



JONATHAN CONYERS

AUTHOR

SOMETIMES I LOOKED FOR [FAILURE] BECAUSE I KNEW I [COULD] LEARN LESSONS, THAT I [COULD] BECOME BETTER."

Jonathan's upbringing wasn't like most; he had a difficult childhood and became a father in high school. Despite these obstacles, he graduated college and loves his job as a respiratory therapist. Along the way, he found another passion: sharing his story with the world. He is now an author of his memoir, *I Wasn't Supposed to Be Here*, which comes out in September 2023.

WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE GENIUS?

"My unique genius is using my personal experiences to uplift and motivate people of all different backgrounds."

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN THIS CAREER?

"I was a father in high school. I needed to know what I wanted to do [because] I had a child to take care of. When I got to college, I knew I was going to be a pharmacist because I had to have my plan right away. Then I started to take some classes. I met with some of my counselors [and] I found out that even in my situation, pharmacy wasn't for me and that was okay. I ended up taking a class in respiratory therapy and I loved respiratory."

I had this amazing [writing] professor. She was like, 'Jonathan, you're an amazing writer—you should minor [in this].' That's when I got interested in writing. After college, I [worked] three days a week and had free time to follow other passions—that's when I started writing more."

"Life is not a straight line. You [try] different majors, you get to meet new people from different walks of life, and you get to figure out what you really want."

IN WHAT WAYS IS YOUR CAREER A PERFECT FIT FOR YOU?

"No matter what I do, I try to make sure I'm giving it 100%. I started to hear from others [things like], 'If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't know this.' It was like wow, I'm helping people. Once I started to realize the impact that I can have, I started to understand that I am where I belong."

WHAT DOES A DAY IN THE LIFE LOOK LIKE?

"I am a coach and a board member of the Brooklyn Debate League [where] we give speech and debate access to kids all throughout New York City. I'm a respiratory therapist who specializes in pediatrics. And I'm the author of *I Wasn't Supposed to Be Here*, which is my memoir that comes out September 5th of 2023."

WHAT SKILLS DOES IT TAKE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN YOUR JOB?

"It's not just about the stars aligning, it's me being open to the stars aligning. It's me saying 'yes' to certain opportunities."

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU KNEW WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER?

"A lot of times people think [when] you share your story or you tell the truth about things that you went through, it can show signs of weakness. But the most courageous and the bravest people are the people that ask for help, the people that live in their truth."

I know in high school, I couldn't dream this, but I kept working hard. I didn't put too much pressure on myself. I just went through the process."

"I'm still learning. I'm still growing. That's the true human experience where we have to figure out who we are and what we want to be."

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF ON YOUR JOURNEY?

"My university, Stony Brook, did a campaign called Far Beyond where they highlighted students who go far beyond. I was very fortunate to be selected for it. There was a big poster of me covering the entire library as big as a billboard in Times Square. That kind of changed my life."

WHAT IS THE COOLEST PART OF YOUR JOB? WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB?

"I work with amazing high school students every single day. Being able to give back is invaluable. My book is not about me. My name is on it, but the journey is the people's."

There's a lot of times throughout my life that I had to fight and I had to want it. On the days that I couldn't want it, I had to go to a mentor [or] somebody I cared about. It's not always easy finding those people, but it's necessary."

WHAT IS THE ONE THING THAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR FIELD/JOB?

"Every single individual, I think, has a book in them. My theory is if I can do it, anybody can do it."

WHAT WAS A DEFINING MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE?

"My defining moment was when I graduated [from] Stony Brook University. I worked so hard for it. When I finally figured out what I wanted to do and found my passion, it was a beautiful moment to get that diploma and finally say, 'I did it.'"