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A PODCAST FOR BLENDED FAMILIES

Mike: Hey guys. We're back.

Summer: Hey.

Mike: It's the two of us. I bet you've missed both of us on the podcast.

Summer: Man, it feels like it's been a bunch of episodes in a row that I've missed being on the podcast.

Mike: It really hasn't been that many, but it does feel that way. Welcome back. Welcome back baby.

Summer: Well, I feel like I was there, maybe there in spirit or maybe just a listener.

Mike: You know what? I talk about you, so there you go.

Summer: Awesome.

Mike: We always have our Lives.

Summer: Every Friday morning 7:00 a.m.

Mike: 7:00 a.m.

Summer: Pacific Standard Time, come hang out with Brewing With the Mulders. It's actually fun. We just hang out. You should just make some coffee, sit back, chill.

Mike: I agree. Right now we're sitting back and chilling in our bedroom.

Summer: It's the least echoey place in our house.

Mike: It's also just a great place I think for us to talk about our family. The doors are shut-

Summer: We can close the door-

Mike: We're like, kids, be quiet.

Summer: We can try to find a quiet spot, which is difficult with four of them.

Mike: Today, we're going to talk about why blended families don't work. It's kind of a big deal.

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- Summer: And to jump back to some of those statistics, they actually say that your second marriage-
- Mike: It's over 70%-
- Summer: Statistically higher chance of failure-
- Mike: Of divorce-
- Summer: Than you're first. I'd be interested to know why that is.
- Mike: Well, we're going to talk about some of those things today. I think we've touched a little bit on some of those topics in some of our past episodes. But what we do know is that there's over 50% of families just in America that are blended families of some sort.
- Summer: You can't even name all the ways.
- Mike: You can't even name all the ways.
- Summer: There's so many different ways.
- Mike: There are so many different ways. The thing is, is that you know if it's your first-time marriage and you've got kids with that spouse, sometimes even married with no kids. But married, you have kids, there's such a set of challenges that come up with being an exceptional wife and husband. Being an awesome mother and father. Dealing with siblings, dealing with work and career and also balancing marriage and [crosstalk 00:02:49].
- Summer: And personalities and all the other people that are even outside of your little unit and all the contributing factors.
- Mike: That's just within your own, this is my first-time husband, we had kids together, plus we have all these extended family members. That is hard enough. Now, you bring in other parents, exes, a new set of grandparents.
- Summer: All these kids different dietary restrictions.
- Mike: Dietary restrictions, this one's allergic to dairy.
- Summer: Favorite cravings, I can't live without pizza. One's like, I can only do pepperoni and I have to have cheese.

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Mike: One has chronic ear infections, one has anxiety, one stays up all night. There's all the different things that happen. It's hard enough in your own family. Bring all that in, and it is just so challenging. I don't remember where I read it, but it was in an article that says, just having that family for the first time is all that we feel capable enough to handle. Like, I think I can figure this out. It's hard, especially in the beginning. I think a lot of blended families have in their mind, holy crap, I don't even know what I signed up for. What did I get myself into? Because I'm dealing with so much just in my regular life and now I've got all of this to deal with and it's so hard. Really what we want to talk about today is the negative feelings that come up and what we feel or what we have seen and even in just articles and things that we've read, why blended families don't make it. We've made a list of eight and we'll just briefly talk about them because I think they're really good to be aware of.

Summer: The one thing that I was going to mention before we dive into those eight. We've talked historically about the fact that you need to have good communication before you decide to make the decision to blend your family.

Mike: Yes.

Summer: Because I think a lot of people just jump into it without really considering how difficult it can be and how it's a major commitment. Without work and dedication, and actually wanting to have that happen, because it's not always going to be fun. That fairy tale love that's bringing you into that situation. Isn't always going to be there. It's one of those things where, if you don't have that element, and if you don't take the time to really consider what's going to be going on, then you've got to really think about whether you want to do it or not.

