

Summer: *Hi, I'm Summer.*

Mike: *And I'm Mike.*

Summer: *And we got married ...*

Mike: *With children.*

Summer: *We're going on two years of marriage.*

Mike: *But we've been together for 10.*

Summer: *He brought two.*

Mike: *She brought two.*

Summer: *Together, that's four kids.*

Mike: *That's way too many kids.*

Summer: *And we want to share what works for us.*

Mike: *And what doesn't.*

Summer: *For step-parents, co-parents, marriage, being your best self, managing work, family, friends, health. We're going to talk about ...*

Mike: *Everything.*

Summer: *You're ready babe?*

Mike: *Always.*

Summer: *Hey guys.*

Mike: *Hello, hello.*

Summer: *We are back with another Everything Always episode.*

Mike: *Super fun. We were a little nervous that we weren't going to get to do this week's episode due to the ...*

Summer: *The cold vortex.*

Mike: *The cold vortex here in San Diego. I know it's a stretch to think that the cold vortex could actually get here in San Diego. We were a little nervous that it was going to get below 65 degrees, and that we weren't able to record. All right, I'm sorry for all of you in Chicago, Minneapolis who are experiencing those minus 40 degree temperatures.*

Summer: *Yeah. We do have a storm now and the airport got shut down and we were on our way back from Utah, and we were in the air in our flight from Utah back to San Diego. The pilot gets on and he's like, "We're trying to stay in the air for a while because San Diego Airport should be opening up soon, but we don't have enough gas so we're going to have to stop in Phoenix."*

Mike: *Which is pretty much one of the biggest weather events we've had in San Diego-*

Summer: *It's pretty huge.*

Mike: *Ever.*

Summer: *Yeah.*

Mike: *Due to rain.*

Summer: *Yeah rain.*

Mike: *We had [crosstalk 00:01:35]-*

Summer: *And we've ... We had a lot of friends that are their houses are flooded outside.*

Mike: *And I think we should be sensitive about this because a lot of people are dealing with real weather.*

Summer: Like real weather. You know-

Mike: But I want you to know here in San Diego, if it gets below 60 degrees, basically everything stops.

Summer: Stay home from school, shut down business.

Mike: It's a winter day, it's 48 degrees. All right, enough fun with that. Let's get back to it.

Summer: All right. We hope all of you are doing super well and enjoying the new year, we are. We're like at a super running start with this year.

Mike: That sounds so cheery.

Summer: It so cheery. I'm so happy. You got to get cheery sometimes because we talk about some topics that might not be so cheery, so we're trying to make them cherry.

Mike: Little more upbeat, not as ba, ba, ba, ba.

Summer: And you know what, that's exactly the sound that our kids here when we go, "Hey guys, we're going to have a family meeting, and we're going to talk about house rules." That's what happens in their head place-

Mike: It either that-

Summer: Bam, bam, bam.

Mike: Or plays the thing that goes, wah, wah, wah, wong.

Summer: She does. Chloe has-

Mike: On her phone.

Summer: Has sound effects on her phone-

Mike: [crosstalk 00:02:43] little-

Summer: So as things happen ...

Mike: Life DJ.

Summer: Yes

Mike: It's dinner time, wah, wah, wong.

Summer: Yeah. Or like somebody makes a joke and it's not good, and it's like [inaudible 00:02:51].

Mike: It's pretty terrible. All right.

Summer: Today's topic is house rules in a blended family, and the do's and don'ts. And we're going to talk about what we've learned based on our experience, and probably some research that we've done on what we should and should not do. If you're step-parent, or bio, or step-parent, but especially like this is probably going to speak to a lot of step-parents, and how they deal with their step-children in terms of house rules and what your authority, what your role should look like. Because-

Mike: Discipline.

Summer: Discipline is such a tricky thing when it comes to step-parenting. Because you're trying to really preserve and build a relationship with your step-child. And if you go hardcore into authority mode ...

Mike: And it ... I mean, let's talk about walking like a super thin line of being able to preserve the relationship, while at the same time have order and unity in terms of what the house rules are and your discipline styles.

