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A PODCAST FOR BLENDED FAMILIES

Summer:

Well hello Everything Always family. Welcome to another episode of the Everything Always show. It is just me again, and I'm sure that bums you out because I know you love to hear the big Dutch man's voice, but it is just me today and I'm having girlfriend talk with Heather Stewart. She's also known as the wicked step mom, but she's anything... She's anything but evil wicked. She's everything wicked awesome and wicked cool, and you're going to hear that.

Summer:

I'm so stoked to be talking to her because I sought her out early on. I've been following her on social media. I think she's so rad. I love the stories that she shares and I really wanted to talk to her because there's a lot of women that right in that are childless step moms, they're an instant mom. You just meet somebody, fall in love and the next thing you know, they're a mom, even though they don't have biological children of their own. It's always such a crazy dynamic.

Summer:

All good things, challenging things. A lot of women write in about their struggles with relationship with the bio mom, figuring out how to be a mom all of a sudden with young kids or even older kids. There's just a lot that goes into it and it's stressful, but it's also super rewarding. There's goof ups that we have, and we're talking about all of that in today's interview. What I'm super impressed with is Heather and how she handles situations. If emotions do arise or things do feel frustrating and at the same time, how she learned to get there. It's awesome stuff. I'm so excited for you to listen and enjoy the interview.

Summer:

Heather, I'm so excited that you are talking to me today about being a step mom, blended family all the good stuff.

Heather:

Thanks for having me. This is so exciting. I've actually listened to yourself and Mike a lot. You guys offer a lot of advice and even some of your interviews have been quite insightful. It's exciting to be a part of your show.

Summer:

Thank you. Well, that makes me excited. Especially you're... Let's talk about first who you are.

Heather:

Okay.

Summer:

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So you are a step mom and you blog a lot about what it was like becoming an instant mom because you were not a parent yourself until you met your husband. Correct?

Heather:

That is correct. Yes. I lived like ... If you could picture the ultimate party girl, loving life, doing all the adventures, making all the mistakes. I did them all and I was really career driven. I was focused on me and honestly in some aspects, I guess I was living a selfish life. Not that that was necessarily a bad thing. It was just me that I had to worry about.

Heather:

Then I came into this role and woke up and I'm like, okay, this is a completely different lifestyle and it definitely wasn't selfish. It was completely the opposite. I was in no way shape or form thinking about children or a life with a full family already made.

Summer:

How old were they when you first met?

Heather:

The first meeting was preliminary but they were two and four. Then our relationship started to build as they were three and five. I guess they know three and five.

Summer:

Kids at that age can be a handful. You're not used to parenting that and then you're just thrown into it. That's a lot to deal with.

Heather:

It was and I look at it ... I look back at the time, I actually was joking with my husband this week and I was like, "Remember that first time, when the boys came around the corner of our apartment? I was like oh shit, he's really little, they're just babies. I got to go." Where can I go where's the escape route. They were babies. I talked on FaceTime and seen before, but I never really... Maybe I didn't put it into perspective. Maybe there was some part of me that was a bit naïve, but as it progressed, it became a little more manageable. But yes they were challenging, they were little.

Summer:

What were some of those being this woman that's coming into their lives? What are the challenges you faced right at the beginning?

Heather:

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I had always been around kids and I almost hate saying that because everyone's like, "Well, you can't be around kids enough until you become a mom." Then it's like it's a whole other ballgame really. To be honest, I came into a situation where my husband really needed a lot of help in the sense that he was working a full time job, he had his own place, and so when he was actually having the children a lot, and I just came in helping him. A lot of people were like, did you discipline right away? How did you navigate in that way? Did they resist you?

Heather:

With me, I came in helping my husband. When you have a three year old who's not sitting his bam in the chair, you're like, "Okay, just sit still it's supper time. You need to go brush your teeth. Did you potty before you went to bed? Okay, let's put your pull up on." All that I just was helping him. I kind of just moved into that direction of a parent. Naturally, I can't say that there was ... it was really hard, because they saw me as someone helping their dad and it was so natural, and they loved on me.

Heather:

Cliche enough, I always say I was a miracle how it happened because they curled up with me and curled with me immediately. That was just the relationship we had. It wasn't pride or tried or awkward.