Mike: That is so true. Just a reminder. If you look back, I did do an episode of, I think it was top five things to think about and to be on the same page with the person that you're in a relationship with before you blend. Sometimes you've already blended or you're already right in the mix of it, but it's still not too late to go back and look at all of those things just so you know what you can expect. Because when you go into a blended family situation and you think, oh my gosh it's going to be so romantic and awesome and perfect. We're all going to get along and exes are going to get along and we're all going to have Christmas together. That is a wonderful way that it could possibly be that is absolutely possible, but statistics say-

Summer: It's like a little fairy tale.

Mike: It's like a fairy tale, but the reality is that there's so many different personalities,

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there's so many different people with different, I will call it different emotional IQs that maybe get more worked about different situations. You find that maybe the best thing is that we don't do that. The dynamics are going to be different, but our point today is to be aware of the feelings that will come up and are probably the biggest reasons that couples will break up and a blended family will split.

Summer: Let's talk about those things.

Mike: The first one on our list is resentment.

Summer: Tell us more.

Mike: Resentment comes from not feeling like a priority. In a blended family, that can happen a lot because in a first-time relationship when you don't have other kids or not a lot of other people calling for your attention, it's very easy to get all of that attention. But once you bring in other people that are demanding attention from that person-

Summer: And rightfully so deserve attention.

Mike: And deserve attention, but if you are expecting that you are going to be in this new relationship and that children are not going to demand that attention, then you have a very rude awakening that's coming your way because A, it's not fair to think that you should get all of the attention. Remember these kids were here first and they are a super priority, but that feeling happens. Here's the thing, when I say this too, you're going to have these feelings, in fact every single feeling that I'm going to talk about in a blended family, I'd be very surprised if you never experience any of these feelings, even if it wasn't for a short period of time because the truth is, you probably will feel all of them. The point of this is to say-

Summer: Unless you're not human.

Mike: Unless you're not human. How are you going to deal with it. I think the first thing is to be aware of what's happening, because sometimes you have these negative feelings and you let them run and you don't deal with them at all. But feelings come up, that is just a natural thing that happens. It's more about recognizing it and saying, okay, what am I going to do with this feeling? What am I going to turn it into? How can I transform this into something good instead of making it destroy everything?

Summer: Right, well and sometimes just stepping back and saying, you know what, it's not all about me.

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Mike: Right.

Summer: That could be a good segway into number two.

Mike: Which is ego. Ego, everybody has ego. The problem is when ego becomes so demanding of attention that you start to do things that are really ugly for the relationships in your life. Instead of looking and understanding that other people have feelings too you make it all about yourself.

Summer: When that ego kicks in and that I'll show you, I'll do this, I'll do these actions based on that element, it only can lead to bad things.

Mike: You know when ego is at play when you are taking things personally without knowing exactly what's happening in a situation. You also know when you're making assumptions.

Summer: What else? We're back to-

Mike: Are we back to the four agreements. But seriously, those are two big things.

Summer: I have a funny thing to say. So I actually was hanging out with my brother two weeks ago. He was getting ready to drive back to Oregon where he lives and I said, "Hey man, have you ever read the book The Four Agreements?" He said, "No." I said, "You've got Audible, why don't you listen to it on the way back". I felt it's the kind of thing that we make our kids do on every road trip.

Mike: Right.

Summer: He said, "Okay, cool, awesome." So then he sends me a text, he's like, hey man I really enjoyed The Five Agreements.

Mike: Oh yeah, there's the fifth agreement, did you know about that?

Summer: The sneaky one?

Mike: Yes. Oh, I know about the fifth agreement, I thought I told you about it.

Summer: No.

Mike: We haven't all listened to it.

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- Summer: I didn't, I was schooled and I thought, that's like-
- Mike: It's so good, it's so good.
- Summer: Alright well I guess I've got some Audibleing to do.
- Mike: Audibleing.
- Summer: Audibleing.
- Mike: Yes, so the third one is the feeling of losing control. This is going to happen. When you're in a blended family you absolutely feel out of control because guess what, you don't have your normal-
- Summer: Because guess what?
- Mike: You are.
- Summer: You can't control everything.
- Mike: You can't control everything. The thing is is that somethings in your normal life, I will just share because I've promised to share all of my weaknesses.
- Summer: All?
- Mike: All of the weaknesses.
- Summer: All one of them.
- Mike: I have plenty of weaknesses. But, I definitely like to be in control. Why is that? Because it feels safe and I feel secure that way. I know that coming into a blended family there were times when it was just me and my two kids, it was like, wow, I've got this all under control. I can control bedtime, I can control meals, I can control all of these different things like routines. Mike knows this, I'm so into routine and I like being organized. I like things to be clean and now bring all of us together it's not going to happen.
- Summer: It's like not ever realistic.
- Mike: It's not realistic. But there is this feeling and I've had it where you're like I feel out of control. Things aren't the way that I would normally do that.