Summer: Yeah.

Mike: *Combine that with the fact that both kids are going to other households who have totally different rules, creates a turbulent environment a lot of the time. And I know that we've ... Men we've really struggled with this over the years.*

Summer: *We have. I think one thing first to go into before even going into the do's and don'ts is, and you'll notice this theme throughout a lot of when Mike and I are talking about all of the things that have worked for us. Always going back to that number one, the relationship between you and your spouse because that foundation is so key. And I said on a couple episodes ago, that whole being the captains of your ship. Because when things go wrong, if you guys aren't on the same page, your sailors are going to feel really insecure. Like, "What's going on? We're looking to you-*

Mike: *Your crew.*

Summer: *To make things right." Your crew is basically feeling very uncertain.*

Mike: *And there can be a mutiny if you don't do it right.*

Summer: *There totally can. Then the-*

Mike: *And then ... Or making them like-*

Summer: *The crew starts fighting. Everybody has all these different-*

Mike: *Ship analogies.*

Summer: *Opinions. Nobody's on the same page.*

Mike: *One thing I was going to mention in terms of house rules, I think a non-blended family can struggle with parenting styles, and being a unified front, and making sure that the kids don't play against each other, and making sure that you're consistent with the things that you do so that they actually create good habits. That's a struggle when it's your kid or kids between the two of you. Now throwing the dynamic of the fact that you have different parents on other sides that are contributing to the rules that they have to follow in the habits that they're making. You throw into the mix the power dynamic of trying to build a relationship with new people that aren't your bio kids. You throwing all of those things and men, this can be really tough. And it can be a super challenge, and there's byproducts that can come from it if you do it wrong. For example, if you become the Cinderella, evil step-mother, who's disciplining and being terrible and those things, resentment and all of those things are going to form.*

Which at the end of the day, everybody is looking for harmony, right? You want to have a great relationship with your kids, with your new kids. You want to have a great relationship with your new spouse or new significant other, whatever that might be. And it's really, really tricky to do.

Summer: *It's super tricky. I think what might be interesting is if we explore where we came from, because like we said, we're not experts. We didn't walk into this being an expert. I will say I feel like we're becoming extremely knowledgeable because we've had 10 years of experience here. But we had different outlooks, we were also being told different things from different people. Friends, people who may not have even had that situation of what you should do as a step-parent, and blending your family and then you should ... Which-*

Mike: *And someone had had ... Have had very different views on how things should be done.*

Summer: *Totally.*

Mike: *Let's flash back say like right now our kids are 16-*

Summer: *13, 13 and-*

Mike: *13, 13, and-*

Summer: *Almost 12. Yeah.*

Mike: *Almost 12. And now the dynamic of discipline and those kinds of things is different. And I can tell you, I think because of the length of time we've got it down pretty good, in terms of like the things that are acceptable here. But let's go back to when they were just getting to know each other, when they were little, like-*

Summer: *Yeah.*

Mike: *Seven-*

Summer: *Well-*

Mike: *Five, five and four or whatever the [inaudible 00:07:29]. When they were little kids.*

Summer: *We had a different opinion. My ... I actually was being told by some people, "You need to discipline your step-children, and you need to this, and you need to that. Make them respect you." And I do agree with the whole, you want to have that respect especially as an adult. But there's a great saying that says, rules without a relationship will lead to rebellion. And that is just so true. And if you think about it, if you're just somebody coming into their life and all the sudden you're just creating, "Hey, by the way, nice to meet you. Here are the rules and here's what's going to happen. And I'm going to discipline you, and I've got all these consequences lined up when you don't behave the way I want you to behave." I mean that's just like, "Oh."*

And if you think about it as a parent, when you first have a babysitter that comes over, you really at the beginning, you just want your kids to like the babysitter. Because you're leaving them with this person and you want them to have a good time, because hopefully that same babysitter is going to be awesome and get to come back so that you can go do things. But if your kids are dreading seeing that babysitter because they're so strict on rules and discipline, then it's not going to be so much fun. When a babysitter usually first comes-

