

Interview with Stephanie Taylor
Interviewers: Carryne Clements & Andrea Fandetti
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Abstract: Stephanie Taylor is an Assumption College alumna who graduated with her Bachelor's in Psychology and continued her education with the Counseling Psychology graduate program. She now works as a counselor at the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC). She discusses how "middle child syndrome," in conjunction with her family life led her into the field. Kind-hearted, somewhat sarcastic, and overwhelmingly humble, Stephanie reveals the hardships as well as benefits in her job. Her interview is filled with laughter and little stories that allow us to get an in-depth idea of how her life has been thus far. Although she never directly says so, various references to her faith, friends, and family appear to help keep her grounded in a career that can be emotionally and psychologically draining. At 27, Stephanie is fearless, confident, and determined to leave her mark on this world, one small act of love at a time.

CC: Okay, well, we want to get a little background, thanks for coming.

ST: Thanks for having me.

CC: Yeah, welcome back! So, where were you born?

St: Lebanon, New Hampshire

CC: And tell us about your parents

ST: Ah, well, my father's William (___???) Taylor, he was born in '53, two years later my mother was born, Janet Marjorie Dunham. They met in undergrad at Dartmouth and are very disappointed that that's not where I went to college. What else do you want to know about them?

CC: Like your relationship with them...do you guys have a strong relationship?

ST: Ok, so my dad's very much the fifties mentality of a father, you know, provide the food and water and pay the bills that kind of thing and mom did the maternal stuff, the parenting stuff. So I had definitely a lot closer relationship with my mother, just because I spent a lot more time with her than my father, same as now. I'd say out of everyone in the family, my mother and I are closest, including my father and my mother's relationship; we're still closer than that I would say. Even though we spend probably a heck of a lot less time together than my father and her do. So...

CC: Interesting. And where have you lived during your life? Have you always been here?

ST: Well, I was in Lebanon, in the New Hampshire area till I was about two, then my parents moved to Massachusetts, started out in Arlington, MA and then moved up to a little town called Dalton, which is where I lived the rest of my life until college. I came here to Assumption and then I was at Assumption for a year, the first year, and then I transferred out to Emerson in Boston so I lived in Boston for a year and a half. Then I transferred back to Assumption...

ALL: [laughs]

ST: ...back in Worcester, I swear they put something in the water [laughs]. So I was back in Worcester and I remained in Worcester until I graduated from undergrad, at which time I moved to Holden, because I was a live-in nanny. I was a nanny for the last year of undergrad and then the following year I was a live in nanny with the same family for a year more in Holden and then I moved back to Worcester [laughs] shortly after that and then I did grad school here and I've just, I've just been here ever since bopping around somewhere on the west side, moving somewhere each year.

CC: Nice. So where do you live in the city now? Like, in the West Side?

ST: mmhmm, Right near...

CC: I didn't know Worcester had West and East sides...

ST: Oh yeah. Well Park Ave. is like the meridian line of Worcester. Like, if you ever want to know as a single girl where you can and cannot go, [laughs] after dark, if you're by yourself do not go past the Park Ave line at any time unless you are armed with something.

ALL: [laugh]

ST: West Side is pretty much up to Park Ave, its like the Holden side, that Assumption is very much on the West side, it's far far West Side. When you're heading towards Paxton or Holden you're on what's quote end quote the good side. Once you pass Park Ave, it's just-it gets a little dicey [laughs]. Let's just say...

ALL: [laugh]

ST: Just a little dicey

CC: Okay, well you said that something in the water, like what was it that kept you here? Kept you coming back?

ST: [sighs] Well, I actually met, my fiancée, which we won't get into that, but at- in undergrad here, and that was part of the reason I came back. We finished up undergrad here, and ended up staying together for several years and ended up buying a home off of Mill St. on the West Side shortly before we broke up, so...but we're not gonna get into that today! [laughs]

AF & CC: No. [laughs]

CC: Stay on the positive side of things. Well what changes have you seen in Worcester like, since you've been here? Since you've been a college student?

ST: Uh, wow. There used to be something called [laughs], the Worcester Outlets. I don't know if you guys know about this, but the giant parking lot at the end of Major Taylor Boulevard that's currently just used as a parking garage, used to be a pretty boppin' shopping center. Like, all Fifth Ave., like all high end stuff, but the outlet stores? It was the biggest place to shop around. We didn't have the Millbury plaza for example

CC: Yeah

ST: Greendale Mall looks completely different than it used to so that's shopping. Restaurants have changed in the short time I've been here. So much. We didn't have the (____???) group, which is responsible for things like Bocado, which, Bocado, Block 5

which is another Jewel Box, but, but Jewel Box is being moved somewhere else and I don't know, Block 5 is taking back over that building I guess. We didn't have the.. Sole Proprietor was around and then all of a sudden 111 Chophouse popped up and then Via and all of a sudden, ya know, it was the happenin' place to eat. Worcester didn't use to have high-end restaurants like that. It was kind of ghetto actually. And there was a pretty severe line between like, poor and rich, and there was not much intercession between the two. There's also been a lot of cultural changes in the sense that things like have you heard of Start on the Street, it's an Art & Music festival.

