

ANY QUESTIONS?

# Hoda Kotb

The *Today* show co-host, 57, chats with us about life's little surprises.

**How old were you when you moved to Alexandria?**

Sixth grade. I went to Fort Hunt Middle School, then Stephen Foster, then Fort Hunt High School.

**Where you were homecoming queen, and also chosen to deliver a speech at your class's baccalaureate service!**

I remember being terrified, giving that speech! I was like, *Oh my GOD*. And with homecoming time, there was the head cheerleader, and the head of the drill team—and me. I was the kind of misfit, like, *What is she doing in that group?* My brother was escorting me, and said, “Where do we go when we lose?” And that was our entire conversation. So when they announced [I won]—there’s still a picture of my brother’s face that makes me laugh. He was like, *What?* And I was like, *Huh?* I feel like my whole life has been a series of surprises and shocks. And that was the beginning of many.

**What do you chalk up your unexpected popularity to?**

I feel like I was the kind of person who wanted to be friends with everyone. I liked having friends. And I think I was a good listener. And I also think when you’re not the typical, like, high school beauty type—I had a funny name, and I had funky glasses, and I was a big athlete—I just wasn’t your prototypical beauty, whatever that is. So I think you work on other skills.

**You at least liked the area enough to stick around for college, at Virginia Tech.**

I loved it. We lived on just a regular old street in Alexandria, but we called it the United Nations, because everybody from every home was from somewhere cool. And I remember thinking it was so normal. And I love that. We had just moved from West Virginia, so that was kind of a beautiful surprise. My parents worked for the government, and we did all the things that families do—on the Mall, we’d watch

the fireworks and the Beach Boys. It just seemed like it had the best of the big city in a small town.

**Do you make it back here often?**

My mom’s in Old Town, and my sister’s there, and my brother and his wife ... I come back probably three or four times a year, if not more.

**Any favorite hangouts?**

Old Town is, like, my favorite place on Earth, because there’s a feeling that comes over me when I walk through it. I walk to the farmers’ market and I walk along the Potomac, and think about all the times my mom and I and my family spent there. It just brings back all these kind of fun memories. As for restaurants, we always went to a chain, like the Chart House in Old Town, which I still love. My mom introduced me to Misha’s Coffee in Old Town, which is a favorite. My mom’s like the mayor of Old Town, but she’s really the mayor of Misha’s Coffee. When you go there, my mom is like, “Tom, this is my daughter!”

And sometimes when she’s there without me, she raises her phone and she FaceTimes me.

**As anyone who has seen you perform “Baby Got Back” on *Lip Sync Battle* knows, you clearly have a great sense of humor. Does it come naturally, or is it something you’ve cultivated to survive, when reporting the news every day can be a heavy job?**

I think there’s a part of all of us that just wants to be a kid again, and laugh and feel silly. Real play is so underrated—like, I do it with my kids (Haley, 5, and Hope, 3), and it’s a blast. It’s nice to realize, *Hey, a big part of me wants to have a great time in life and not be weighted down by all of the things of the world*. I just like to let my freak flag fly. **KELLY KENDALL** 🐘



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