Mike: *But you want the balance too. You don't want to the babysitter to be-*

Summer: *Well, I'm getting into that.*

Mike: *Okay.*

Summer: *That's what I'm getting into.*

Mike: *Go for it. [inaudible 00:08:49].*

Summer: *Is that usually in a successful relationship between a babysitter and child, that babysitter comes and starts to ease ... Kind of eases their way into it with, "Hey, what do you like to play with?" Or, "What kind of games do you like to do?" Or, "What do you like to watch on TV? What would be a good movie?" And you have the support, this is key, the support of the parents saying, "Okay, little Johnny, now, Samantha here is going to make sure that you're in bed by 9:00. So you know that Samantha is in charge here tonight. Got that?" "Okay, okay." But there's this building of a relationship of having fun together before all of that comes into place.*

Now the parents going to say in front of Samantha, "Hey Samantha, you know Johnny is not allowed to have too much sugar." Or, "Johnny is not allowed to jump on the bed." Or whatever those things are. So the babysitter can say if that happens, "Hey, remember your mom said." In a very like nice way. Now as that relationship starts to grow, and the child has that respect and has that connection with that babysitter, there's more discipline starts to happen. "Hey Johnny, sorry, remember your mom said no jumping on the bed, so now I have to take away your iPad." And there's things like that that will happen, but you have to ease into it. And I think that quote is so great because, at the very beginning if you're just like, "Oh, you're jumping on the bed, iPad's gone." That kid is going to be like, "Whoa, you just came in. This is the first night and meeting you, and I don't want to see you again."

Mike: And it's not like that. It's like life happens between events. It could be like everything is super good, and then all of a sudden there's something that happens. I think it in like in our relationship we'll talk about it a little bit more, but I would take more of a lead in doing the same discipline that I would do with Justin and Ashleine, and as I would do with Logan and Chloe to a point. To the point where, "Okay, if I do this now I'm going to jeopardize my relationship." I would do whatever it is to stabilize the situation. It's not like you just are like, "Hey, our house rule is running through that ... You're not allowed to run through the house with scissors."

I'm not going to say anything about it because I don't want to be the bad guy. I'll just let him run through the house with scissors. Obviously this is an analogy of how things are sometimes done. But you'd say, "Hey, you can't run through the house with scissors. You're going to have to be in trouble now. We're going to need to talk to your mom, and you guys are going to have to figure out what that looks like for you." Where Summer I think would be a little bit more pulled back and she would be kind of like, "Hey Mike, the kids are running through the house with scissors. You need to make sure that they stopped doing that." You are definitely more back in terms of [crosstalk 00:11:27]-
Summer: I was definitely more pulled back. And this is times when we disagree, because there were times where Mike would be like, "I want you to be more firm and stern with ..."

Mike: Yeah. I'll be like, "Tell him to stop running through the house with scissors."

Summer: Yeah.

Mike: And she's like-

Summer: And I would be-

Mike: "No. I'm going to leave that for you. Because the relationship that I have with them is more important, and I don't feel like I'm on a firm foundation right now."

Summer: Yeah.

Mike: And you didn't want to ... You didn't want that to [crosstalk 00:11:50]-

Summer: I didn't want to jeopardize it. I wanted to keep being a peer to them, and somebody who could be a role model but not necessarily an authority figure. Unless, dad's out of town. And there were some ... There were times where I would have to step in like a babysitter would, type of a thing. But it would ... It did feel uncomfortable. And-

Mike: There's been time like, "Hey, we need to call your dad."

Summer: Yeah. And there were ... And then there were times where I'm like, "Well, I don't know that I like ... Oh my gosh, Mike is really disciplining Logan over something. And now I'm worried that Logan is going to have this issue with Mike." There were things like that that we ... We definitely had times ..."

Mike: Well, there were times. I remember on occasion it's ... And it's such a weird feeling where you'll be like, "Can I talk to you for a second?" And you're like, "Listen, the dynamics can be hard because-

Summer: It's hard.