AF: Yup

ST: They had it recently, it's out on Park Ave, it's only been in existence for a couple of years so there's an embracing of different things and they're calling it...something woo...oh gosh, it's a whole art movement that's being done in Worcester currently and it has to do with music and the arts and it's like a big deal. There's been a lot of changes that I've seen in just the short time that I've lived in Worcester, so...I don't know if that answers your question...

CC: Yeah, yeah it does. Um, well kind of like, what challenges do you think the city faces or like, what would you change about Worcester, especially cause you went to college here and we go to college here and the whole college scene...

ST: Yeah, there's definitely... Despite the fact that Worcester is a college town, it has a lot of ethnic diversity and it has a lot of cultural roots. Being I mean, if you've seen the little hearts on the corner of all the street signs for Worcester, I don't know if you know what that means...?

CC: No

ST: But, Worcester used to be referred to as the heart of New England it still sometimes is in some circles. It's the second biggest in New England, so it's kind of. It's got a lot of history to it. There's like, oh there's just so many, there's actually been like, later on, a lot more Spanish influence but there's like much older roots like Polish and a lot of, heavy Jewish descent families and like a lot of influence there. There's a lot of Armenian, sorry, not Armenian...Albanian, and Greek as well. And there's just such a mixing pot, but there isn't really um, how do I say this? [pause] Because there's such a clear division between the West and East sides of the city, it creates this like, um, kind of like, I keep thinking of like West Side Story, like it creates like this clear division between the different sides of the city in terms of mentality too. The college kids kind of being the buffer between the two and kind of being like the only thing that's the crossover. Because if you notice, the biggest place to do things like pub crawls, Park Ave. So they

kind of bridge the gap between the two. Just geographically anyway. And then you know, you see a lot of kids will head towards like Main St for places like Irish Times. But generally, based on skin color, they'll end up on one side of Park Ave or the other when they settle down. And I'm no different than the rest I guess. Um, because as a girl, a white girl living by herself I really wouldn't live anywhere besides the West side and that makes me a little snobby, but also just a little bit cautious. So I see that as a major problem for this city in the sense that, I don't know. And it's also a city that's like really broken, you know, its had, if you just step outside of the city lines and go to like, just one town over you'll see a difference in demeanor, people's attitudes, facial expressions, stress levels, and because I work with people one on one in their homes, a lot of the times I deal with anxiety, as a therapist, you know. You, you note the marked change in stressors and what the stressors are when you move outside the city. And common denominators in this city are a lot of people living off the system, a lot of people unable to get off the system, even if they want to. Even more people who are indulging in the system who, know that it's actually financially more feasible for them to stay on it as long as they can. So, that's, that's one of the major issues with the city, doesn't seem to be able to get out of its own way some of the time. And there's a lot of cultural diversity that creates some barriers I think.

CC: Yeah. Hmm, that's really interesting. Well let's get into into your education. We know that you attended school here for grad and undergrad, but what were some challenges you faced in education, in school?

ST: Uh, just, do you mean just graduate and undergrad? Or?

CC: Yeah.

ST: Okay. Uh, hmm... [pauses & chuckles] Assumption has, so okay, for example, my freshman year at Assumption, I was a commuter. At that time, by the end of the time I was at Assumption, the commuting population was less than 3% of Assumption's full community, which, is not a whole heck of a lot. And it was really difficult because you would say things like, you would get to know somebody, you have a class with them, they ask you where you live and you say that you live off campus and the second you say that you commute, the people would just be like, "Oh". That was a challenge [laughs]. It was really difficult to be a part of a community that doesn't really embrace commuters. It wasn't 'till I lived on campus, soph- junior and senior year that I was like, "Okay. Now I really feel like a part of this school." That was a challenge for sure. Assumption has a lot of drinking. I was never into drugs so that saved me a lot but I heard that there's a pretty big drug community here too because when you have a bunch of kids with a lot of money from mommy and daddy and they're living on campus and they don't have a whole heck of a lot of bills what are they gonna spend their money on? So, you know and for a non-Greek affiliated school, we have...I mean, it's referred to in some circles as Consumption College, I'm sure you've heard that at some point or another. So, that's a

challenge. I remember struggling a lot my freshman year here with, with feeling like I was in what I called thirteenth grade. Because it felt like a lot of the kids had come straight out of private, Catholic high schools, hadn't had a lot of opportunity to grow up and that I was fine with because you know, I hadn't really grown up either, I was the same age they were [laughs], but at the same time maybe it was partially because I went home to my parent's house at the end of the night I was able to see it from a different perspective and I don't know, it was really disappointing to see people with a lot of potential and another thing I remember that happened in the *Provocateur* it came out my freshman year was this whole thing about the silent campus because no one would participate in class, no one would raise their hand, no one would talk, and I obviously have no problem talking [laughs] So I'd find myself like leading classes, one after the other and that wasn't because I was a teacher's pet, I just had a lot to say [laughs]. It wasn't like, to impress anybody, it was just like, I had an opinion so I announced it, frequently. And teachers loved that because they were like "Oh I have actually somebody who will respond when I ask a question in class" but, even if I didn't know the answer that well I would try and I'd be like, "Well I think it's blah blah blah" and they'd be like, "Well that's completely wrong, but thank you for your efforts Miss Taylor"

