

Packer Report

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MY BROTHER'S KEEPER BY HARRY SYDNEY

I'm still coaching

Mentoring program helps others with 'Straight Talk – Sound Direction'

What does a guy who knows he is blessed do to hopefully give back? That's what My Brother's Keeper is all about. So many athletes give money or their name to events or foundations, but since I have neither I give my time and the truth.

Don't get me wrong, I enjoy writing these articles or talking sports on the radio in Green Bay, and enjoy who I am now. But as I look back at my life I realize some of my struggles were self-inflicted. I didn't control the things I could and I worried a lot about things I couldn't control, like most boys and men. We all have a story, which includes abuse, alcohol or drugs and bad decision-making. You name it we've lived it, or at least, I did. I had my share of disappointments, like we all have. I've had failure and wanted to quit on myself many times, especially when doubt surrounded me.

Life growing up was never what it seemed, so like most men, I got lost, but finally got success when I played for the San Francisco 49ers and went to the Super Bowls. At the time, life was bigger and better than I could have imagined. That's when life really got confusing because I thought for years that it was about me, and I forgot it was about what I did and the uniform I wore. The reality of that hit when I retired from football as a player. All of a sudden the noise stopped and I had no clue of who or what I was.

Of course during this time I had gotten a degree from the University of Kansas in Criminology and Juvenile Justice because I wasn't totally stupid. Playing football gave me an opportunity to get a free education and I always envisioned myself self-helping people. I just didn't know when or how. During my years at San Francisco I worked with the mayor at the time, Art Agnos, helping slow do the violence around Candlestick Park where the 49ers play. Rival gangs were attacking each other, which wasn't good for anyone, especially the pocket book. That moment stuck in my head because I

thought I was part of making a difference. I saw young men that were lost and had no dreams and that every day they survived was an extra day of life they didn't count on.

After retiring from football I started coaching. I enjoyed coaching with the Packers, but all good things must come to an end so that other more important things can begin. When Ray Rhodes and his assistants, including myself, were fired after the 1999 season, I had opportunities to take jobs elsewhere, but I realized other things were more important than chasing my dreams.

When I was divorced in 1995 I had to take a look at myself and didn't like what I saw. I really wanted to talk to someone but didn't know who because as a man I didn't want to be judged by someone else. Not only that but who would believe I had problems? I was living every man's dream. How could life be complicated? Let's just say that after my divorce, things changed and I met this woman that made everything make sense to me and we got married.

To be honest, the best thing that happened to me was getting fired because I had to refocus on what was the most important thing to me, which is my family. Trust me, it wasn't easy because I was selfish and she taught me a lot about life and still does. Together we have eight children ranging from 26 to 14 - four boys and 4 girls - so when I left the NFL I realized, as I talked to my boys and their friends, that a lot of young men have no idea about how to deal with life's challenges. So in 2003 we opened My Brother's Keeper Inc. - a male mentoring non-profit 501c 3 organization.

Since 2003 we have worked with more than 1,700 clients and our theme is 'Straight talk-Sound Direction.' We go into the jails, the juvenile detention centers in Green Bay and surrounding areas as well. We work with schools, liaison officers, police departments, public defenders, attorneys and