Mike: You're kind like will listen, "This happened, this isn't okay, and this is how I would deal with it." And you're like, "Hey, can I talk to you for a minute?" I'm like, "Don't disempower me right now. I'm in the middle of giving a little lecture on how you're not allowed to like set the house on fire." And then you'd be like, "Hey listen, you're coming down too hard on him." And I'm like, "Well maybe." And I don't know ... Like in those situations it's kind of like, "Okay, well then you go deal with it. I didn't really want to anyway but ..."

Summer: Yeah. These are ... What we're basically telling you is these are the issues that we've dealt with, and how we came up with these do's and don'ts that we're about to go into. I don't ... Should we just go into it, and then we can talk about like ...

Mike: Yeah, let's just jump into it.

Summer: The first thing is making sure that you have each other's back. I think that some of the issues that we had together was going back to that whole, you've got to know ... You've got to agree on what these-

Mike: And this-

Summer: Rules are. So-

Mike: And this is for blended families or probably normal parents.

Summer: Well, of course. But especially in-

Mike: Not that blended families aren't normally. What I mean is non-blended families.

Summer: In the thing it like you were just saying, and that's why I kind of jumped into it, because this is probably one of our first do's is having each other's back. If I disagree with how Mike is handling something, I can't disempower him in front of the kids, because we are the captains here. To do that makes them ... Of course, it's going to make them feel insecure, or make them go, "Oh yeah, see, mom is on my side." Or, "Yeah, see he did something wrong." And so the correct thing to do it's going to play out or to say ... Take a brief moment or whatever you need later on and discuss it in private. That's an opportunity to say, "Okay, let's each express how this was handled."

Mike: Yeah. And I ... Even before we get into this, I think there's one thing that's important to talk about. And that's have a clear understanding. You want to be captains of your ship, you don't just say we're going to set sail, and we don't have a plan, we don't have a map, we don't have a compass. Those things in this situation, or having a clear understanding of your disciplinary style, of what's okay, what's not-

Summer: And that's number two.

Mike: Well, hey, you know what, I'm jumping ahead.

Summer: *It's really knowing the expectations, and knowing what are those family rules. What we have done, because these things have happened in every single time. One thing we do well is that whenever something like this happens is, we take it and we're like, "Okay, what's the lesson? What's the takeaway from here? What are we going to improve? What do we know that we're not going to do again?" And we hear each other out. And what we've done for years now I would say is, Mike and I getting together and saying, "Okay, what are the rules we want them to go by? What are our rules? What are the things that are ... You absolutely must adhere to this?" There's some things that the kids will have some push back on, but there are a lot of things that is just, "Be kind to each other."*

Mike: *Respect.*

Summer: *Respect.*

Mike: *We don't allow the kinds of things where I think no kid regardless of the situation should be. The bullying, talking negatively-*

Summer: *Of course.*

Mike: *Bad things-*

Summer: *So there-*

Mike: *Those are zero. Those are like a zero go.*

Summer: *Basically you agree together what are these rules. And then what we would do is we would take those, and then we would come up with consequences if those rules were broken or warnings. How many warnings do you get? And then the next time here's the consequence. And then what we would do is we'd all sit by in the family room together, and we'd call the meeting. That's the, [inaudible 00:16:17]. And then the kids know.*

Mike: *Wah, wah, wah.*

Summer: *But we would say, "Okay, in the next 15 minutes we're all going to a family meeting." And we would meet and go through the rules, and then we would ask for their feedback. And here was the kind of creative part is we would say, "What do you think the consequence should be?" We had ideas but we would go, "What do you think the consequence should be." And they would actually come up with it. "Well, like if I mean then I probably shouldn't get to play my video game." Or-*

Mike: *And which we got a lot of by-in to with that.*

Summer: *We did so much-*

Mike: *And this-*

Summer: *Because-*

Mike: *And this was a long time ago. I feel like-*

Summer: *This is a long time ago.*

Mike: *Once you can get everyone in alignment, it becomes a lot easier.*

Summer: *Yeah. But then you have to keep ... Then you refresh them. And because they changed, the rules change obviously and consequences change as they get older. And it's just really great because they come in with such apprehension but then by the end you're like, "Oh." And it kind of becomes this challenge and almost like a fun thing because you're all on the same page with what these rules are. And then when you start*

to see things slip, that's when you have a meeting again. From this they have the expectations. From this they know, "Okay, stepmom or stepdad is going to enforce these, and my bio dad or bio mom just made it okay to do that." And it adds this level of respect. It also adds a level of, "Hey, I'm not out to get you. I'm just on your mom or dad's team, and we want to help you. " And you all ... We always tell them, "This is because we love you. This is because we're helping you to grow into the best adults you can be."