ALL: [laughs]

ST: So, yeah. I don't know. That was definitely a challenge so, ...graduate school was a challenge in and of itself because we were really rigorous. Assumption has a really rigorous program for counseling psychology. It's a really excellent program and it's really well respected in the community which is why I did it, Dr. Doerfler was actually the one who talked me into it because I said that I had wanted to go into Psychology, wanted to get a master's degree, where he thought I should go and he said "If you're gonna stay anywhere in the area, you better come to my program." Okay then. [laughs] So, you know, you have to do a total -- between your practicum and your internship-- eleven hundred hours of unpaid time in addition to a full course load over the course of three semesters and you know, [deep breath] you're working full time. So, at one point, this is pretty fun, I was working full time in residential, which was a struggle on it's own and I was coming here three classes a week and then I was also doing twenty hours at my internship at MSPCC which is where I am currently employed and then uh, I was also doing 15-20 hours for my college professor, her name's Dr. Lyubchik, Amy, she had just had baby twins so we started talking right before she had the babies and so I think it was three or four days after they were born, I started taking care of them (____???) for the first year of their life. So basically, I had an 80 hour commitment a week. But I had Sundays, uh no, I had Saturdays off or Sundays. Sundays off, I don't know. I had one day a week off. Maybe it was Wednesday...Doesn't matter anyway. I had one day that I reserved for homework and every other day I was like, doing 14 hour, 16 hour days generally and that, that's challenging on it's own so, yeah. That would be another challenge.

CC: Wow.

AF: laughter

CC: Wow. [crosses off next question]

ST: I love that every time that you ask me a question, you cancel out the one after it because I think I end up answering it.

CC: [laughing] Sometimes. Well on the positive side of things in education, what support networks and mentoring has been important to you?

ST: It was super helpful and do you mean in terms of this school as well, or?

CC: Yeah, yeah

ST: Ok, when I was doing my internship, my supervisor was ridiculously helpful, my internship supervisor. I don't know what I would have done without Sue. She was basically my rock that whole time cause at the same time I ended up buying a house and I was planning a wedding and then, then we broke up and then I had to find to a place to (___???) and then you know, return the dress and all that other crap. So that was invaluable. Another thing was we had this, especially in grad school, we had this core group of girls, there was like five or six of us that would come over and we would watch 90210 on Tuesday nights [laughs] in my apartment and then afterwards we'd all study for our oral exams together and the oral exam comes at the end of the graduate program for counseling psych and it basically just asks you to remember everything you've learned without notes. And you have to remember the entire history of one client. And you have to talk about all of it within an hour and you have to remember the names of all the people that are influencing all the different theories you're gonna talk about and you're gonna need to know all the titles and subtitles and 1A, 1B, 1 blah blah blah. So, you know, you just have to do this in front of two professors and just pray to God that you remember it. So we were freaking out just a little bit. [makes motion with her fingers] So that was something we used to do every Tuesday. That was a good time. Uh, that was a good support system. I also ended up banding together when I was an undergrad, with a couple of other commuter kids, which was invaluable cause there was like, only two other ones that I could find in the entire freshman class and the three of us were like the Three Musketeers and that was really helpful. Um, other supports...there were friends outside of the school. I had a unique experience because I didn't live on campus freshman year. I'll never know what that's like, to share a bathroom with like forty-five other girls, and maybe guys, and have to walk an entire hallway to go brush my teeth like I never had to do that, it was very nice. I lived at home and then I lived in an apartment

on Beacon Hill and I had everything I wanted , except it was like a shoebox. It was probably one quarter of the size of the room we're in right now [laughs] and two people lived in it. It was insane. So yeah, those were some of the supports. And then, invaluable, I can't forget, was one of my professors. Actually his name is Dr. Nalin Ranasinghe, he's a philosophy professor here now. Under his tutelage I actually learned that I enjoyed education so that was a first for me. He was absolutely invaluable and he's definitely one of my heroes so...

CC: You mentioned that you worked at the MSPCC and (___???) but how did you come into it, did it fall in your lap?

ST: Oh, MSPCC? Let me think about that. How did that come up?

AF: Well do you want to tell us um, what MSPCC is?

