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A PODCAST FOR BLENDED FAMILIES

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 four way too many kids.

Summer: 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: Are you ready, babe?

Mike: I'm always.

Summer: Hey guys, I just have to say that I'm actually really impressed that my husband kept quiet for the two beats.

Mike: No way. I'm here. And I'm really excited because we are going to have a super fun podcast.

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- Summer: I think everyone just heard our guest that's with us. They heard a ... It was almost a chuckle.
- Mike: It's a chuckle. I would love the pleasure of introducing one of my very best friends and college roommates, and the guy that happened to marry us as our officiant, Kyle McGregor.
- Summer: Okay, but before he take the mic, Kyle, I just want to say that right before we started recording this, my beautiful husband here said, "Baby, you take the lead. You do the intro."
- Mike: You totally did.
- Summer: I think I got two words in and then you took it away, which is awesome. I think it's great.
- Mike: I wasn't trying to take it away. I think you're doing a great intro. Keep going.
- Summer: Well, here's what happened. We have our wonderful friend, Kyle, who yes married us and has known Mike for a very good portion of most of his life. Who's here and we're all in the kitchen, and Mike's like, "I think we should do a podcast right now because we were having conversations-"
- Mike: Impromptu podcast.
- Summer: Well, sometimes things come up and you're like, you know what, maybe we should record this 'cause this could of value.
- Mike: We were talking about it in the kitchen. We're like, okay, so like, what's this ... We're going to dig into that. But we were talking about things that would be good content for a podcast potentially having to do with blended families, and like things that happen and all this stuff. And I was like, let's make a podcast right now.
- Summer: One of the things is, two, is that you just heard our previous episode was with my friend Kelsey, and we were talking with her about her experience, having children and having a fiance who does not have children. We were talking about our interview with her fiance and so it kind of came up because we were looking at Kyle and we're like, you know, Kyle, you've actually been in a situation where you were pretty much like a dad to a young girl. And I think you could actually offer a lot of insight for people listening whether it's a mother who's dating somebody who has children, and who's dating somebody who doesn't have children, or vice versa, a father who has children dating somebody who doesn't. I think it's just, it's a really good perspective to hear.

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Mike: I guess you haven't said a single word so far, so I'd like to first say-

Kyle: It has been great by the way.

Mike: - to say hello to the everything, always-

Summer: Audience.

Mike: - people. But don't be nervous. There's probably only one person. There's just one.

Summer: Thank you to that one listener. Mom, thank you so much for listening.

Mike: Thanks for listening, mom.

Kyle: Oh, crap.

Mike: I'm sorry, there's two. Thank you, mom.

Summer: Your mom may be listening too. We have two listeners now.

Mike: Okay, it's getting bad. All right. So anyway, Kyle and I first met in college. He was bad at dating back then too.

Kyle: I was actually really good.

Mike: That's funny.

Summer: Can I just say something? There will be no self esteem or confidence issues in this entire podcast. Maybe from me, but not from these two guys.

Mike: No ego, just governance, time out, time out.

Mike: All right, so let's break it down. Let's break it down. We're going to give you your stats.

Kyle: Okay.

Mike: How old are you?

Kyle: Older than most.

Mike: No, what's your age?

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- Kyle: 41?
- Mike: Probably not older than most. Most people live till they're like 92 now statistically. You're younger than most people.
- Kyle: Most people would be younger than [crosstalk 00:04:32].
- Summer: I would just like to say something. Baby, you are older than the both of us.
- Kyle: That's true.
- Summer: I'm just saying that. Okay, continue.
- Kyle: You're an elder, I'm 41 years old, sir.
- Mike: That's why I bring most of the wisdom to this podcast.
- Kyle: That's true. Animal version. I'm a Virgo. I mean, September is my birthday.
- Summer: Both of you are Virgos.
- Mike: I am also a Virgo.
- Kyle: So stats, I'm 41 years old.
- Mike: He's 41 years old. Never been married?
- Kyle: No kids.
- Mike: Had lots of different relationships over time. But you're recently out of a relationship that was how long?
- Kyle: Eight years.
- Mike: Eight years, which is a long time. And during that time you were with someone that had a child.
- Kyle: Mm-hmm (affirmative) .
- Mike: How old was that child when you first met?