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- Summer: Or you can't deploy your parenting things directly the way that you could on your step kids.
- Mike: I can't. Exactly.
- Summer: You can't control your spouses ex somebody and the things that they do or the things that they affect the kids that you now love.
- Mike: Exactly. I can't control any of that. I can't control how he responds to a situation, he can't control the way I do. That is a feeling of oh my gosh.
- Summer: I think most people in general want to feel like they're in control.
- Mike: They do.
- Summer: Not like I'm a control freak. You want to feel like you're in control of your own life.
- Mike: Right.
- Summer: That you can actually shape and decide the way things will go. From the context of a blended family, no you're out of control and it's like a rollercoaster sometimes.
- Mike: It's not that you're out of control of yourself. You are always in control of how you feel and how you can respond to a situation.
- Summer: That's probably one of the only things you can control.
- Mike: But you are not in control of other people and what their emotions are and how they're going to react to things. That you are not in control of and the moment that you can make peace with that and I think you go in and out of that. I think there's times where you're like you know what, that's okay. I see that you are reacting this way and it is okay and I know exactly how I am going to respond because I'm in control of my feelings. But sometimes you feel out of control. Sometimes you're like, you know what, it's like a pretty crappy day and I'm going to react in a way that I'm not going to be proud of. That happens. So it's okay, because guess what? We are going to have grace and that is number four.
- Summer: Having grace. Another reason that families and relationships will break up is not having that grace and what I mean by that is forgiveness for yourself and what that means also is taking responsibility for things that you might not be proud of of how you reacted in a situation. For me, this also means having grace for other people and so there's all

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different people in your blended family, there's other children. Just really giving grace to them and how they are adapting to the situation. Does that make sense?

Mike: It's complicated, this whole giving grace thing. I feel like I want to know what the definition of grace is.

Summer: What I think it is, is it's being forgiving. It's allowing room for somebody to grow. Does that make sense?

Mike: I'm going to actually read the real-

Summer: Read the definition. He's looking it up right now.

Mike: I just used this funny little thing called Google.

Summer: Courtesy, politeness, good manners, respect, respectfulness. Okay, so it's kind of on the do give honor or credit to someone or something. So, I think that kind of goes, for me I'm going off a feeling of what grace represents to me and what it means to me is having grace for yourself, respect and forgiveness of the journey. That's what I mean, you're going to have different kids, you've got your spouse whose going through different things, you've got your spouses ex-wife or husband, give grace and forgiveness because everybody's going to get a little heated up at times. You can label and you can judge all that you want.

Mike: That will get you absolutely nowhere.

Summer: It will get you nowhere. Have the forgiveness to say, hey it's okay because that's what raises your emotional IQ.

Mike: Yeah.

Summer: Getting all heated up and staying in that, staying in that is not going to do any good and you already know that if you've been there. You absolutely know it and if you're trying to justify it you already know that that's not working for you either. So anyways, let's get onto to the next ones.

Mike: Number five.

Summer: Number five.

Mike: Jealousy.

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Summer: Jealousy.

Summer: Now let me go here. Right? I think jealousy is a normal emotion, right?

Mike: Yeah.

Summer: When you really, really feel passionate about something there is that jealousy that can come in any situation for any normal person. But I think a lot of times in blended families there is baggage that came from before. There are things that have happened that have led you to not be together with that original person that you were with. A lot of times you can have those scars and that stuff that you're bringing into the relationship which is then going to make you more prone to potentially being jealous.

Mike: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Summer: I mean that's my take on it.