ST: Oh sure, [laughs]

AF: I don't know what that is [laughs]

ST: We call it MSPCC; it's much easier to say MSPCC than it is to say the full name which is the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. And that actually got started in the 1800s, it's pre-DCF, formerly DSS, there was no DCF, no DSS, nothing of the sort back in that time and there was a little girl named Mary who had been pulled from her home and was badly beaten and bruised and she'd been really neglected and she was in rough, rough shape and this, this agency pulled her out and said "We don't have anywhere to take her". And actually the MSPCA is the one that pulled her out. MSPCA is the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention Against Cruelty of Animals which, believe it or not superseded cruelty to children! Yeah! Cause we're more interested about animals than kids, it's just I guess, logistically a lot easier to pull an animal from a house, you get a lot less complaints and all that. So, (___???) the child had nowhere to go and this agency said well we need to create something, create a state agency that will put this kid somewhere. Well there was no state agency so this non-profit created itself, called the MSPCC, and found Mary a home to live in. And a year later she you know, you can see the before and after pictures if you want to Google it, and she just is this totally different kid and looks really bright and happy and you know, she was full as opposed to gaunt around the cheeks and had clothes that weren't torn and ripped and dirty and voila! Somewhere around 60s-esque, I don't know, they decided that the idea of just ripping kids out of their houses was really traumatic and they said, "Well, that's not really what we want to do with our agency. We really want to build happy, healthy families." So they started a whole bunch of programs within MSPCC

designed to keep the kids in the home, but fix the home as it is. Providing support before the baby's born, to new mothers, to pregnant mothers, to grandmothers who are taking kids in, to siblings, to individual people. Doing whatever they had to, going into the homes with them, doing daily care, doing twice a week interventions, crisis work, 24 hour hotlines, you know just basically whatever they could provide to hold that family together and keep that family together as best as they could. And so, I don't remember honestly, which is terrible, how MSPCC came up. I think a couple of other people in my graduate program were doing it, a couple of the girls from my study group I think were, and so I just kind of hopped on the bandwagon, called them up and said, "Hey, do you have any more slots?" And they said actually, we have one that opened up and it's for VOCA which is a subdivision of MOVA which is a federal grant where they take money from criminals when they go to court and have to pay court fees? That money gets dumped into a federal bank account, subdivided between states and then moved into state programs like VOCA which is Victims of Crime Assistance, and that provides free mental health care to anyone whose been a victim of a sexual abuse crime so families, kids, etc (___???) So it's criminals directly paying for the therapy for the damage they've caused.

CC & AF: That's awesome, that's great. That is, it's great.

ST: So that's how I became an intern of that program because part of the grant states that you have to have some free care to make up for how much money they've given you so you do that by subsidizing with an intern. So that was the work that I did at MSPCC before I worked for FST. ABC, 123, FBI, CIA [everyone laughs] I get so sick of acronyms!

CC: So what has this work meant to you?

ST: VOCA was incredibly personal, not in the sense that I'd ever been in the position of one of those kids thank God, but it was pretty harrowing, I remember-here's a good story. The very first day I was an intern and that they were gonna have me be a clinician [deep breath], my supervisor was put out on emergency medical leave for uterine or ovarian, ovarian cancer? So she was on emergency medical leave. I come in Monday and she wasn't there and I'd just been hired, ok? So they hadn't had me actually shadow anyone but they had all these clients that were her clients that now needed a therapist. So they just transferred her case load to me. Now she's a very seasoned, incredibly talented person. Three kids of her own, she's in her forties, she's been doing this for twenty years, she's really, really got a good head on her shoulders, amazing, sweet, everyone loves her. I have zero experience [laughs] being a therapist, I've never once, the closest thing I can say I've ever gotten to therapy was being on the other side of it when I was a kid and my parents sent me to some lady cause they thought I was depressed and I hated her and refused to go, so my therapy experience was fairly limited. So I was going in on a wing, a prayer, intuition, and basically pre-diarrheal feelings [laughter]. And so we walk in and

there's this sweet little girl you know and she had all these names out (___???) and she's sitting there and she's talking to me and I made the mistake of doing what I see them do in movies...I said, "So would you like to tell me why you're here today?" HUGE mistake. She proceeds to tell me by getting up, and so this is, just a little background story, this child is seven and for the past four years has been raped and molested by her thirteen year old brother. So she proceeds to get all the dolls in the room and put them in various positions and make them all have sex with each other. Really graphically. And I just sat there and shook and went, "I'm going to hell, I'm going to hell, I'm gonna go to hell, I'm going to hell." [laughs] for about an hour. Traumatized, I just walked out and went, "I quit" but I came back the next day and it was better the next day. Yeah, so. That, yeah. That was probably one of the first, most traumatizing experiences of it, but slowly over time I realized that the clients really started to mean a lot to me, started to get really attached to them, and now if you look at my cubicle, it's just covered in letters and pictures and drawings and cutouts and paper hats and photographs and whatever that kids and families have given me over the years. This one family wrote a poem that like, still makes me cry every time I read it. I don't...just, so much stuff. So it just, it turned out to be like probably the most meaningful thing I've ever really done, I'd say, in my life. Except for maybe church, sorry God.