Summer:

I think there's an advantage to when they're so young. I've noticed that and I think we have that as well in our family. But I've seen people when the kids are older, it's more difficult. They're a little bit apprehensive, not a little bit, a lot. Because they've been used to this other life for so long whereas when they're little, it's like things are changing all the time for them.

Heather:

I think you're right. I think some people say, Oh it's great because they were little. And I think there's some positives when your kids are older because they're able to process it differently as well. But I do think for our situation, in particular, it was great that they were so little, because it was just accepting as though I was ... I don't know. It could have been a caretaker or a nanny in their life.

Heather:

They really accepted me as ... and I think, I don't know, kids are so intuitive. We don't give them enough credit. I mean, these little boys saw their dad just as himself. They actually had three months away from their dad while he was across the country, just looking for a job and re establishing his [inaudible 00:06:59]. It was three or four months after and it came in it was ... I was a part of that new life and I was loving on him and I think that's all that mattered to them.

Heather:

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They're like, oh my dad loves her, she loves him, okay cool this person's awesome. They actually called me Miss heady at the beginning of it all.

Summer:
So formal.

Heather:
We have videos of my youngest being like, "Look dad, it's miss heady on the picture." It's miss heady." And he would kiss me Good night. And I'm like, I don't know. It's pretty crazy to me when I think about the beginning days.

Summer:
How often do you guys have them?

Heather:
We do have 50 50, the beginning of our relationship, I actually did long distance for nine months. I think that helped me establish a relationship with the children, because we actually built a relationship via FaceTime. I would have movie nights with them while on the computer, or we'd have ... I'd send gifts to them and with some scavenger hunt or some game associated.

Heather:
When I did visit, it wasn't that they were with us full time, it was split. I remember my first time being dad's girlfriend, I had been in their lives via FaceTime, I guess for almost six months. We went camping. Camping didn't also feel like we're at home in their space. We just had an adventure together which was a whole other can of worms because man camping with a three year old and a five year old, I had no idea.

Summer:
Oh wow that's a lot. That is a lot.

Heather:
It is, there's a lot of pictures of me drinking beer. I was just...

Summer:
Totally need it.

Heather:

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[inaudible 00:08:35] Chris had them 50 50 as well. Sorry, Chris is my husband. Then when I moved across the country and left my career and everything. It still went 50 50 the whole time. Our schedules two two five five, because the boys were so little, and it works for us and we'll continue until it doesn't.

Summer:

That's what we did for a long time when all of our kids were younger when we shifted to 50 50. We had different kind of ... There was a time where my husband had his kids less percentage then it moved to 50 50. I had my kids more, and my ex husband had them less, and then it shifted to 50 50. That was such a great ... Especially when they're younger because it's hard for them to be away from their parents for so long but then you just see, feel out when it's right.

Summer:

They start to ask, our kids were like, it would be easier if I didn't have to move all of these stuff. But when we presented it to them earlier on, what do you think about a week on or a week off? It was like, not ready yet. You feel that out. This is one of the biggest things that I hear especially from women in similar situation to you that are just dating somebody with kids or ... and don't have kids themselves. They have challenges and struggles with the relationship between their husband and the bio mom. Or sometimes it's the relationship between the two Women.

Summer:

I'm curious and obviously only share what you want to and feel comfortable sharing, but I'm always curious about that and I want to address it because I cannot even tell you how many women will write in about this, about challenges that they're having. Some like, gosh, it's almost like I can't talk about it enough.

Heather:

Yes, I do think every situation is different. I tread lightly and I only tread lightly with this area because I think I try to talk... I try to emphasize a lot on the positive and how step moms are parents too. I am probably navigating a little differently to be honest, because Summer you're mom in the position to and I think if I'm talking to moms who are in the role as a step mom as well or not, I actually probably talk differently than I do if it's just another step mom, and they're not a mom as well.

Heather:

I think everyone has different emotions in it and I think that you bring to the table in your situation a whole different insight because you're a mom prior to becoming a step mom. Well then, whether there's a step mom on the other side or how that feels or how that even happened, there's so many different elements. I tread lightly, but in our regard, I call it pretend amicable. We are pretend amicable in front of the children. But we are not friendly.

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Heather:

It's friendly if it's needing something. There's still I think, a lot of hurt and emotions with regards to the relationship and what happened there prior to me. I come in with a really full personality and I'm like, "Okay, well, it's our home." I'm going to do what I have to do to navigate through it, and no one's going to really tell me how to do that. I'm pretty sure bio mom has that same personality traits.