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- Kyle: When I first met her, she was eight years old. And by the time we finished the relationship she was 16.
- Mike: Okay. And you know what, in general like the way that Summer and I do these things normally, it's not about calling people out or whatever. We don't give super specifics, it's more about lessons. The lessons that are learned and the experiences that you've had, right? And the whole thing is about helping people avoid situations that could have been maybe different if they had more information, right? We're about disseminating information and, I don't know, just talking about the things that we've gone through so that people can maybe make better choices or different choices, or potentially the same choices.
- Summer: Well, and also, I think the big thing, too, is getting to hear your perspective. Because if I'm a listener that has children, and I'm dating somebody who doesn't have children, I'd be super interested to hear what that person's perspective would be vice versa. I think it will shed some insight to go wow, that could be something that would be really hard that maybe I've never actually appreciated or acknowledged. So it would be, maybe I should think about that a little bit more.
- Kyle: One thing growing up I had four older siblings, and they were between seven and 11 years older than me and my twin brother, so I was able to see even at a young age, them going through their relationships and the follies and all the nastiness that came with that and all the joy as well. What I didn't like and what I learned from that, because you learn two either ways; you learn from your own mistakes or other people's mistakes. But you also learn from what they chose to do that created happiness.
- Kyle: Seeing that was a great opportunity to have older siblings to say, holy crap, I don't want that.
- Summer: So you were able to kind of model what you wanted your life to be based off of the things that you saw?
- Kyle: Yeah, and I was all super blessed. I also have an amazing father that was just loving, and kind, and inauthentic, and-
- Summer: You talk about your dad a lot. I love it.
- Kyle: I love my pa. He is a good dude. But just to see that relationship also with my mother and father ... Well, some people have just like a nasty up growing with bad parents or what it may be, but I had a great parents and they just showed how to love each other and how-

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Mike: How long are they together?

Kyle: Almost 50 years before he passed away five years ago.

Mike: And like right out of high school, college?

Kyle: No. He was an attorney and she was 24. He was 34 when they got married.

Mike: So they were pretty much like, boom, together-

Kyle: Within a year they got the first kid. Yep, ground and pound rocked it out and then realized that-

Mike: But you say ground and pound?

Kyle: I don't know it was wrestling term, I'm not sure.

Mike: What does that mean?

Summer: Kyle was a wrestler in high school.

Mike: I've never heard that terminology before but I gotta call you out on like some like ground and pound. [crosstalk 00:08:22] Does that mean you gotta like take her to the ground?

Kyle: And then pound it.

Summer: He is now gonna use that. He picks up things and then the next day you're going to be like, "Did you just say ground and pound just so many times today?"

Mike: Welcome to the ground and pound podcast.

Kyle: Just give me credit twice and then you can use it for your own.

Mike: Okay good. That's a verbal contract.

Kyle: Done it. Done.

Mike: All right, so back to the point.

Kyle: The point is that I was fortunate to be able to learn the lessons early on and then-

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Mike: Do you feel like you had a really stable childhood and growing up and consistent parents like no drama? Give me the dynamic.

Kyle: It was zero drama. Yeah, my butt. I mean, any fellas who says they don't have drama, that means that they are an alien.

Mike: But you didn't have the drama that normally was like a broken family, step-dad, step-mom like scenario?

Kyle: None of that. My parents were together their whole lives and showed what's consistency and staying together and commitment look like.

Mike: Most of your drama is the fact that your twin brother was better looking than you?

Kyle: Most likely. Yeah, I mean, he had the looks and I had the brain so at least we balance each other.

Mike: Sorry about that, Craig.

Kyle: We may have shared the brain, I don't know, we're better together. He's a good dude.

Mike: I really like that. Okay, we've gotten a little bit of an idea about what your upbringing was like. Let's talk about your last relationship. You spent eight years of your life with someone that you super loved. I'm assuming that you thought there was a long term path and we're going to flash to the end. They're not together now.

Kyle: Correct.

Mike: When you came into the picture, what was it like getting to know her daughter who was eight. Give us a little insight on that.

Kyle: When we first started dating, it was a while before I even met her daughter. You know, she was very protective.

Mike: Like how long?

Kyle: Six months.

Mike: Which is actually super smart, probably really healthy.

Kyle: No, I completely agree with-

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- Mike: And maybe even longer depending on how far in the relationship and commitments-
- Summer: We waited we waited a long time until our kids met.
- Mike: Yeah, longer than that, maybe. I'm totally okay with not meeting kids, parents, whatever it might be, because you want to build the relationship, let it grow organically. You don't want to force something and you want to know whether it's right or not. Because you don't want to introduce somebody or a boyfriend, girlfriend to a relationship with their children that's gonna be here today and gone tomorrow.
- Summer: Right, exactly.
- Kyle: That was a smart move on that side. But there was ups and downs, highs and lows. And there was a lot of immaturity I think on both sides of the relationship because she had just come out of one, I had just come out of one. One of the biggest lessons I can probably share with you today is what's hard is giving enough time between relationships where you can get back to you and get back to who you are and who your essence. But also do not bring your baggage into the next relationship because that can destroy. At the beginning I needed to learn those lessons-
- Mike: Were you bringing baggage in or was she ...
- Kyle: I think we both were, honestly. And then those initial stages where-
- Mike: Which is pretty normal, probably, right?
- Kyle: It is normal, absolutely.
- Mike: As an adult, you weren't 20 when you met. How old were you when you guys first met?
- Kyle: True. I was 31. That was almost 10 years ago.
- Mike: Did you do some quick math?
- Kyle: Yeah, 31.
- Mike: Okay, so you're not a kid in that scenario [crosstalk 00:11:56].
- Kyle: I had been in two other relationships two or three years previously.