Mike: No, I can see that. I can see actually, so when I thought of jealousy I actually saw a number of different things. I do know because I've seen it enough times. I see jealousy when one parent is spending so much time with a child. I've seen jealousy in that aspect. I've also seen jealousy in gosh, you really spend a lot of time talking to your ex-spouse. This might be surprising but I also think that there's people are going to be, oh yeah. Jealousy with extended family members like, oh you're still ultra close with my ex or your ex is still ultra close with your family. That type of a thing. Or jealousy with step grandparents and step kids with the biological kids. I mean there's so many different ways that jealousy comes into play.

Summer: You can deal with jealousy even just between the kids. The kids are jealous of the time that you're now spending with your new-

Mike: Yes.

Summer: Jealousy.

Mike: Jealousy. But here's the thing, it's a natural feeling, it's something that's going to come up. It ties into ego because that's where it's coming from. But, jealousy is probably coming from, back to, I'm telling you Four Agreements are so good and that's why there's only four of them because they pretty much can relate to all different feelings.

Summer: For anybody that hasn't read or listened-

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Mike: Don't we plug it so much.

Summer: We're not like affiliates or anything.

Mike: We are not, not at all.

Summer: Although if you do click the link to Amazon at the bottom of this episode-

Mike: Are we going to put a link?

Summer: I'm just kidding.

Mike: Just go to Amazon and get it.

Summer: Maybe I'm not kidding actually, maybe you should click the link at the bottom.

Mike: Get the Audible. You know what? I would go on hikes and listen to this and I've listened to it probably five times, I love it.

Summer: It's like you get something different each time.

Mike: You do get something different. The more you hear something the more you're like oh my gosh, I can apply to this or that. But in terms of jealousy it's a lot of times jealousy is coming from you are making assumption or you are taking something personally. You're starting to have negative thoughts about yourself because whatever's happening over here is making you think something negatively about yourself. Which is also one of the four agreements which is be impeccable with your word. Which if you listen to the book has a lot to do with how you speak to yourself and how you honor yourself. So anyways, not I'm getting all spiritual.

Summer: I like it.

Mike: But I just think that people should be aware of that is a normal thing that's going to happen. I think that the more you are aware of the negative feelings that will come up, the more maturely you can deal with them because if you aren't and you have those feelings, you try to justify them and feed them. The more you feed them, the more that they negatively impact you. Would you agree?

Summer: I think so. I think that's pretty straight up. Don't get jealous.

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- Mike: 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 I get along with his ex or how do I set some boundaries in place? Or, why doesn't my step son 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.
- Summer: The next one and this is a pretty big thing that can cause blended families to split up and that's fairness in a family. We have talked about this when it comes to house rules, treating all of the members, step children, bio children, all the children of the family how are you treating them? Is there one set of rules for these three kids? A different set of rules for that one kid? Things like that can definitely tear a family apart.
- Mike: That dynamics super hard. Right?
- Summer: It's really hard and I've seen couples that haven't even gotten to the let's move in together or let's get married or let's get engaged or let's take the plunge of blending our family because this has been since a strong thing. There hasn't been that, hey if we're going to do this then we're going to make sure that all the kids feel that they are being treated equally. that can definitely, because what it does is it causes kids to be ultra upset which causes hardship and a very stressful dynamic between the bio parent and the bio child. All of this stuff starts to happen and if you think about it, of course it does because these are children and they're still growing and learning and they're still seeking that security and you want to give them as much of that as you can. So if you're trying to play games with, oh you get to do this but you don't, you get ice cream but nope you don't get it.
- Mike: Right, it doesn't work.
- Summer: It doesn't work.
- Mike: I think sometimes when the topic being fair to all family members, it could be be fair with the person that is your partner in raising kids. Be fair with them. Understand that they've got to spend time with-
- Summer: Yeah, that's true too.

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Mike: Dealing with things. It doesn't just necessarily mean like hey the rules for all the kids are exactly the same, I'm talking like-

Summer: It's with time as well. It's like hey, be fair knowing your husband needs to spend time with his son or your husband needs to spend time with his daughter or your wife or your girlfriend needs time with her daughter. Things like that. It is, it's being fair and being respectful of that, I agree.