Heather:

Sometimes that clashes and not necessarily that we even communicate a lot, I actually allow my husband to do the communicating. I think even though I might be doing all the appointments, it's just going to come across a lot easier to be received, I think from him and say, "Hey, this is what the doctor said, This is what the dentist said, and this is what ... we got haircuts, and this this this. Instead of me being like, "Hey, this is what this is."

Heather:

It's almost like, "Oh, you did all that with my kids. Why didn't I do it?" Even though it was all put on our plate, it's just that I happen to be the one in this household that could take care of it. We navigate in that way, there are things ... We have a group text, that we communicate things with school papers, or invitations, and those little logistical things I will communicate back and forth with because it's usually me who's making sure that snow pants were in the backpacks or making sure that the papers are signed and all of that.

Heather:

I'll communicate those types of things with her. I don't get into feeling matches. When it ... we're talking about feelings or how we should proceed as family or as a whole or not. I don't get involved. I try to stay out of that. My husband probably hears I'm much more earful on that.

Heather:

We're very aligned in that way and often before those conversations happen, we know where our boundaries are, how we feel, where we're going. That kind of thing. What he's actually communicating is usually what we come to together. In public, we don't have the same friends. We're not having wine together, and I know that there's lots of people that do. We've never really sat down and had a chat, we've never communicated really about the children and what they're going to be even involved in.

Heather:

It's just, I stay out of that part of it. Because I think ... I think actually, and maybe this is stereotypical, and a lot of women will be like, "Oh, that's not me." But I think we're very emotional and we're very emotionally driven. Sometimes I might respond in a way because not even thinking about the kids but just how I might feel, or that it might be something about snow pants and I'm like ... by her saying that I

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forgot the snow pants, does that mean, I'm not as good of a parent? But it had nothing to do about that. We're just talking about frigging snow pants.

Heather:

I think sometimes it's just easier and I always say, my husband knows her better than I do. He knows the bad and the good. So why am I telling him how to communicate with her or how we should be communicating with her when he's the one who spent X number of years dealing with it.

Summer:

You're extremely mature. I have to know, was it always this way for you? Because for a lot of people who finally reached that point where they go, "Okay, I'm not going to get emotionally involved, or I'm not going to try to ..." I don't know if you heard one of our episodes with Ashley. She was like, I used to be like ... I'm going to send the text message for you, or I'm going to communicate all of that. Instead she said, "Hey, he can handle these things." And like you said, you come to an agreement together. That's what my husband and I do.

Summer:

We'll talk about things okay, what's the ideal outcome and how do we need to respond to this? I think that's so healthy and good, because that means you're also putting your relationship as a priority. But it took us some learning. We had to go through a learning curve to realize, oh maybe this is a more mature way of doing X, Y, or Z. Or maybe think about the kids or whatever it is at hand. When you really look at the ultimate result that you want to have and if you're not getting it, obviously, you have to do something different.

Summer:

We've learned a lot of different things that we need to do. Then there's some things we're like, "Gosh, such and such family has so much drama with communication or this or whatever it is that's happening." I think we've done really well. We always tackled it this way. I just want to know, did you always know, especially coming in as an instant mom, basically.

Heather:

Honestly, if I'm going to be completely transparent, hell no. I am still dramatic on the other end, it's just I'm not going to show her that side of me. I'm going to hold my shit together and I feel so composed but I'm the one being childish [inaudible 00:16:10] enemy flipping her the bird as I'm driving away, she can't see. That's just me being totally real in the sense is that it is ...

Summer:

If you have not had those moments in your life, then stop listening now because you're being fake. You just not being real. Who is born that mature ever?

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Heather:

Exactly. I'm seeing my friend and how we've now learned what we need to do, it's been a learning curve for sure. But I also know that there are times when we'll get texts about something and I just want to rhyme off. I actually put it in a separate text to my husband. I'm like, this is what I really want to say. He'll do the same and sometimes it's just about ... And I've heard other people say, you know what, I put it in a draft, like just putting a draft, never send that or sit on it for 24 hours because sometimes I just have a lot that I want to say.

