

Have you ever had a dream that has been hard to reach due to real life circumstances? If the answer is yes, you are not alone. As we try to choose the right path in life, we are guided by situations that force us to compromise in ways we may not have thought we had to. Life is always going to be complicated no matter who you are, difficult decisions will need to be made along the way. How you deal with the situations handed to you shapes the person you are now and the person you will be in the future. At such a young age, Tanya Koran has gone through many obstacles in her life; including a move to Chicago from a small town, a marriage, a son and many other challenges life has thrown in her path. However, she has managed to juggle work, school and a family all while having a dream to one day become a famous fashion designer. Tanya has made many accomplishments as a designer including design job offers, fashion shows, and currently the biggest achievement in her career so far: working with Tavern on Rush in designing the cocktail uniforms. You may ask; "How does she manage being the busy Mom, wife and holding a job?"...

The story of Tanya Koran is one that most people can relate to, whether it is personal or indirect. Koran grew up in the small town of Harvard, IL with high ambitions to move to Chicago to go to school and ultimately become a fashion designer, much like the designers who have inspired her; Donna Karan, Alber Elbaz and Helmut Lang. Her many inspirations have shaped Tanya to be the designer she is today and will help to encourage her designs in the future. Tanya's mother was extremely creative and encouraged her to be inspired by art. When Tanya was going into high school, her mother took Tanya and her portfolio to the Chicago Academy of Art where she was accepted immediately but because she was so young her father did not want her to move to the city. That did not stop Tanya. Because she had learned to sew at the young age of 8, she was able to design both her homecoming and prom dress, sewing them from scratch. Design school was Tanya's destiny.

Tanya Koran is a graduate of the International Academy of Design and Technology. In 2008 she had participated in an Organic Fashion Show that featured designs made using organic cotton and jerseys. At this show, an online company out of Colorado approached her immediately offering Tanya a designer position, which she kindly turned down due to her nonexistent desire to move to Colorado. At Chicago's Fashion Week Tanya represented IADT-Chicago with her wedding dress line that included a silk taffeta gown from her Couture Bridal Collection that won. From there she earned an internship through Macy's Incubator Program, funded by Chicago's former Mayor Daley. She was assigned to a Russian-American designer, Yana German, where she assisted with pattern making, draping, and seam stressing. Koran says of her internship, "This was a great learning experience because I was able to see how hard it was starting off from the beginning and the process in which was needed to make a collection come to life". As you can already tell, Tanya Koran is a very fervent, creative person who is extremely dedicated to her passion in life; fashion.

Since fashion designers are always looking for new inspirations for their design, Tanya has always looked to theatre, dance and art to guide her hand in creating her masterpieces. When Tanya was younger she idolized her Aunt who was in theatre and travelled all over the world. Her Aunt would teach her Broadway songs that Tanya says she will never forget. Tanya is obsessed with ballet and opera, which has a huge impact on her style, in which she uses a lot of lightweight silks for movement and femininity. Tanya also has an appreciation for architecture and structure allowing her to "blend some masculine attributes then combine [a] jacket with a lightweight super feminine draped silk cream or other neutral tops or dresses and to top it off add a pair of pointy toed black stilettos or an edgy boot".

Throughout college, Tanya had worked at Tavern on Rush as a cocktail server. In 2005 Tanya discovered she was pregnant and was faced with the decision to continue to earn her degree while raising a child. The struggles of going to college while pregnant and having the determination to continue after the birth of a child are that of something a passionate, ambitious person would endure. Fortunately that is just the type of person Tanya is and with hard work and dedication she was able to make it manageable. After graduation Tanya was not able to start a career right away. Part of this has to do with the simple fact that she now had a family to support. Managing her current job and a young child leaves little time for her career goals. Yet somehow she makes the most of her time by incorporating her son, Ty, into her projects. This way she's able to work and get some family time in as well. When asked how her husband puts up with long hours of

sewing and draping, Tanya simply stated, “He knew from the get-go what he was getting into!” In reality, Tanya explains that as a designer you tend to be a perfectionist and work takes a lot of concentration and dead lines must be made. This can sometimes put a burden on a relationship due to the stress that builds up, which can make it hard to relax. But at the end of the day it always works out for Tanya and her family because as she says, “I’m blessed to have such a caring and patient husband and son. I just know that the more work I get the more they will continue to understand. But just like everything else, you figure out a way to make it work and it always ends up just fine”.

After graduating, Tanya continued to work as a cocktail waitress all while continually updating her portfolio to seek a career in fashion design. Recently, Tanya had been approached by the General Manager of Chicago’s well-known restaurant, Tavern on Rush, to revamp the cocktail uniform which is currently out dated and boring. To give you an example of how huge this opportunity is, famous designers are shifting towards designing cocktail uniforms for hotel bars and lounges, designers such as Michael Kors, Mandy Coon and Gwen Stefani have joined in on this trend; Mandy Coon for Soho Grand Hotel in New York and Gwen Stefani’s L.A.M.B for the W hotels throughout the country. Most of the work that Tanya accomplishes for the design of the cocktail uniforms are made while the boys, husband and son, are at work and school. When asked how she manages to get work done in time to meet the deadline while still finding time for the family, Tanya says that she is able to work on patterns while Ty, her son, works on Halloween crafts.

Being that Tanya’s grandparent’s owned and operated Rosati’s, a Chicago restaurant, she has a true understanding of the restaurant industry. With this knowledge, Tanya is able to use that to her advantage to help with the design of the cocktail uniforms. The new Tavern on Rush uniforms will be made from fabric that Tanya knows will withstand any mishaps such as spilling. Tanya had also mentioned that the women she works with happen to be some of her closest friends and with that she is able to get feedback on her design. The designs will be classy, refined yet comfortable. When asked what the toughest part of the job was, Tanya stated “There were some challenges at first, like every job though, for instance my boss wished to have all red dresses. Which if done correctly could be beautiful but not practical because of spills, stains, and even the fading factor. So after our meeting he was more than willing to go with red and black separates. Wearing at least one red piece per outfit”. Tanya then set out to design two red dresses, which the girls are able to pick out, and three other sets which consist of short, skirts and blazers.

Once the Tavern on Rush cocktail uniforms are finished, Tanya plans to take her resume and portfolio to New York and Los Angeles for an opportunity to one day land a position on a design team for a major firm then continue on to become an assistant designer and eventually create her own label. Dreams can come true when you set your mind to it. For Tanya, this is just the beginning of her career, and she is very fortunate to have a caring, loving family and a strong group of friends to support her. To everyone else who has a dream, including mothers such as herself, Tanya’s advice is to “if you have a dream, don’t ever give up. Your family will be supportive and if you are a single mom, if you have enough ambition and drive the possibilities are endless. To everyone, focus on what is important, your friends will still be there years later if they are true friends and your family will never leave you. Just remind yourself of your dreams everyday each morning and set weekly goals; in time you will have success!”