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>> Stan Koutstaal: So, it's my pleasure at this point to welcome Jenna Summerhill.

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>> Jenna Summerhill: Good afternoon. First of all, I'd just like to say thank you so

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much for having me here today. It's been such a blessing to me and my husband as well. We

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have made so many memories the past few days here in Maryland and also traveling to D.C.

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We've taken lots of pictures and seen lots of things that we never would have had the

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opportunity to do so if we hadn't been invited here today, so thank you from the bottom of

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our hearts for that.

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I'm actually from Monroe, Louisiana. It's a small town. I'm 29 years old.

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I'm a mother of two. I should have brought pictures because I love to show them off,

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but I left my phone upstairs, but I have a three-year-old son named Case, and a five-year-old

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son -- he'll actually be six tomorrow. His name is Canon. And they are delightful.

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But growing up, I would say I was at first born being a little different. This is a birthmark,

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and it's been there my whole life. So, looking different as a child was always an obstacle

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that I had to overcome. I know everyone looks differently, but when you have something that

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really sets you apart, it can be difficult at times because kids can really be cruel.

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But also growing up I was always chubby. I was always the fat kid, so having a birthmark

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and being overweight was a little overwhelming at times, so I would say my self-esteem was

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not always what it needed to be.

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I come from a great family, a great support system. I have wonderful family morals and

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values and was taught right from wrong and to do the right things; but I say I'm a bit

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hard-headed; and as we all know, even though our mothers taught us that the stove was hot,

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we still had to test it out for ourselves. Five months after graduating high school,

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I began a relationship with a man that was 13 years older than me. I was very gullible,

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low self-esteem, extremely overweight at this point, and he showed me a little attention

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and it was nice for someone to -- that I thought -- cared about me.

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This relationship would continue for four years. He was a very manipulative person.
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More so emotionally abusive than physically. But he really made me feel like I wasn't worth
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anything. After four years of that, it kind of got old. I wasn't going anywhere. I was
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working a minimum wage, dead-end job that I knew would never get me anywhere; and so
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I decided that I was going to show him: I was going to be somebody. I was going to lose
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weight, and I was going to make someone out of myself, and make my parents proud because
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they deserved that for what they had done for me growing up through a wonderful childhood,
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never needing for anything. They deserved a better daughter than what I was, so I decided
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that the relationship was over with him. I began to lose weight. I lost weight very drastically;
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and after losing about 60 pounds, I found out I was pregnant.
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I moved back home with my parents. My parents are very encouraging. I got a job at a law
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firm. Bottom of the totem pole, doing everything no one else wanted to do, but I was proud
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to do it because I had a job. But after working there for five years, I built myself up. I
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proved myself, I learned, and I became a supervisor there. And so one of the girls that I was
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over, her name was Misty, and I had been single for a while now, really just was focusing
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on my son, and just wanting to do what was best for him. I knew that he was everything
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to me and I would do anything to give him the life I had. He deserved it. And so anyway,
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Misty came to me one day and she said her boyfriend works at a company and she said
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Brent knows this guy and he's super super nice, just as nice as you and I think you
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all would be a perfect match.
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But that Friday, Matt knocked on my parents' door. He introduced himself. Well, my little
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boy was very, very shy. He was 18 months old at the time, and he wouldn't have anything
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to do with anyone except Mama, Nene and Poppi. But when Matt opened the door, he jumped
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into his arms, gave him a hug and a kiss, and he wouldn't let him leave. And so my mom
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kept him that night and we went on a date, and we've been together ever since.
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So we were engaged three months after meeting and married six months after that. And then
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the following May we had a baby boy named Case. And he is now three years old. And so
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when Case was six months old, he was hospitalized with a rotavirus. And seeing the nurses
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care of him was just unbelievable. They just cared for him like he was their own. And they
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loved him as much as I did, and you could see that. And there were so many things that
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they had to teach me to do because they had anywhere from seven to ten other patients,
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and they definitely couldn't be in the room at all times. And taking care of him, and
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making sure he didn't pull his IV out, and just caring for him, it just blew my mind.
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And it was definitely something that at that point I decided that I could do. I just felt
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called to it.
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I went to the Workforce Investment Board and I filled out my application, and it was actually
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the day before the deadline. And so the next day Miss Alice called me, who would become
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a very good friend of mine and like family to me. But she called me and had an interview
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and it worked out. And I got focused. And it was more than a paycheck, and it was more
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than daycare. She became family to me.
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So, at the end of the day I want all of you to know that it's not just a job. That everything
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you say, and everything you do, and all the support you give, it means so much to us.
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Even though I had family support, and I have so many people in my life that love and support
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me, there are so many people that don't. And we care about y'all just as much as y'all
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care about us. And so just know that y'all are making a difference.
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And I graduated second of my class with a 3.8 in honors classes. I also received the
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Clinical Award, which is an award that is given to only one person for the most outstanding
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person in their clinical experience. I have been a nurse, full-time, since July of this
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year, and I received the Employee of the Month Award in October 2013, so that was such an
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honor as well.
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So I would just have to say that God has blessed me in so many ways. I'm not finished.