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Mike: And she obviously had been in other relationships because she has a child. And like that child's already eight. She probably had her daughter in her young 20s, right? Again, I'm really good at math.

Kyle: No, she was definitely not. She was in high school when she got pregnant.

Mike: Okay, so she was younger than you.

Kyle: Yeah, she had a lot of layers, a lot of walls, a lot of things [inaudible 00:12:24]. Very beautiful girl. And there's things that we had to work through and to be able to show the open authentic her.

Mike: How long was it before you guys moved in together after you started dating?

Kyle: Over six years.

Mike: So you dated for six years before you moved in?

Kyle: Yeah, I committed for about six years.

Mike: So you would do dates and keep it, wasn't casual, was it 100% committed?

Kyle: The first six months was kind of hit or miss. It was like we weren't seeing eye to eye and it was tough to communicate because she had the previous and I was coming out of one. And so for the first six months it was kind of up in the air. I think certain seeds were planted that really didn't help set the precedence of those things. Here's the point of that.

Kyle: The reason I share that is how you start a relationship is important, and coming in open authentic honest experience versus let me hide things behind your back or not feel like I can be open with you. But if you can just be you and the authentic you at the very beginning, that will help set the precedence of a potential relationship versus you can actually set some mind bombs in the relationship early on if you're not being your authentic you.

Summer: I think that's the term, yeah. That's a really good point. The thing that I'm really curious about is the whole dynamic with there's a child. Once you did meet this eight year old daughter, what was that like?

Summer: I guess what I really want to know and I think what people would want to hear especially me as a mother or if somebody who's dating somebody who is like, I have a

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kid or don't have a kid and I'm dating somebody who has one vice versa. I would want to know what were some of the feelings that you had? Was that like, "Oh, we got along right away." Or was it like, "Man, this took a long time."

- Summer: Did you sometimes feel like, I really want to give a lot or sometimes I feel like I don't. I already know this, I already know that it's a roller coaster, because I know it's a roller coaster for us and we're both parents and we both brought two kids and it's a roller coaster just bonding with step kids and then your own kids and all of that. I want to hear some of that real stuff.
- Kyle: Well, this is based on, number one, the personality of the person. Because a lot of takers in the world, there's a lot of men that just, it [inaudible 00:14:54].
- Mike: I don't know if it [crosstalk 00:14:54] men who are like that because for generally stereotype-
- Kyle: I'm saying there's a lot of douchebags in the world. When there's actually an awesome dude that exists out there, that is actually a giver that doesn't-
- Mike: Are you a self proclaiming awesome dude?
- Kyle: No, but I think I'm pretty awesome. No, in a very humble way.
- Mike: And a nice laugh. Okay, get back to it.
- Kyle: What I'm saying is that I think that those types of men that expect those things can lay a ground or have women pull away and not feel that they can trust his source of worth. At the beginning, when I actually was introduced and she chose in and we wanted to actually pursue something and be monogamous at the time and I was introduced to her daughter, it was awesome. Because her daughter, she does a great job being a mother and she's got a really beautiful just [inaudible 00:15:55] young daughter and I've built a really great relationship over time with her.
- Kyle: Even though when at the beginning when I took out a ride with her, she was eight or nine, she was like, "I want you to be my dad." She liked to me, right? She realized, hold on. If you're going to be my dad that means I have to share you with my mom. Man, maybe I don't want-
- Mike: You know that this conversation and all the laughing is going to get like really, really low as soon as we get deep into this right now. Because we talk about this stuff, and this is serious stuff, so like all the smiles need to come off the faces.

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- Summer: What are you talking about? We can still smile.
- Mike: No, no, no, no. Check it out. Because I want to ask you some serious questions right now.
- Kyle: Okay.
- Mike: I've known you pretty much my whole goddamn life.
- Kyle: Yeah, half of it, at least.
- Mike: I mean, I would-
- Summer: I don't know what he hadn't.
- Mike: Anyway, my point is-
- Kyle: When it get deep, to ask some serious questions-
- Mike: No, no. Let's be serious for a second.
- Kyle: Let's do this.
- Mike: But the thing is, I've known you through that relationship.
- Kyle: I know.
- Mike: And I know the struggles that have come because you were connected to a kid that you are no longer connected to because you guys are no longer together.
- Kyle: Correct.
- Mike: And that's really hard. I can only imagine that you feel not only the loss of the relationship, which is hard enough for most people, but the disconnection from a situation where I know you felt like you were in a co-parenting scenario. And that's got to be really tough. We're lively and we're having fun and everything. I'm not trying to bring it down, but I'd like to have a serious conversation with real feelings for a minute about how this is and how you feel.
- Kyle: What road do you want to go? Do you want to address the fact that the relationship may be difficult to determine certain points or certain things that were said and

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addressed four years before that I said that I wanted certain things in life and she wanted certain things [crosstalk 00:17:52].