Mike: Just to recap, we're talking about the things that lead to blended families failing.

Summer: Yes.

Mike: And maybe never even starting.

Summer: Maybe never ever starting. This stuff happens just in the early dating stages. Okay, this next one-

Mike: Can you relate to this one?

Summer: I can relate to it.

Summer: But I don't think you actually practice it.

Mike: I don't think I ever practice this, I can relate to it, maybe with strangers. But here's what it is, blended families breaking up or failing because they're fixated on what other people think. So, they're faking it, that it's so easy. Oh my gosh, everyone gets along so great, it's so perfect.

Summer: It's that whole thing, like you want to have this façade.

Mike: You want to have this façade.

Summer: That everything is so perfect.

Mike: I will tell you we've always been-

Summer: There's no blended, there's no family, blended or non-blended-

Mike: That is 100% all the time in harmony.

Summer: In fact, nobody's perfect.

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Mike: One things for sure is that I've always been honest about, okay it's challenging sometimes and then there's times where I'm like, oh my gosh, I don't know what's going on but it's been an amazing month, there is harmony happening in this family. It's awesome. That happens, we're going through right now.

Summer: Peaks and valleys.

Mike: We've had this amazing peak this whole year I feel like. I'm talking about even before, like this school year with the kids, its like amazing.

Summer: Man because we've had so many legitimate challenges where it's been freaking hard.

Mike: Yes, it's been really hard. So when people go, do they get along? There's time where I remember in the very beginning we were like, yeah it's kind of amazing. They all get along. Then there were times where we just like ah, yeah the boys really don't like each other, hate sharing a room. Or, whatever was happening and it's like well, mmm, it's been kind of challenging, it's hard. Not that we're airing dirty laundry but we're just honest about hey, this isn't the easiest thing because there were couples-

Summer: If you're listening and you're super, super struggling and the kids are wanting to push each other off of a bridge and it just seems terrible, we can tell you honestly it will get better. Then it will probably get worse again and then it might get better.

Mike: You know what? This is just evolution, this is just how we evolve as human beings. I think it gets better if you have that grace. If you have the grace and the respect and honor that this is a journey and this is part of the experience that they go through. Instead of taking it personally and thinking that everything's going to go wrong now because of this one bad moment which I have totally done. I have said that to Mike and Mike has always been this guy whose like you need to look into the future. I want you to see the trajectory of these things. These boys are going to be bros one day. Sure enough they totally get along right now and they cook together and do these things and I'm like this is kind of amazing right now.

Summer: But there were times where I'm just like I don't know, I don't know. It makes you, when you feel that disharmony or you feel like some people aren't getting along or you feel like a kid is struggling, it does make you go, is this worth it? Are they suffering? Is this my fault? I mean you have all of these negative feelings and what's so amazing to see and I would hope that some of you that are just newly doing this really hear this, is that the more grace that you can give, the more compassion that you can have for all of these different journeys and empathy, the day comes because we have this now. It

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might change again, they might have other negative feelings based on what's going on in their individual personal lives but to hear them say the things that our children will say to us, like the things that they've gone through and how much they have learned from each other is just so amazing. I think they would not have had that had we plugged the plug and said you know what this is too hard. This is too hard for them.

Mike: To push through it and to work with them through it has made them stronger, better people. That's ultimately the goal. There are so many blended families and I've maybe said this in the very first episode of this season that there are so many blended families out in the world now and there's such a high rate of those families failing, that's a lot of people suffering. I would really love for less people to have to go through suffering because when people suffer, they start to make bad choices and do bad things in life. So, I'm saying this, have faith in your family, have that grace, have that respect, put ego aside. Recognize that you might be having these negative feelings but what can you do to transform this.

Summer: So that was a lot under the [inaudible] thing.

Mike: That's good, baby you're on a roll.

Summer: Obviously this is a passion of mine and that's why did all of this. But the thing is is that if you fall into the whole rabbit hole of things are going badly, it goes into the final negative feeling here which is just kind of that feeling sorry for yourself and the whole dynamic and going nobody here even wants to make it work. Because you will have those moments where everybody's upset. Every single person is just in this negative spiral mindset.