ALL: laughter

CC: Um, when did you know that you wanted to pursue this career?

ST: Well, I'm not really sure when I made the change but I think I always was a little bit of a therapist to everyone. Mostly to my mother. Being adopted herself and never having and growing up in a time with a woman who was much, much too old to have a newborn and much, much too old to have any understanding of current ways of parenting and being raised by a woman who's even worse than her, my mom never really understood what attachment was, what that faults of you know, being adopted were, and then as a very young child, her parents divorced when she was four, and then it became this awful tussle because her mother was strict Catholic you don't actually get a divorce, you get a separation and you tell everyone you're still married with two separate addresses. She got to be torn apart between two homes for every holiday, birthday, whatever, for the rest of her life, and so she had some severe attachment issues [laughs] and watching my mom, I remember once when I was probably about eleven or twelve we were driving down the road, down, down 85 leaving Dolton and I said something to her and she just looked at me and said it was really shocking her to realize that at forty, or whatever age she was, about that, um, that I was having the same realization that she was at that same age, at twelve. So I was sort of more self aware than my mom, I had kind of outgrown her intellectually and psychologically by the age of twelve. My mom caught up over time, but it took her awhile. Her learning curve was really stunted because of you know, her emotional learning curve, really bright, but emotionally stunted so I think that probably put me in that lane early on and I was also a middle child and my brother

had ADHD and my sister was, I don't know, I feel like today that she's probably Asperger-y. She says that she is, she thinks she is on some level, she's just nuts. And my Dad's like Rainman and my mom has attachment issues so basically I was living inside of a DSM my entire life, [laughs] just waiting for the realization, that I probably wouldn't have ended up anywhere else and I don't think I would've. And, and then, so senior year of high school we took the intro to psych class or general psychology or something like that, my senior year or it was an A&P class, sorry, an AP class not an A&P class, so it was just, really, I was just loving it, like I couldn't eat the book fast enough just shoveling all of it into my brain. I was like, "Finally! Something that explains my crazy life!" So, I think that probably when I was really like, now I want to go and so I did go into Assumption undeclared, but I took all psych classes, I knew I wanted to be a psych major. So...

CC: [laughs]

ST: I don't know, I guess that's my answer.

CC: It's a good answer. [laughs]

ST: [laughs] Thanks.

CC: Um, well you just said you had kind of a crazy family, like lots going on, so how did you balance all the priorities and responsibilities, and roles and then like, your own personal life and you're interests?

ST: Hmm. I don't know. [laughs] I think in my family, being the middle child, it was kind of your job to be the go-between and the person who fixes all the problems or mends them to the best of their ability. There's also usually one designated person in each family who's like, the problem, uh and that's the families way of assigning all their way too difficult to deal with problems to one person and allowing them to bear the burden. My family definitely let me do that for them. Because I think I was the only one who was capable or willing so, I learned early on, I think, how to bear other people's issues and kind of internalize them and make them my own, which is not healthy, but it was just how I managed. As for balance, [deep breath], I've always been a ridiculously bad procrastinator and I become really anxious around deadlines and I'll push them off and find other things that are really important to do, like find a printer cartridge, at a store that's 400 miles away from you know, Staples which was next door to me and I could've gone there but I'd rather take a road trip to Seattle to get it [laughs] because that's clearly the best use of my time when I have a 400 page paper due the next day and studying and that's just, you know so I don't know, I think the best way that I handled it was to

become obsessive for a little while about something and then drop it and move on to the next thing, which also, not healthy, but got the job done!

ALL: [laughs]

ST: So yeah...

CC: Sounds a lot like us

CC& AF: [laughs]

ST: Yeah, I was hoping it would go away after undergrad or grad school. It didn't.

ALL: [laughs]

ST: About that.

CC: Um, are there like, any personal or professional costs of like, the path that you've chosen for yourself?

ST: Mm. Basically working in mental health is subscribing to a life of poverty so there's that. And I have expensive taste so I had to learn how to get what I wanted for far cheaper. Example! [lifts foot to show her shoe] These shoes? Extremely cute? One dollar! Yes, I became a fantastic shopper. [laughs]

CC&AF: [laughs]