Mike: NO, no. I guess actually here, I don't really give a crap about the fact that your relationship ended, that happens all the time, like that's the deal. For whatever reason, trust me, 50% of all marriages fail. I'm sure more than 50% of all dating relationships fail. We can get into these statistics about all that. I want to know about how you felt about losing the relationship with the child that you thought that you were in a co-parenting relationship with.

Mike: You guys lived together, you obviously had a relationship with her daughter-

Summer: I think it's also important to mention that her father was not in the picture, so you really were the father figure. There was no, like you competing with time or she was going, it was full-time having her and especially when you guys were living together, it was full-time-

Mike: What was that dynamic like? Were you running her to activities and were you acting like a parental figure?

Kyle: I was doing all that. Taking her to school in the morning, buying her things for her because she actually loved wrestling, she did tennis, I mean, all these things. I was that role in her life.

Kyle: The frustration on this side was it was half in with the mom. I mean, you have different demographics and not just talking about my relationship, but even other relationships where the woman is okay with a man being the step-dad, or being the boyfriend can actually help parent. I never felt I was given that opportunity about that I couldn't do anything or say anything to be able to help guide that direction. It was always the reins being pulled out.

Mike: You never had full access to like-

Kyle: Not at all.

Mike: Was that because you weren't formerly married or was that because ... Why was there the separation in terms of ...

Kyle: I think it's just ... I mean, for me seeing it in a minute because water doesn't know what water is, a fish because the fish is it. If the fish is in it, you can't see because you're in and can't see what it is. For me being in it from my experience what I saw, what I felt

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was that she had to have control. I totally understand it because she had to be the mom and the dad for this young-

Mike: And the main protector.

Kyle: And the main protector, and the controlling factor for everything. She's this controlling female that needs to protect her child. And whether I've been doing it with her for four, five, six, seven years, it doesn't matter. She was the protector. I was never really truly fully integrated. Even though she said that I was, I never felt it fully, which was frustrating.

Mike: I guess what we're trying to get to here is the dynamics of the relationship and to understand ... This is a modeling thing, right? So we're trying to learn for people that are potentially like moms that have kids that are introducing their family to a guy and bringing them in and how can this dynamic work, and how can we give valuable information in that scenario. It could be the other way. It could be the dad that has a child that's either lost or separated from the mom. How do they introduce the other person?

Summer: I think a lot of what he said is extremely valuable, especially if you are on the other side to hear his perspective. We have friends where it's the opposite, where it's a father who has kids and it's the girl who does not, and she's coming in as either step-mom, mother, whatever. Whether she's either coming in just as a friend or whatever it is. I think, to me, at least that's the value to take from it, is going, well, what are they experiencing? Because I would imagine being a parent myself, that you can get real wrapped up in your own emotions of what you need to do for your child. But at the end of the day, if you are going to commit to a relationship, you have to understand the feelings of the person you're in the relationship with.

Summer: It's only fair if you're going to be committed and you're going to say, "Okay, we're going to do this together," especially if you're going on the basis that you and I go off of, which is if we are going to become a family, if we are going to be a family, that we're going to show the example of putting each other as a priority which we believe in. We are all about, we want the kids to go, hey guys, actually we're going on a date night this week and we're doing this and we're-

Mike: Because you have to model what a successful connected relationship looks like.

Summer: Exactly. And the reason why I feel like this is so valuable and important is because one of the things that I hear is an issue a lot is from the person that's in a relationship where the person they're with hasn't a child, is that they're not feeling like a priority. I think it's important to hear that.