Mike: And remember I said there's byproducts of the things you do. The byproduct of doing this exercise is that they feel more connected to each other. They feel like they're actually all part of the same union. And that part is pretty amazing. You can do that through doing fun things, like we all go to the carnival together, yay. Or we all figured out our family rules together.

Summer: The next point is, is don't give a consequence or something that isn't in alignment with what the bio ... As ... I'm talking from a step-parent. Don't give a punishment or, a consequence is a better word, that isn't in alignment with what the bio parent would do. Because going back to earlier in our conversation, that can cause a disagreement. It's again being on that same page. If a bio parent is gone and you're watching stepchild, and they've done something wrong, and the agreement was you have your TV privileges taken away, and all of a sudden you decide, "Well, I'm so bad about it. I'm also taking your phone and your devices and all that away." Then it's kind of like, "Ooh, now you're becoming that ..."

Mike: Or a way to do that part of it. You can say, "Okay, this stops now. These are the consequences temporarily. And when your bio person comes back." If you're trying to maintain that relationship, don't be the person that gives the actual punishment. You can be the jury and be like, "Hey listen, you got to stop setting the house on fire now. And obviously you're going to be in trouble and when your mom or your dad comes back, we're going to figure out what the punishment will be."

Summer: Which leads into the next one which is, as much as you can let the bio parent do most of that discussion back and forth. And most of I should say, leading the discipline. It's not that the step-parent can't, but especially if you're still building that relationship, let the bio parent do most of that. And Mike, what he'll often do is if there was something that I had to step in on, I'll tell him later and then he'll later have a talk with, say it's Justin or Ashleine. And he'll sit down with them and talk to them. And then he'll bring me in later on, so that it's like, "Hey, we're all in this together. We're all on the team." But he's the one that's really leading it, because he is the biological parents.

Mike: But always refer back to number one, united front.

Summer: United front. Hey guys, I just wanted to say thank you. Thank you for taking a chance on us and listening to our podcast. Our goal is for you to not only learn from us, but to learn with us. We've taken a leap on being pretty open about our blended family and how we do life in everything. We want to make sure we bring you all the things you want to hear always. Please if you have specific questions like, how do I get along with my ex? Or how do we get along with his ex? Or how do I set some boundaries in place? Or why doesn't my stepson like me? Please, please email us with your questions. Email them to info@summerfelix.com, because we want to answer those questions and

we aim to bring you the best guests and conversations to address your most burning issues about everything always.

One thing that I always think of in the back of my mind as a step-parent is thinking of myself as a parental figure, and really being a role model. And that authority comes in, it's earned. I think it's really earned.

Mike: It's kind of like respect, right?

Summer: Yeah.

Mike: It's built in inches, can fall back in miles.

Summer: Right.

Mike: Making sure that you are under control of yourself, and the situation in the way that you handle yourself. Right. We got a saying that we have in our family is, don't lose your cool, never let them see you sweat. Right. You might be freaking furious, take a minute, get yourself under control, right?

Summer: Yep.

Mike: Figure out how to deal with something in a way that's going to be positive and that's going to be constructive. Now I know that there are people that are dealing with ... Like I would say in terms of our disciplinary situation in our house, we've had some flare-ups that have been very traumatic, but we, for the most part of that, a relatively okay coexistence in terms of our family. I know that there are parents out there that have situations that are freaking tough.

Summer: Really, really tough.