ST: So, that was one of the challenges I had to overcome and one of those things that I had to give up, but in a more serious way, it is dangerous, like I said before, it's not necessarily healthy to take on other people's problems. If you're a procrastinator, you're also one who's really good at putting off things that you need to handle on the inside, not just the outside. Like I just noticed while we were talking and I almost threw up that I had a text message on my phone that, that showed up from somebody that I have to deal with and it's a personal problem and I really don't want to. So I've been putting it off so when people ask me "What are you going to do about it?" I say, "I'm just not going to

talk to this person. Ever again.” [laughs] And that will clearly, fix the problem. Crap. He has my number. So, I’m interested to see what that says. So that’s in the back of my mind right now but that’s definitely a cost. Learning to compartmentalize which is very, very, very important if you ever go into the field that I’m in, can I just say, learn to compartmentalize. Don’t take your work home with you, that kind of thing and don’t bring your home to work with you because you’ll be a crappy therapist and you’ll be useless to all of your clients or coworkers or anyone who has to come across your path, unfortunately. When you compartmentalize it can be unhealthy. It can cost you your sanity, so you really need to be careful about how much you let yourself do that. And how accountable you keep yourself for things you’re thinking and feeling, how much pressure you put on yourself, um I try to really like, and it’s partially the procrastination too, but I try to really combat that by doing like, a lot of self care, even if it’s an indulgence of \$1 shoes, letting myself go shopping for something I don’t need for no other reason than because I need the release. Even if it’s not spending money, or like, instead of sitting at my desk doing my homework, I’m sorry, my paperwork, going to the café next door and sitting down with a friend that does not work with me and having coffee and lunch and chatting about something completely unrelated to work for twenty minutes, so.

CC: That’s quite the job

ST: Little bit. Yeah, I mean, like I said I had that kid who pulled knife on himself and the week before he pulled a gun on his dad. He’s eight. You know, had another kid who got whisked off into foster care for no apparent reason other than the stepmother didn’t want her anymore and told us that she dropped her off and said she didn’t want her anymore and DCF was gonna place her somewhere and they didn’t know where she was. I had another kid who was so excited because he was finally getting to go back home to his parents after being pulled out of his parent’s home for neglect and placed with his grandmother for the last four months only to find out because his parents had done drugs, the court had not awarded him that and that day he was not going back to his parents, he was going back to his grandmother’s for an indefinite amount of time. You know, just stuff like that. And then you have kids that like, would literally cling to my leg and be like, “Please take my home with you. Don’t make me go home.” And you have to send them home. So that’s sad.

CC: I’m sorry.

ST: Yeah, I’m fine. Yeah, sometimes it’s really hard.

CC: Are there, are there, benefits? The flip side of the job?

ST: Yeah! Yeah, I wouldn't do it if there wasn't cause that's too stressful. I get up and go to work knowing that something that I do is meaningful and that if I find a way to, in that day, make someone else's life even a miniscule amount better than it was, my day was worth it. Just, you know, I'm like Abigail religiose on you, but like, I'm a Christian, you know, so that's like a really important thing to me too, so there's a spiritual aspect, not like I sit down and talk about God or Jesus or anything like that with my clients, but because I do believe in like, a greater being that has control over things but chooses to make our own mistakes. (___???) Um, if I can in some way like, show some goodness to someone else that I feel like that's doing my job who believes in that as a Christian I guess. And I don't feel like a lot of jobs give you as much flexibility, as much payback as my job does in a non-financial kind of way. The other ones just pay you and I don't get that so instead... [laughs]

CC: Well, you're obviously really involved in community work by the nature of your job um, any other volunteer community work that you've been a part of?

ST: Well, I work with this wonderful agency called the Boys & Girls Club...

CC: Wow!

ST: That's actually set up through MSPCC as well so there's the work there that I've done for actually a few years now. And then, my church actually does a lot of work in the community, we recently.. There was something called Main South Celebrate that happened a little while ago and we ran the entire children's fair which was half of the festival [sighs] it was a big undertaking but it was a lot of fun. We also did Start on the Street, we had a table there and uh, we get involved in that's in the community as much as possible. Um, we have a pro-uh, something called SEEK, which is, it's for a lot of people who don't go to church, who just like wanna ask questions and be around supportive other people, a small group meets at Moynihan's. I'm going there actually tonight, after my, uh after my last client at seven and um, always doing something I mean, like just giving food away, last Christmas we had a professional camera family Photoshop (___???) Christmas presents and a tree and stuff for or for families in the community that we know live in or around Main St. so you know, they get a frame, they get a nice picture (___???) you know, stuff like that. So, there's tons of stuff in the community I feel like every single weekend I get a phone call, there's actually a text message that came after that other one, from my pastor [picks up her phone] Oh God! Who sent me ten? Oh God! [laughs] That should be interesting. [puts phone down] So I'm sure he has 400 other things that he needs to (___???) this week.

ALL: [laughs]

ST: He just had a baby actually so he's been really busy. [Hold out phone to show us a picture] That's her.

CC: Oh, she's beautiful.

ST: Isn't she cute? So, he's a busy man, obviously. [puts phone down] So, lots for the community sure.

CC: Um... [scratches off next three questions]

ST: [laughs]

CC: [laughs] You did them for me, I don't have to.

ST: I try, I try to help.

CC: How were, this is obviously for a women's studies class, how were girls treated when, when you were in school?