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- Kyle: I wasn't third place, I was like six or seventh place.
- Mike: Wow, I'm sorry to hear about that.
- Kyle: I mean, whatever it may be, but there were certain times I felt good. But from a single person coming in and helping take care of a lot of things in their lives and helping support that, I'm never ... Oh, I'm not gonna say never. It was hard to feel completely integrated. I felt like it was a family unit.
- Mike: Like you were a trespasser in their family.
- Kyle: Yeah.
- Summer: 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 and everything. We want to make sure we bring you all the things you want to hear, always. So 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 step-son like me?"
- Summer: 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.
- Summer: What would you have done differently? Is that like what we should have been on the same page or I thought-
- Kyle: I think once you choose it, you fully choose it and you say I'm going to do this. Let's draw a line in the sand, let's get real with each other. What do you want? What do you really want? What are you looking to achieve and what are your goals? Are we in alignment with that?
- Kyle: If our goals are at least can grow, we don't want all the same stuff, but I'm saying, are your goals in life congruent to what my goals are? I told her for years and years and years I want my own kids. I want my own family, I want to build something, I want to have children. Other aspects and other goals that we shared privately that she would say yes, and I would say yes, and we would say on occasion, but I don't think the communication was as consistent. So I think consistent communication with knowing what each other wants and needs in life, that each other's goals are being met. That-

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- Mike: They weren't in alignment.
- Kyle: They were not.
- Mike: Which actually is what ended up leading to you guys not being together.
- Kyle: Correct.
- Mike: She had a daughter, you wanted a family, you wanted more kids. Can I ask you a real serious question?
- Kyle: Sure.
- Mike: Do you wish you would have asked her at the very beginning? Do you want to have more kids because I would like to have kids of my own?
- Kyle: I did.
- Mike: Okay, so that wasn't the answer that I was thinking, because normally people jump into relationships and they're just going down this thing thinking that they're going to figure it out when they're not clear on exactly what they want which would normally save them a lot of time.
- Kyle: I already knew exactly what I wanted and I already expressed that to her at the beginning relationship, halfway through.
- Mike: And so it was a turnaround there. She said, "Yes, I'll have our kids." And like you pretty much ... There were there and guess what, in the big picture for this podcast it doesn't really matter about your specific situation in terms of like why it didn't work out, so we don't spend too much time and not to be unempathetic-
- Kyle: No, it's fine.
- Mike: But the real situation is, it's about the learning lessons that people are gonna learn about out the lessons. [crosstalk 00:26:21]
- Summer: Well, that's a good question, like, I would go, "What would you have done differently?" I mean, that's the big question.

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- Kyle: Oh, yeah. That's what we were talking about earlier, not being deterred from specifics whatever you are at. That clarity of what that path looks like for each other, and if you're in alignment. And if you're not, be okay to say goodbye.
- Kyle: Because at the end of the day, I mean, I'll not ever say I wasted my life, but at the end of the day I could have spent years building a relationship with somebody else that had something in alignment.
- Mike: I think relatively, me being a smart business person and a CFO for some companies, whatever. Statistically, you were together for eight years.
- Kyle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Mike: The average life expectancy for a man, I believe, right now is about 81 years. You gave up 10% of your life on this dating experience. You only get to do that 10 times.
- Kyle: Yep, I better take some really good lessons from that.
- Mike: And I'm saying, like, the takeaway is, you better know what you want because now check it out, you're 41 years old. You still want to have kids. You're a great guy. I'm sorry. I guess if anyone's seen the movie, Old School, disease free man.
- Mike: I'm sorry. I mean, you got a very disease free man. Let's consider this is like Kyle [Palooza 00:27:45]. We're releasing him to the wild.
- Kyle: That is hilarious.
- Mike: I guess drive the message somewhere. I'm just kidding. I'm actually just kidding. More about this, back to being serious. Do you feel a little bit of sadness that you have left the life of the daughter for eight years? Eight years is a long time. I mean, eight years is like longer than most first marriages, right? I mean-
- Summer: Well, it's longer than our first marriages.
- Mike: That's right. I wasn't married. I was married for some years.
- Summer: You know what's funny? I think you and I have been together and then we'll go back, longer than you were married, longer than I was with my ex husband. Like, it's-
- Mike: For sure. What I'm saying is like in a normal scenario, in that situation, you'd be like, "Well, what's my visitation like? I have a connection." When you're just dating without

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being married, and it's not your biological child, man, it can be a snap. And then you're like, this person that I was connected with, there's got to be a loss in that. I mean, this scenario is scary for me.

Summer: Oh, man, we have talked about this, that's why it's a really great question. We've talked about like, Michael has said to me, "But what happens? If something happens to me, I hope that you would still be in Justin and Ashlyn's life.

Summer: "Of course, I would. Why wouldn't it be?" And he's like, "Well, what if this, and what if that ..."

Mike: It's the most terrible scenario for me right now, if like something, heaven forbid, screw you heaven, right? Like if something should happen-

Summer: Screw you, how, whatever.

Mike: I'm just saying like, "Don't you do it." [crosstalk 00:29:35]. There isn't a single [crosstalk 00:29:38]. I mean, I'm sure that, whatever. That's the point. My point is, in that scenario, if all of a sudden, like the situation because of the other dynamics, if I never get to see Logan and Chloe again, there would be an absent ... I would be like, wow, that would suck.

Kyle: That's what's happened to me.