Mike: Really tough-

Summer: And-

Mike: Like kids that are like will yell at the other ... Their stepdad and be like, "Well, I'll wait till you're asleep. I'm going to hit you in the head with a bat."

Summer: Oh my gosh. It's awful.

Mike: You know what I mean? Things that are like, "What the hell?" When you're ended up in those situations, I think you have to use the same mentality, that same philosophy of, "I have to create respect. I can't let things just happen. You can't just run through the house with scissors." But the action-

Summer: [crosstalk 00:22:43] running through the house with scissors? I'm [crosstalk 00:22:44]-

Mike: I don't know because-

Summer: [crosstalk 00:22:45] ever run-

Mike: No. I think all kids are not allowed to run with scissors.

Summer: All right.

Mike: Right.

Summer: It's a good rule.

Mike: A kid running with scissors, "You have to stop running with scissors." Whether ... Whatever that thing is. But the situation needs to be, that you need support. And I mean in that situation where you have the violent teenager, right? I mean what do you do in that scenario? You have to stop the situation regardless of what it might ... It might require calling the police. I mean that's ... We're getting to extremes here, but I know and I have-

Summer: *These things happen.*

Mike: *Some firsthand situations of some people that I know that have had that 16-year old kid who is really, really tough. You need to make sure that your house is safe. You need to make sure that your self is safe. You need to set the ... The fact that that has to stop. The running with the scissors has to stop, but the dishing out of the discipline has to either come as a united front or from ...*

Summer: *And yeah, you have to be united because there's also the sibling rivalry that can happen. When step kid hates other step sibling, and there's ... And their things can get pretty out of hand. I always have to be in that place where I know if I get overwhelmed with something, or I feel like, "Okay ..." I remember like right in the beginning too where I'm like, "Oh my gosh, these boys are not getting longer. They're going through this period where they just hate each other and needing your support." You have to ... Going into this, you've got to know that you're ... That you will be there for each other to support each other, because what an awful it ... There's ... I can only imagine how awful it would be if you're in a position where it's like, "Well, it's because of your son."*

"Oh, no, it's because of your son." And if you're ... And if ... You've got to look ... You have to step above and be the adult and ...

Mike: *And [crosstalk 00:24:25]-*

Summer: *Realize that these are two people not getting along. They're two kids, we are the parents, how are we gonna work together to support each other.*

Mike: *And those quotes that she's talking about right there, that's literally happened to us.*

Summer: *Yeah.*

Mike: *Where ... There's been situations where like, "Yeah, this is really a tough situation right now." There is this animosity and think of it like the byproducts of those situations. Your bio kid is totally not liking your new step kid. If you side with the step kid, you alienate your own kid. If you side with your kid you're going to alienate the other one. It's really this balance, it's really-*

Summer: *Such a good point.*

Mike: *A tough thing to do. And from-*

Summer: *And it happens.*

Mike: *From the standpoint that you just have to be, "Hey listen ..." I bring it back to love. Because love is one of those things that it's like there's no measurement. There's no way to quantify it. The thing is you can say, "Listen, I love both of you. I love both of you different. I don't love one, or one more than the other. You can love different at different levels at different times and you're not going to divide me between the two of you. And you ..." And man it's ... And sometimes you just got to give those kids their ability to have their space, and it'll run its course.*

Summer: *Well, it's true. And it does, and then you can revisit it later when everyone's calm. But the main thing, always back to that main thing, and I'll say it a billion times-*

Mike: *And move on.*

Summer: *Is really keeping each other ... Being on each other's side and being the adults. Be the adult. Don't ... The blame game really doesn't get you anywhere? It really doesn't. I mean, " It's your kid's fault, it's your kid, it's this or that." And if you're doing a bunch of blame game, then maybe there's something else to be talked about in the whole*

...