ST: Mmm. Depends on the school. Up until fourth grade I went to a private school in Littleton called Emago which is Latin for Image of God. It was a Christian school that believed in spanking. That school is no longer in existence, thank God. Girls had to wear dresses, I would say, strongly encouraged and to this day, I actually will wear dresses over anything else it's just what I feel most comfortable in. Which is very strange, you'd think I'd rebel and like, wear pants all the time but it just became a comfort almost to like, wear a dress. I didn't feel like a girl if I didn't. I noticed especially once high school got started, actually, even in middle school guys always got called on way, way more. It wasn't and I think one of the reasons I grew up to like learning so much was because when I got to Assumption I actually got to talk. It was the first time in school, from kindergarten, through high school that I was ever allowed to talk. I always got yelled at if I talked. (___???) I think that's why I didn't enjoy learning. Um, yeah, that would definitely be a big change in that girls were just not encouraged to speak and if their hands were raised, they were usually just ignored. No matter where you sat in the room. Studies have actually confirmed that that's much more likely that boys get called on at least twice as much as girls. And you'd think the culprits would be men, but actually, female teachers are more likely to call on a boy as well. I don't know

why, maybe because we're a culture that strongly embraces like, machismo, like the idea of the male being dominant. Maybe because we're a culture that really prides itself on focus, purpose driven education and those are attributes that you stereotypically would be applied to a man and not a woman. Women are supposed to be, I don't know, softer, sweeter somehow reserved, quieter, seen and not heard. And those are old, deep seated, ridiculous, attributes that were applied to genders before people had brains a long time ago.

CC & AF: [laughs]

ST: I don't know, when we used dinosaurs to get around. [laughs] I don't know. So yeah.

CC: Kind of based on what you just said, girls not being able to talk, what advice would you give to, to women today, and future generations?

ST: Mm. Speak up. And don't give a crap, if somebody, oh God. [emphatically]Don't care at all [laughs] if somebody looks down on you for it because people tell me all the time, "Oh, you have such a strong personality!" And I'm like, "No, I have one!" [laughs] There's a difference. And I'm quiet and reserved when necessary and I can be quiet for extended periods of time and I can listen really well. I can not talk for an entire hour and just nod my head and listen til someone finishes puking their life on me emotionally. But there's actually nothing wrong with having an opinion, with having a point of view, and with letting other people know what it is and I still struggle with that often because I do want to be a people pleaser and that stems from like, middle child syndrome, therapist syndrome, wanting to just fix everything and make it better and if you can sort of in some way lose yourself to save the rest of the world you'll do it, which is another very big danger of my job. But that's not really what we're meant to do as people, we should be somehow contributing to our community, to our families, to our careers, to whatever it is that we're doing. Don't sell yourselves short. It's just, with the whole glass ceiling thing and women get paid 76 cents on the dollar compared to men, blah blah blah, what it really comes down to is, listen, you could moan and complain about it or you could demand change. And I work with like, all women, my boss actually, ironically is a boy, a man. He's a man, but he's a boy and he has absolutely no concept of how to work with women. It's hilarious. He means well, but everytime we start picking on him he goes, "Am I at home?" Cause he has a daughter about my age and his wife apparently rags on him a good deal, which if I was his wife, I would too.

CC: [laughs]

ST: So he doesn't really know how to work with women. But, I work with all women which can be a challenge in itself, it's a place where I don't feel like I'm a 'less than' I feel like I'm an equal.

CC: Good. Well, what do you do for yourself so that you, you kind of mentioned the therapist syndrome and middle child syndrome, so what do you do for you? You do so much for...

ST: I like to shop. A lot. I you notice that people have what is called like 'love languages' or whatever. I don't know if you've heard that theory but there supposedly like five love languages and I'm not going to remember all of them, but it's like, time spent with someone, words of affirmation, physical touch, gift giving, hmmm... and I don't remember the fifth one, it doesn't matter but one of my love languages is gift giving so ironically one of the things I do for myself is give gifts to others that actually makes me feel better, especially if I can see a positive reaction because of it. Like, a friend recently had a baby and she has nothing in her home, so while she's in the hospital for a week cause she had a C-section, I mean her entire apartment is probably the size of this room, and it's two rooms and it's her and her sister and this newborn child and she's, she comes from nothing. I mean nothing, nothing, nothing just has a bunch of crap piled in boxes in this house, so I bought couch covers and cushions and curtains and baby stuff and I, [picks up the phone to show a picture of the baby] Oh, this is her baby. Her name's Kyra. Yeah so, while she was in the hospital, I redecorated her entire apartment. I made a nursery area and painted like, like wooden letters with the baby's name on it because it was one's you can't find, because it's a name that's uncommon, on purpose, and then got little things like, I went to Christmas Tree Shop and got decorations and like so I you know, started doing stuff like her dishes and unpack and so when she came home it was an inhabitable environment because it wasn't previously like, I don't know what she was planning on doing, but you know, so just her being happy about that, like made my week, you know what I mean, it was just really fun too cause I really like decorating and shopping and I got to do both.