Mike: I would hate that. I would be like, this isn't fair. No, it's not right. And it's a little bit unfortunate because of the dynamics of how things work in blended families. That could be a very real scenario.

Summer: Yeah, it's true.

Mike: And that just sucks.

Summer: And age is important too, because it's like how old are the kids? How much does the other parent have control? Do they have phones? Can I still text them? Things like that. But in your situation, let's hear more about that. Like, what did that feel like. I know in conversations that you and I have had privately, I know some things, but whatever you can share, I think is helpful because I think people do go through this.

Kyle: Well, no. It's a real scary dynamic of like, if you're dating someone with a kid and you've spent not just like two months, eight years, creating a relationship and having feelings in that scenario. Give us some dirt.

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- Summer: That's enough time to actually connect. Two months is like, whoa, glad I dodged that bullet. But here's like we're, and especially that's eight through 16. That's like-
- Kyle: Sure. The dynamic goes even deeper because it wasn't just building a relationship with just her daughter.
- Summer: And not just part-time by the way.
- Kyle: No.
- Summer: Because she wasn't sharing custody.
- Kyle: Correct. But all the time. And I was a part of that time. Taking her to school and picking her up and games and all that stuff. But it wasn't just that, it was a full dynamic because she's Hispanic and her family's amazing, I love her family. But they're very tight knit, and it was also her sister. Her sister has three kids, I miss them tremendously. So it wasn't just her daughter.
- Mike: You guy, you got divorced from the whole family. I guess that brother, that happens to everyone that-
- Kyle: Totally get it.
- Mike: Family basically goes away. It's the kid relationship that I care about.
- Kyle: Well, that was big, because from eight years old from a story from even Hawaii, which was huge for me to ... but [Tommy 00:32:07] laughed. I mean, she was at this teenager stage, very protective of mom. And we're going through our ups and downs.
- Summer: Like any teenager and parent will.
- Kyle: Absolutely. And still at that same dynamic of, okay, you can be here but you can't really be a parent, Kyle. That whole experience was still there even living with each other so that was tough. And providing certain things in life and thinking that you're creating a family because I had asked her to marry me a year before and I'll put a rock on that. She said, yes, with a clear intention mentally because clearly she didn't want to because she probably would have reacted differently.
- Kyle: Now, getting back to your child thing and I say that for a reason, because that creates gaps and it creates distances within relationship with the child as well. But having that relationship and the love of a young daughter, pretty much, gainfully, yeah, basically.

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And you don't have the opportunity to really connect with ever again. And maybe down the road, we will.

Mike: And that was theoretically 10% of your life.

Kyle: Yeah.

Mike: I mean, you're probably in the late, 120 years old, obviously-

Summer: It's a smaller percentage.

Mike: - you're Scottish and ... All kidding aside, that's tough stuff. And the loss that you feel in those scenarios is actually really hard to deal with. Let's talk about some takeaways.

Summer: Well, wait before we go into takeaways. Because look, here's the things. People listen to podcasts and things like that because they want to hear what are some of the real things. Did you feel, I mean, I'm just thinking about this and I'm thinking about Michael, like if I had gone through that. If something had happened where you and I had broken up or something. There is that feeling of like, hey, [crosstalk 00:34:00].

Summer: There would be that whole feeling of just like I get locked those kids. I helped with activities, birthday parties, this whatever. The things like when so and so was upset about his friend being mean. There's so much-

Mike: If we broke up, which is not going to happen obviously.

Kyle: Clearly.

Mike: But if it did, I would be super sad about that. It's like that breaking up of family. Regardless of the piece of paper that comes from the government that says, "Oh, guess what? You're married," you had a connection. You had a marriage of sorts, not legally obviously, but man the struggles are the same.

Summer: I think it's really important to acknowledge those feelings because I know as a step-parent, you know as a step-parent, you know as acting as especially almost like a full-time job because there wasn't an actual, wasn't in the picture, and nobody can see this. I'm looking at Kyle when I say that and then before I was looking at you Michael. I just really want to stress the point to really acknowledge what you go through. And the reason why is because I think one of the hardest things about being a step-parent for me is it actually is a thankless job.

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Summer: And I'm not even saying that like, give me pity points, give me ... It's not at all like, hey, I need all this acknowledgement or anything, but it really is. There are times where you feel kind of lonely because it is a thankless job. There are so many things that you go out of your way to do whether it's financially, whether it's, "Yes, I will. I have all picked them up, I'll take him to the doctor, I'll do this, I'll do that." There are things that you are doing, you're showing up for games and sometimes you can't do all of it, right? And so then you have that guilt and then you have expectations but at the same time, you're also ... Wait, you're supposed to be there all the time, but wait, I don't want you there all the time. Because you've got like-

Mike: Oh my gosh. You're explaining my whole relationship.