Mike: *[crosstalk 00:26:03] probably needs to-*

Summer: *Relationship.*

Mike: *Figure it out. I would say they other thing, man, in families when the parents fight in front of the kids ... And I can say this is one really great thing about Summer and I, on less than one hand the number ... Not that we don't fight, we ... She's Latin. She actually really loves-*

Summer: *I'm so fiery.*

Mike: *She seems calm, cool and collected, but man, she's got that half Puerto Rican, half Italian thing going on. And when she gets fired up she is on fire. What I would say there, save that for your own private space. Stomach it if you have to and just be like, "Or you know what? We're going to go have a captain planning meeting for a minute." And I can already see the fire in her eyes when she does that.*

Summer: *Although I will say this, we have had, I would say constructive arguments in front of our kids. I don't know if you'd call it an argument, there's no yell ... We don't ... Even when we are fighting there's not [crosstalk 00:26:59]-*

Mike: *They're more-*

Summer: *But there's more-*

Mike: *Pointed conversations.*

Summer: *There's more like, "Okay, but you ..." There's sometimes where they should hear you, and hear how you deal with a disagreement. I think that's actually really healthy. Because if they never see any disagreement then it's like ...*

Mike: *Right, but I wouldn't [crosstalk 00:27:15]-*

Summer: *Every relationship has that.*

Mike: *Argument category. Because it-*

Summer: *Yeah. It's not an argument-*

Mike: *It never gets-*

Summer: *That's something different.*

Mike: *To the point of yelling or saying bad things or things to each other. And that we don't ... We actually, we're really blessed because we don't have that dynamic. Where we like to try to tear the other person down in order to make a point, which I know a lot of people do. For those of you that like to do that, man, that's a whole another conversation. But into-*

Summer: *We're not getting into that.*

Mike: *Yeah. We're not getting into that right now. Can it ... But in terms of the communication in front of the kids and not fighting, save that for your own space. It will break down that dynamic-*

Summer: *You know what it does?*

Mike: *Of a united front.*

Summer: *It really actually ... It makes you stronger too. Because just in real life, there's times where you just feel like, "Oh, I'm so he got up." It's such a great lesson in being emotionally mature. When is the right time to deal with this? And sometimes you do have to suck it up. There was one other ... One last thing in terms of the do's, is going back to when we're talking about some of those ... Some stepchildren that might yell back at you, "You're not my real mom and you're not my real dad." Or whatever.*

Having some type of backlash with the discipline or with the authority that you're exercising is, to always make sure don't bow down. Which I may have done way in the past where I'm just like, "Okay, I shouldn't have said anything." Don't be a pushover because you still need to have respect. At the end of the day it's still your home or your space, and you are the adult. But respond to in a very calm, rational way, and be honest about it. Like, "Hey, that really hurt my feelings. I feel really disrespected when you say that. And remember we talked about what these house rules were."

Mike: *Or really disarming, you could say, "You know, I'm not, but I do care about you, and I want us to have the best situation possible." And-*

Summer: *Totally.*

Mike: *What can someone say to that? When at the end, usually those feelings and those types of words come from a place of feeling insecure, and feeling like they're out of control.*

Summer: *And if they don't say ... If they just come back with something else or whatever, you just quietly walk away and let them have their space at that time. But for the most ... Either way. And then you can talk about it later. That has happened. I mean kids especially just all of growing up, they can get really emotional. I mean about so many different things. Just school, just, "I want that toy." Then leading up to teens, adolescents, I mean there's so many things that actually are so much more glorified. And seem like such a big deal and because it is, it's all relative, it's a big deal to them. But later, a day later, maybe hours later when things have calmed, you can look back at it. And really learn from it, and discuss it, and go, "Okay. In this situation what do you think we could have done differently or ..."*

Mike: *Yeah, that whole look back evaluation-*

Summer: *Is so good.*

Mike: *Will create ... It's kind of like if you're adrift at sea, you can't really tell what your ... Where you're going. But if you can look back and see the line from where you've come that, the trail, you can tell the direction, right. You can go, "Am I going left or am I going right?" And it just taking a quick minute after things have calmed to say, "Could we talk for a minute? We have this interaction." You start with the I instead of the, you, right? "I perceive this, I felt this way, I understood that this was the situation, can you tell me how you felt? How could we have done this better?" And I know this sounds like really easy to do, right? We're sitting here like, "I, I, I." But-*

Summer: *No, it's not. We said it [crosstalk 00:30:43]-*

Mike: *But if you can take time, and I know it's like one of those things where if you really want to build the dynamic that's going to be awesome, you take the time to go and do an evaluation. Just like you would with a job, right? You have a job, you're given a task to*

do, your manager or your boss is going to come back and say, "Let's take a look at what you did. Let's evaluate the performance. How could we do this better?" I know I do this in business.