ALL: [laughs]

ST: So, yeah, I mean that's one of the things...

[Side one of the tape ran out. Flipped it over to begin again]

ST: I feel bad for your little fingers that have to type all this.

AF: Yeah

(___???)

ST: What was I gonna say, oh God. [pauses]

CC: How you got to redecorate...

ST: Yeah! But there was something more. Well, it doesn't matter, so, oh gosh, I totally blanked. It doesn't matter so basically it made my week to do that and that was fun. And I definitely, oh yeah! I spend a lot of time with my friends, I spend a lot of time going out, like I go out dancing two nights a week, minimum. [laughs] I do something every single night of the week, I'm always with them, I'm always out, I'm always having fun, I'm always with people so, it's a good time.

CC: [laughs] Um, how do you define success?

ST: Not stereotypically actually. I really could care less about money; obviously I work in human services for a non-profit. [laughs] For me, honestly, it's-it's a lot to do with relationships. A successful person has a lot of good people around and if you want to know a lot about someone, look at who they spend a most of their time with and the people they invest themselves in the most. You know? And I have really awesome friends. I know this. Even if my family's whacked I have good relationships with them. I have a solid relationship with my brother and he's thousands of miles away in Salt Lake City you know and actually (___???) Sorry, you know, it's just, I don't know, I think success is defined by your relationships with others and I mean, that's, that's, kind of a touchy subject with me because I feel like I've been very unsuccessful in the sense that I'm going to be 27 next week and I'm single [deep breath] And...[laughs]

AF: Nothing wrong with that.

ST: You know, it's just, I mean, it's just hard when you've been there, you've gone the whole gamut and you know, gotten steps away from walking down the aisle and you (___???) the dress and you've got your own house together and then to go from that to like absolutely nothing is just a little bit of a, not to say there's been nothing in between, but, (___???) but you know, I think success is yeah, defined as...- Before there was money, before there was finances, before there was Wall St., before there was stocks, before there was three piece suits and power heels and any of that, like before there was

even colleges, there were people. And people communed with one another and had relationships with each other and defined their successes by the sizes of their family, ya know? That was success, when someone had a big family and who had lots of friends around them and I think that that's the core that a lot of people forget about, so...that's what I think.

CC: I like that. [laughs]

ALL: [laughs]

CC: Well I guess my last question... [laughs]

ST: Yay!

CC: Do you feel that you have a legacy? Or, I mean, like you said, you're only 27, do you maybe look forward to having one or is there a goal for one?

ST: Um, legacy, ooh. That's like uh, geez. I don't know if I feel that important. I haven't really done anything crazy or great, like I haven't ever donated an organ but [laughs] I don't know. I don't know there's...- As Mother Theresa kind of said, that you know, that anyone -- Not everyone can do great things, but everyone can do small things with great love. So, if anything I would hope that I will in some way impart somewhere along the lines of someone, great love. And, you know, it doesn't necessarily have to be in the sense of marriage either like it could be a friendship or another relationship or even a client that having actually some positive effect, kind of like... [glances down at the table and points to it] Look at the design of the table here, say this is the effect here, it sort of like ripples outward, see in the wood there? If you have a positive effect on someone, even just in that day, it could be a complete stranger that you happen to be nice to when you're getting your coffee, who's having the worst day ever and you're nice to them and then they're nice to the next customer who's having the worst day ever and then that person is nice to their boss who they were gonna get in a fight with and lose their job over and you know, you might, you never, never, never, know who you're talking to and what effect you might have on them but if you can just at some point know that you were one ripple somewhere along the line of ripples, even if it's just in reaction to someone else's goodness I think that would be part of a much greater legacy, not that I think that I'd have my own, but that I'd be happy to be part of a bigger one.

AF: Wow.

ST: I don't know, if that answers you're question...

AF: Yeah

CC: Yeah, it does.

ST: Phew!

AF: And was there anything else that you wanted to tell us or anything that we might have forgot?

ST: Uh, jeez. That's not a big question or anything.

ALL: [laughs]

ST: No, I just think, I think it's really admirable, this project in general because oral history is kind of like a lost art, a little bit. It used to be that, we know, we didn't really write things down, we talked them out and then were told from story to story. Literacy, as a general rule, hasn't been around all that long and I think it's still 40% of fifth and sixth graders can't read or something like that, some statistic I heard recently it was just like totally appalling and I might be misconstruing it, but it's just like a really galling amount of people that can't read so I think oral history is really, really important, and I think you know, not even just for the people that like, my glory days story or anything like that, but just so that we have something to look back on as a snapshot of time so, yeah, I think it's really good what you guys are doing and I'm happy to be a part of it. And that is all.

ALL: [laughs]

AF: We're happy to have you.

ST: Well thank you. The end.

CC: The end. Thank you.