Summer: Right? And that's what I really want. Like that's the thing like I frickin get it.

Mike: I want you there when I need you there. And then when I don't want you there, then go away.

Summer: That's exactly the thing and it's like, babe, I'm not saying that I get that from you. Because you're always like, "Please be there all the time." I'm talking about even like as a step-parent when you're dealing with a bio-parent maybe. It's just like, "Oh my gosh, I'm so grateful that you're there." And then at the same time it might be like, "Excuse me, this is not your role." You know what I mean? And you can get that as I've seen fathers do that to step-moms who don't have children.

Summer: Do you know how many step moms I hear from that don't have any children? And this is why I'm hoping to have a voice for them right now. They might not have their own biological children, but they are the step mother to these babies. And they are like, okay, my husband is working and I am the one that is picking up kids. I'm driving them all over the place, I haven't even-

Mike: They've stepped into the role.

Summer: They've stepped into the role and then they've also got maybe a bio-mom that's going like, "You actually didn't do that as good as I would do it," or whatever it is.

Mike: "You should check with me before you [crosstalk 00:37:20]."

Summer: "You should check with me," or, "I really wish you didn't buy those party favors, that was my job," or, "Could you talk ..." [crosstalk 00:37:26] and as a step-mom you're just like, "I'm just trying to be nice. I'm just trying to make everybody get along." You're going through a lot, you're like, "But I ..."

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Summer: You buy something really great for them and then, whatever. There's all of these things that happen that you do not get acknowledged for until you're finally crying and your husband-

Mike: [crosstalk 00:37:46] like an extra super awesome present. And that present should probably be like a cruise to the Caribbean.

Summer: No, but I'm just saying I just have related because Kyle, you and I have had a lot of conversations and I frickin get it because at the end of the day none of it was ever your responsibility ever, not once ever. You volunteered it, you gave with love. And I see a lot of step-parents that are doing that.

Summer: They're doing it because they love the person that they're with, they've grown to love this child and they're giving and giving, but nowhere is it their responsibility to do that. It is still not my responsibility. It's not my responsibility to do anything for Justin and Ashlyn. Legally, it's not a responsibility. It's a moral obligation that I have, that I feel, that I love, and what I want to do because I choose to.

Summer: There's no like, "Well, I'm their mother and I have to do ..." I don't. And so I just really like the purpose of this and like us talking here is really to give a voice to those people because it's frickin hard and it is thankless. It really is.

Kyle: I think one of the takeaways if you want to go there at this point, I think one of the hardest things for most parties to do is just stop and be emotionally mature enough to look and put yourself in the other person's perspective.

Kyle: I think I wasn't given that enough, not being a victim. And honestly, at times, I don't think I did that enough. I did as much as I could, and I should have. I should have done that more. But if I put myself in her scenario, in her situation, what would I be feeling if I were in her space and in that scenario? I think most of us we don't do that enough.

Summer: We don't. You're right.

Mike: You're talking about like coming at it from an empathetic mind.

Summer: Yes.

Kyle: Yeah.

Mike: Understanding other people's feelings?

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Kyle: Well, it's stopping and looking at, number one, look in the mirror first. Taking responsibility for what you choose to do and not do. How you want to communicate and share, and what would you want to be communicated that way, number one.

Kyle: Number two is putting yourself in that scenario, say you have an argument and then putting yourself in that scenario where, how would I feel if Kyle was talking to me that way? Would I feel like back then against the corner? Or would I feel empowered? Like, how would I have felt in that specific scenario? I don't think most of us do that enough.

Kyle: I think in relationships, the more that we can take the opportunity to do that, and if you're feeling resistance, you're feeling maybe a negative experience or a negative feeling, if you can put yourself in the other person's shoes and have the opportunity to feel what they may potentially be feeling. And then just be humble enough to recognize that, and then be empathetic enough or maybe even apologetic or humble enough to actually come back around and say, "You know what, I put myself in your scenario and you know what, maybe I screwed up."

Summer: Yeah. We get so wrapped up in ourselves and what we're feeling.

Mike: That we sometimes forget that there are other people-

Summer: That have feelings too.

Mike: - that are actually giving-

Kyle: They are human beings.

Mike: - with no responsibility to do it.

Summer: Yeah, we talked about this recently on, it might have been our last podcast, I'm not sure which one, but we were talking about that and I was like I had to own that where I was, I need to ... There's some times where I'm like, wait a minute. Oh, you know what it was? It was with the girls. It was the podcast with the girls and Ashlyn was talking about having empathy. One of the things that she had learned, or one of the things that she would tell other step-children was have empathy for the other kids.

Summer: Because sometimes you think you're going through all of these things and you think it's all on you; you're the only one getting in trouble, you're the only one that's [crosstalk 00:41:51]. And then she's like, you realize, oh, wait a minute, they're going [crosstalk 00:41:56].