Heather:

I do have an opinion and as a step mom, on the other side, there's no other step dad involved. I think it's really hard to feel you're without a voice in this role. Sometimes you feel it doesn't matter. Not that your husband or your partner doesn't make you feel like that, they can validate that and hear you all you want. But sometimes you just want to be like, No, that doesn't make sense. Why am I coming in twice this weekend for this, and this when you're going to be out here? No.

Heather:

Sometimes you just want to have a voice. I think, doing that and just putting that draft or putting my true feelings in a text message to my husband that he can be like, "Okay, you're being emotional on this." It makes me feel like I have a voice even though we don't often tap into that voice because it's not appropriate. So no, I'm not always mature. It's not always perfect. We've done things and someone asked me recently, they're like, how do you communicate?

Heather:

I'm like, well this texting thing only this group texting, this has only been happening for probably the last nine months. Prior to that it was phone calls and it got so much for my husband that he was just like, you know what, let's set a time once a week and we get a phone call, then those phone calls end up being two and a half hour conversations on a Tuesday night and we're exhausted and we're like, why are we doing this for two and a half hours? We're just basically bickering back and forth our feelings.

Heather:

There's a reason why people are split too. Things aren't always going to be perfect. It's never going to be agreeing. You can say, Oh, you have to put the kids ahead of everything else. That's true but I'm telling you with adults involved, who are complicating everything, it's really hard sometimes to just see the child in it. And everyone see the children in it at the same time. I think ... We've learned through what has worked for us, what doesn't work for us and you know what? This little texting system works for mundane things, and then the bigger things go on an email and that might not work for someone else's situation but we've learned that that does for us.

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Heather:

It hasn't been always mature. It hasn't always been seamless. There are times where I've probably said something like, Well, listen if I get a voice on this too, but we can ... And then I'm like, "Oh my God, why did I say that? That was so childish of me. This is so much bigger." But I've navigated. I mean, I'm also almost five years into this. Just like as a parent, when you have that newborn, you're like I don't know what to do. You navigate through it, and you learn how to deal with the emotions and the tantrums and all that.

Heather:

It just is and I think that's how this is, you learning how to work with all the emotions, the tantrums and [inaudible 00:19:39].

Summer:

Totally is. It's just, I mean, that's how everything in life is right? Whether it's blended family, being a parent being a step parent, it's constantly a learning lesson.

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 we 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? 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:

I have to say, I love, like you said sending sending the text message to him or just having a draft. I remember doing that even back when I was going through divorce. There were things I was so angry about and I'm like, I can't actually send this to my husband who I'm going through divorce with, but I had all the bad feelings.

Heather:

Yes.

Summer:

But it was like, it'll just start a war or it'll start an argument. I used to draft and I think there's a therapist that told me this, just as I write out the email, say all the nasty things, whatever you need to say. Just say it, it's for you. It's for you emotionally. I thought, well, what is that going to help? But it does, there's

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something about the energy and it just feels like ... It's like if you're journaling or you're starting ... You're trying to think about your future or have a vision, you just get into that feeling of oh my gosh.

Summer:

What happens is, once you do that, and then you just let it sit for a day or even sometimes just an hour, you're like, I don't even need to send it. I feel so much better. But so many people do in that moment, like I'm just going to send it because I need to transfer my negative energy to you. I'm just going to spiral and it's like ... And then, what does that do? Nothing that reaction I mean ...

Heather:

Is never what we needed.

Summer:

No and Whatever ... coming out from it, you're like, take it back. Take it back.

Heather:

Yes, exactly.

Summer:

Very funny, but that is so mature. I mean, that's the thing is that we do have these feelings. It's more about what are you going to do with them in that moment. You're just going to drop the bomb on somebody or you're going to go, "Okay, this is how I have to deal with it, get some tools, and then respond."

Heather:

Absolutely. You know what that's ... you're dealing with three or four adults in the situation and I think the end of the day, everyone has different values, different beliefs, different things that they're interested in, and it changes based on seasons often. You can't expect it to be always the same. It's never going to always be the same.

Summer:

It's so true when you say there's different seasons because you don't know your situation and I think we have that going on with our dynamic to. We're not on a very personal level with our ex spouses. We just co parent with them. There's not drinking wine together, there's not all of that. It's basically it's business, it's handling business. We found that that is the absolute best for all of us.

Summer:

Kudos again, I say that often, kudos to the people that can do that. Have the wine, have the coffee, go have double dates together. That's great.

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Heather:
Right.