Mike: That mindset of just going this isn't working.

Summer: This isn't working.

Mike: And I'm over it.

Summer: And nobody wants to make it work and you're all feeding off of each other with that negative energy and guess what? Yeah, of course you can definitely continue and ride that whole negative feeling and you can fail.

Mike: Or-

Summer: Or-

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Mike: You can deploy good practices, like the things that have to be put in place in order for you to have a successful relationship with not just your spouse but with your kids, your own kids, your new kids, your blended kids, your bonus family.

Summer: Yes, whatever you call them. So, those are the eight, we've got resentment, number one. Number two, ego. Number three, losing control. Number four, not having grace. Number five, jealousy. Number six, being fair to all family members. Number seven, faking that it's so easy and number eight, no one wanting to make it work. But here's the thing, we talked about all the negative feelings that can happen. You're also going to experience and you already know this if you're doing it, you're going to have all of the awesome surprises that actually happen pretty often. Like the moments you see your husband being super lovey with your child or his own child and you see them cuddling together. I see those moments where I'm like oh, look how sweet, everyone's just all cuddled up on the couch. Or look at Mike and Ashlyn, all super cuddled.

Mike: When that connection is super on.

Summer: Yes, look at Mike and Justin barbecuing outside. Look at Logan want to cook with Mike.

Summer: You're like, hey wait a minute, our family's actually all in alignment.

Summer: Yeah, look at us all at the table laughing, playing a game together and talking about memories. Look at all of us going together and talking about the best part of our day and the worst part and what we would have changed and made better and just bonding and connecting. Like siblings loving each other or like hugging each other. Just the other day where Ashlyn got dropped off and immediately these two girls just ran to each other, Chloe and Ashlyn and just embraced each other with the biggest hug, jumping up and down because they hadn't seen each other for three days. It was the cutest thing. There were times when they would just kind of like, oh, I'm not even going to look at you.

Summer: I can't stand you right now.

Mike: I can't stand you right now because you did something in our room or whatever it was. But, it's just those moments where you see them developing emotionally in such a mature way and it's just so awesome and it makes you feel so good inside. You have that oh, my gosh, this is so worth it.

Summer: It makes it all worth it.

Mike: It's so worth it.

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Summer: The struggle, the problem, the things, the work, the tireless hours that go into actually making sure that it comes together is all worth it.

Mike: So the truth is is that you are, you will probably, you are, you're going to fail. You will though. It's a good thing though. You're probably going to fail.

Summer: You're probably going to get close to failing but I know you-

Mike: I wanted to finish my sentence, I'm not saying you're going to fail at your blended family, what I mean is that you are going to feel like you're failing with all of these emotions during this whole journey. I say expect it. You all know if you've been listening for awhile you know that Mike and I are entrepreneurs. We know what it's like to fail in business. We know what it's like to win in business. We know that failing is part of the journey. Those failures are what lead you to the wins because you wouldn't even know how to win had you not learned the lesson from the failure.

Summer: They're the lessons, they're the stepping stones you get to climb up.

Mike: Yes, embrace it, don't let it pull you down into the rabbit hole. Don't get sucked in. Know that you are stronger, at the end of the day you are in control of your feelings. You get to feel what you want to feel and you get to take that and transform the negative thing into something that's so beautiful, like 100 times more beautiful than the negative experience that you had.

Summer: Agreed, well said.

Mike: Alright guys, thank you so much. You know that you can go to EverythingAlwaysShow.com and you can find show notes for this episode, everything that you want to know about Mike and Summer.

Summer: Yeah and hey we want to be friends. Come be friends with us on social media.

Mike: Come be friends, talk to us, join our lives, tell us what you think. Chime in, if you got something from this episode bring it up on the next live. We love hearing from you, we love anybody who comes, even if you come in later. I know a lot of you are like I'm not getting up at 7:00 a.m.

Summer: It's not that early.

Mike: It's not that early but even respond later. We love hearing from you guys. I think we've-

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Summer: In a weird kind of way, we have our family but we think of our listeners as our extended family.

Mike: You are the everything always family, thanks guys.