Summer: I do this in business too. I mean it's-

Mike: And it's-

Summer: The only [crosstalk 00:31:10] can grow.

Mike: And the look back will then build your team to be better, more well equipped, and ready for the next challenge in the future.

Summer: Above all, remember this, and this really applies to anything in life, as these challenges arise with every single challenge, as icky and awful as it will feel, or as overwhelmed as you might feel, it is always an opportunity to make things better, always.

Mike: It's true.

Summer: Just a quick recap on all of all the things we discussed. That first saying rules without relationship leads to rebellion. Just if you can think about that, sit with it, realize what that means to you and for your relationship with your kids and step kids, it's so powerful. And just a summary of those do's and don'ts. Do make sure that you have each other's back. You and your spouse need to have each other's back, and if you disagree on something, settle it in private, not in front of the kids. The next one. Do know the expectations. Agree on the rules with your spouse and then as a family, sit down the whole family, talk about the rules, define the rules, understand what the consequences are.

Let them come up with what those consequences should be as well. You're all ... You're a family unit here, while you guys are the captains and the authorities here, they still should have a say. Because you're still a team, you're a whole crew.

Mike: That's right. Get the buy-in of your crew.

Summer: Yes. Don't punish or do something that isn't in alignment with the bio parent. Again, being on the same page. Do let, as much as possible, the bio parent to talk to their bio kids about disciplining and consequences and being the lead on that. The next. Do ask your spouse for support when you feel overwhelmed, when things just feel so out of control and you don't know what to do, ask your spouse for support. And the last, do standup for yourself in a calm and rational way. If you are ever met with backlash from the kids, say something in a calm way that acknowledges your feelings, and asks about their feelings as well.

Mike: Those are good to-do's and not to do's.

Summer: I hope you guys got some good tips out of this. There is absolutely a PDF download. If you want to have this, some easy access to this and it's helpful to you, you can go over it with your spouse.

Mike: Where do they find this download?

Summer: If you go to summerfelix.com, right under, it'll either bring it up right away, or you can click on the podcast tab, and it'll pop up right there, and you can download it. And please guys ...

Mike: Take the opportunity to go to our podcast like and share.

Summer: Like and share it. You can go to iTunes, you can click on the link, you can share it in your social media. This helps us tremendously.

Mike: For you non ...

Summer: iTuner.

Mike: For you non Apple out there-

Summer: Non Apple people at ... Yeah. We've got-

Mike: Yo can go to SoundCloud, there's a lots of other-

Summer: Lot's of other places.

Mike: Places where you can find the podcast.

Summer: And that's on summerfelix.com as well. You'll see all the places that it is. Where you can play it. You can also play it directly off the page there. And please write a review, star it, and write a little comment, anything that was awesome. If you don't think it's awesome, please don't write that comment.

Mike: Save those for yourself.

Summer: We love you guys and we're so grateful that you're listening. Until next time.

Mike: Over and out. Take care of your crew.

Hey guys, thanks so much for listening to our podcast. You know what they say, if you can't find what you're looking for, then you need to create it. So that's what we did.

Summer: Yep. I scoured the Internet and looked for the tribe that spoke to me, and I just couldn't find the community that was raw, vulnerable, and really wanting to make a change to the millions of families like ours. So I decided to create it. And it took about one conversation for my husband to say, "I'm in." And here we are.

Mike: But it takes listeners like you to keep it alive.

Summer: Please, if you like this right of review, take a screenshot, share it on your social media, tell people it means the world to us.

Mike: Remember to email us. We would love to hear from you.

Summer: And please share this with someone you love.

Mike: And be bold enough to share it with someone that you don't.