Summer:
It's really awesome.

Heather:
Not me not.

Summer:
It's not ... Yes, it's terribly common. You're dealing with already the emotions of the past, the hurt or whatever, and everybody heals and gets through that and moves on at different rates. Then on top of that, you also don't know what's going on in those lives. You don't know what's going on with your husband's ex and maybe he's going through a hard season, maybe it's a great one and you're going through a hard season, there's different things that are always happening. More than ever, to be able to control your emotions, still feel them, but to control the actions that you're going to take is critical for everyone involved and especially the kids.

Heather:
Absolutely. I couldn't agree more.

Summer:
I saw this post of yours on Instagram and it was you cuddling up with one of the boys because he was sick.

Heather:
Yes.

Summer:
And it was so ... It just warmed my heart and was so sweet. I wanted to talk about that just because I think of, that's a moment that's ... it's a challenging moment. It's also probably one of the ... such a rewarding moment. I just wanted to talk about your feelings in a moment like that. Then of course, share any other moments like that, that you have.

Heather:
Yes, I think it's, again, I go back to the cliché of it's some kind of a crazy miracle and how seamless it's been for how I feel towards the children and how they feel towards me. I know this isn't always received the best for the boys do call me mom. I am their mom in this house. And that doesn't mean that they

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don't love their mom. Man, they love their mom hard. She is their mom. They know that she's the real mom. But man, they love me hard.

Heather:

In those moments, mom's not here, and I am their mom. Especially my littlest little who's ... he doesn't even know that there was a life before me. He crawls up to me and wants me to rub his back when he's sick. I'm who he wants. Yes, of course, if it's on his mom's time, she's too he wants and so I don't minimize that, that there's two of us just loving so hard on these kids.

Heather:

I think it's probably and I would admit, I don't know this. It's hard for a mom to feel that and know that. I think there's some bio parents that can step aside and be like, "Wow, I'm so glad at least they have that when I'm not there." But I do think that takes time and growth to be able to separate that, to realize that you can't be there all the time, when you want to. There's more moments like that where he was so sick that night and I just didn't know what to do and I curled in the bed with him and my husband took the photo and I actually didn't even know because I was half asleep and I have these little first moments I had first moments when they were sick before, but now that he's even getting older, and he's seven years old, he still just wants me.

Heather:

There's things that he just wants his dad for. He's never going to come to me and ask to help fix his toy box. He needs his dad in those moments. It is a really raw real moment. It's not opposed moment, he's asleep and sick and there are nights where I remember living in a two bedroom condo and spending my night up changing sheets and scrubbing floors because they were so little that they couldn't run to the bathroom quick in time and we didn't know that they were sick and they were vomiting on the floor. I'm like what the ... what did I sign up for?

Summer:

Oh yes.

Heather:

But then there's these [inaudible 00:26:57] there a little older so they can actually get to the bathroom so it's nice.

Summer:

Yes.

Heather:

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It's raw, and it's real and again, going back, they came to the conclusion of calling me mom on their own. We actually in our home were like, let's come up with something different, maybe in a different language. We would go through different styles of moms, so it didn't get confusing for them. I didn't want to step on anyone's toes. That's not what I was here to do. I wasn't here to make it harder. It was already hard enough. They just kept ... especially my oldest, the youngest one was just follow suit.

Heather:

He just kept pressing through but I don't get it. You are my mom you ... He actually said it first time on Christmas day and he's like, but I think I want to call you mom. You're like a mom, you smell like a mom, you talk like a mom, cooking like the mom. So yes, I just want to call you mom. So I was pushed to get back on the other end and it went for some time and they're like we're not allowed to call you mom. I was like, whatever you want to call me, whatever you feel comfortable calling me. I don't care.

Heather:

It was unnatural for me to be honest because I think ... Okay, you had your children and you had them in your belly and you're like, coming to the conclusion, people would refer to you like, "Oh, mommy's going to be so excited to meet you" Or, "Mommy bought you new dress." As you're amping up in those months. Then you have the early years where they're not calling you mom yet. You're referring to yourself or other people are referring to yourself as mom, but I never had that. I just started having a five year old be like, mom, ma, mommy, it was like six times and they're like, "Heady," I was like, "Yes, what's up?"