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- Mike: They're all just dealing with their own thing. And everyone's dealing with their own stuff. I was so proud of that moment.
- Kyle: Yes, cool.
- Summer: I had said to her, I was like, I've done that with your dad. Or there's times where I'm all worked up about something and it's a situation that's like it's affecting both of us. And I'm like all wrapped up in it. And then it's like, oh, wait a minute. I have to realize that he's actually having feelings about this too. It's not it's not all about me, he's going through this stuff too, and it's true.
- Summer: You know what? It feels a lot better in any situation when you shift it off of yourself and start to realize what somebody else is going through because then you can start to be helpful and you start to feel the good parts of yourself when you take all the attention off of yourself and actually look at someone else.
- Kyle: I think it's also a giving mentality.
- Summer: Yeah, it's just a giving mentality, that's what it is.
- Mike: The more that you give yourself and find ways to serve others, the more you actually start realizing who you truly are.
- Summer: Yeah, absolutely. You really start to see the good parts in yourself and the parts that you want to grow. And you realize, oh, wait, I like this. Maybe I should do more of that.
- Kyle: Versus me to me, you go to you-to-you.
- Summer: Yeah. All right. Well, I think we got some good stuff. This was a good long episode. We got fired up at the end there.
- Mike: It maybe a little bit too long.
- Kyle: Yeah, whatever.
- Mike: Although, if you-
- Kyle: You see a lot of Kyle's, and I was-
- Mike: All right. So, in general, we typically leave with some takeaways.

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Kyle: Okay.

Summer: I mean, I think there are really great takeaways that I got from it and you guys can chime in what's really taking responsibility for your choices. Be honest and authentic, especially in the relationships that you're in, understanding and really acknowledging what somebody else is going through and having empathy with that.

Mike: These are really good, baby. In growing together, I mean, allow, at least in the beginning, to organically grow but be authentic open and real with each other and get on the same page if you're ready to take that next step, whether it's a month in, two months, five months, to be able to see if you're ready to make that commitment, if you want to be in a monogamous relationship and you're willing to commit, to make sure you're on the same page. That way you're actually growing together.

Summer: I agree.

Kyle: Those are really good. Mine would be, and they're kind of layered on top of this. Be slow when it comes-

Mike: And have, hold on, hold on. Have the courage to say no if that's not right. If the relationship is not right, have the courage to say no. But, hey look, we've been hanging out for a month, two months, three months and you know what? We may not be in the right timing with each other. We may not be the right ...

Kyle: That's right. What I was saying about be slow, is be slow to quick engage. "Hey, let's move in together." "Hey, I want you to meet my kids." "Hey, let's let's move really fast."

Kyle: In those scenarios you're making dangerous and hard decisions-

Mike: And it's detrimental for the kids.

Kyle: Especially for the kids. From the kids' perspective, you stay right the hell out. The slower you go. They don't need to know you unless you're real. But in those scenarios, like in the situations like we're talking about here, be slow. There is no hurry. You will win in the long run by taking time. Those are my takeaways.

Summer: I like it. I think what would be cool is one day to have, if we could get that, it might be-

Mike: And don't take psycho people. That's the best I-

Kyle: Come on. Come on. Just talking.

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- Summer: I think what would be super cool, it would be really interesting to hear a child's perspective from losing somebody that was in their life for so long, and if they had a choice to keep talking to that person. Or if they did not, or if they were ... I think that would be interesting. My guess is that that would come from an adult who had experienced that you probably wouldn't get it from an actual [inaudible 00:46:06], but we could actually hear what their experience was.
- Summer: I appreciate a lot of you adults who have written in to us to share your experiences that you had when you were a child, because it is so insightful. And I'm super excited that we got to have Kyle here.
- Kyle: Thank you so much.
- Summer: Thank you so much for sharing and being so real and honest.
- Kyle: And remember, this podcast was scheduled in the kitchen earlier, 30 minutes ago, 30 or 45 minutes ago, which is actually really funny. It was like, "You know what, we're having a great conversation. Let's do a podcast."
- Mike: Let us interview Kyle.
- Kyle: Right now.
- Mike: Right now. "Get your ass in here to our professional podcast studio known us [crosstalk 00:46:49] our bedroom.
- Kyle: Honestly, it's nice to be able to, and honestly therapeutic because it's good to have conversation about this stuff, to be able to share it with the world, because people need to hear of people's experiences and learn from their lessons. So thanks for letting me share and contribute.
- Summer: Thank you.
- Mike: Thanks for being open.
- Kyle: You're welcome.
- Mike: 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." That's what we did.

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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 wrong, vulnerable and really wanting to make a change to the millions of families like ours, so I decided to create it. 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: So please, if you like this, write a 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.