greatest thing, and I think that's what made me sometimes angry. But when I found joy, I was like, "Wow, this is amazing." I just felt like what normal people feel.

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Soaps.com: When you were first starting out in acting, what did success look like to you? What does it look like now?

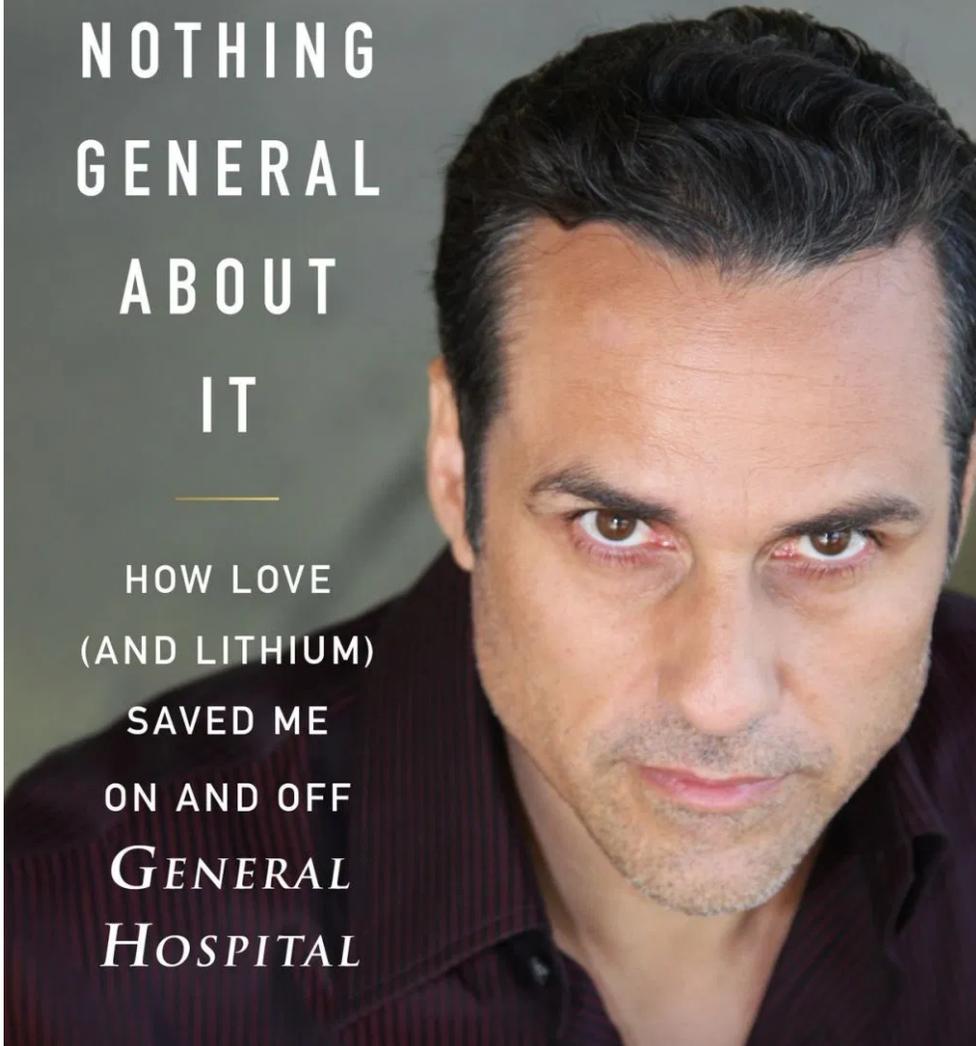
Benard: In my head, I wanted to do movies [early on]. Then my career went a different way, which is fine because *General Hospital* has been like a family to me. I think success now is where I'm at. I've been doing this for a long time. I have a great family, a great wife, a home. I'm good.

MAURICE BENARD

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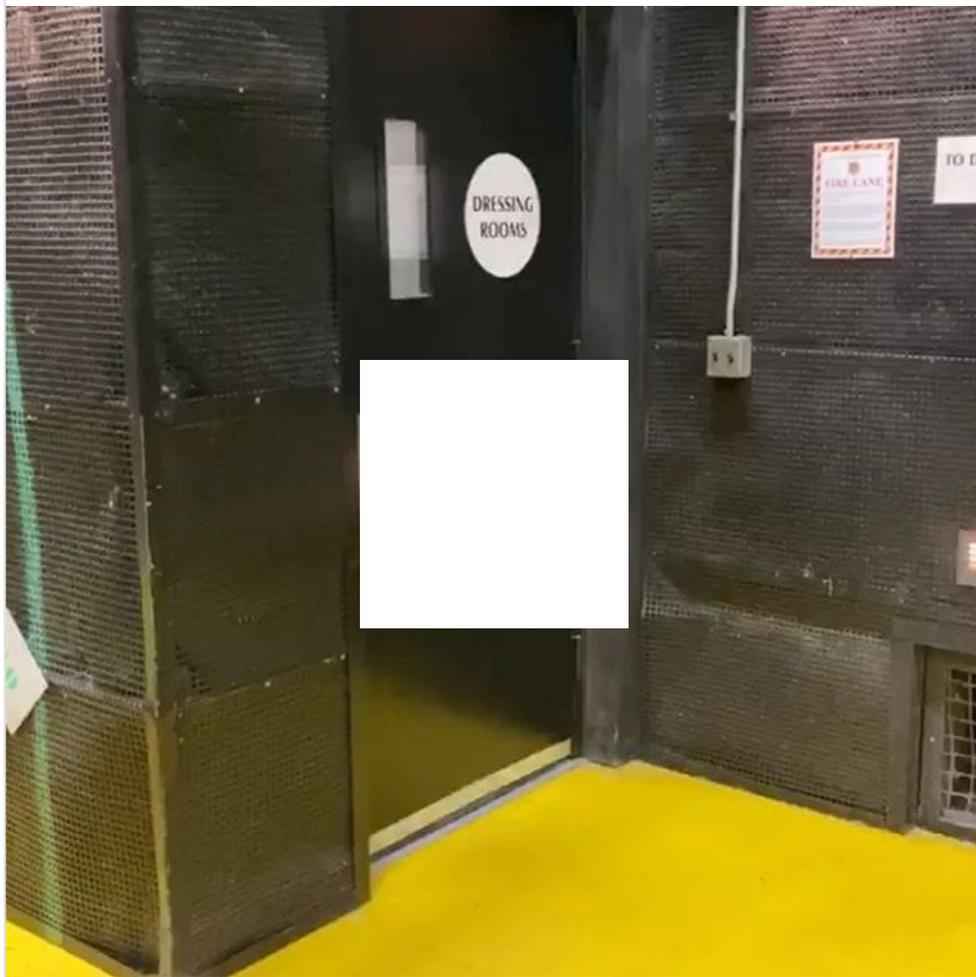
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