Heather:

I would forget ... I didn't know that you were calling me. It was so unnatural. When we got married, we were officially married. My oldest step mom said, "No one can tell me not to call you mom. Now you really are my mom." He just does it full intentional wholeheartedly, you're my mom. Those moments going back to those moments of that picture, I am and I think that's hard for me to say to someone like you who's a mom, it's hard to say that my circles of just mom friends or not even in a blended family situation because I think ultimately everyone's like, I can't imagine. It would kill me.

Heather:

I bet it would kill me. I'm not even minimizing how hard it must be. I just... How do you continue to squash a child when they're so adamant for two years consistently of wanting to call me mom?

Summer:

I absolutely agree. It's so interesting, because yes, I'm a mother, but I'm also a step mom. I do sometimes wonder, I think I remember early on first being divorced, when there were maybe some other women in the kid's life and it was like, "Who is this and what's happening." You're so fragile. It's

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different being a step mom, I definitely have a different vision, but even besides that, there's just something about if your kids are happy, if they're so stoked, that's such an awesome feeling to know.

Summer:

It's the worst feeling. I've had friends who have gone through divorce, and they're like, I've got to send my child, to this other parent, and they don't want to go.

Heather:

It's not positive.

Summer:

Right and they're so upset. And that is heart wrenching as a parent to do that, because I want you to feel happy and excited and loved and all of these things. If they're not feeling that it's awful. I've always felt it was so wonderful knowing that kids are in a place where it's like all of them are ... they miss both parents. When I'm not with you I miss you but I'm so excited to go see this [inaudible 00:30:49] come back to you. And for my children in their case, they have a step mom and their dad and then they've got little siblings that they're so excited about. I'm like that's so ...

Summer:

I mean, it's such a great feeling knowing if they're sick, they're being taken care of and there's that female energy, that masculine energy, there's all of that that they need there. They've got that here and it's a great feeling to know that and I think we had [inaudible 00:31:15].

Heather:

Yes, I did listen to that one. Yes.

Summer:

And I just loved ... and it's so true when she's speaking out to mothers. You've got this woman who's loving on your children and taking care of them. What a wonderful thing, focus on that instead of you forgot to pack underwear or you got to fill their favorite water bottle for soccer, whatever it is. There's all these things you can guess. Nitpicking about that in the big picture is so not worth it. So not worth it.

Heather:

It's funny you say that because I think those nitpicking things are so much more draining and I think we can all get sucked into a season or a cycle of it, especially at the beginning of first navigating, you're like ... it almost like you're trying to, I think in a step parent, you're almost trying to validate. I did it all. I got it all done. I checked all the boxes, I figured it all out.

Heather:

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The nitpicking is almost to prove your worth, to prove your value, but it actually only becomes more detrimental and exhausting than just being I'm just human. Sometimes I might forget shit and sometimes she might. That doesn't make you a bad mom.

Summer:

Every mom does that. That's the thing. If you didn't have anybody else involved and you were doing it yourself, you would mess up and you would laugh about yourself and you would joke about it with your friends and go oh my gosh, I totally ... My kids didn't brush their teeth this morning because we were running late or I totally didn't have time to get my kid breakfast and so they had pop tart in the car on the way or a bag of chips.

Summer:

I've heard ... these are all [inaudible 00:32:49] you're laughing about yourself. Hey, sister I get you. I've been there. But if it were somebody else doing that, then it's so easy for them I would never send my child to school with just a bag of chips for breakfast. What are you talking about? I can't believe she did that.

Heather:

She did that. Yes.

Summer:

It's like, come on.

Heather:

I think that's exactly it, tell you why I even started this whole journey is that I wanted to normalize it. Because as step moms and maybe more childless step moms or I don't know what childless step dads are like, you're constantly, even in your circle of friends who have kids, you almost put on this everything is perfect, everything is normal, everything is fine. But in the meantime, I'm dying trying to figure, making sure they get the favorite bottle, the favorite blanky, the stuffy and the non itchy underwear on them.

Heather:

But we have those same first and those same struggles. It's just our kids aren't toddlers as we're navigating through these things that we figure don't care about the favorite bottle anymore, I'm going to ... whatever they're going to drink pop today. Something silly. I don't ... I had a four and a seven year old looking up at me being you have no idea lady what to do right now, do you?

Heather:

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And actually, I've just wanted to normalize it in the fact that, hey, I'm just like you. I to on that drop off, wore my dress inside out and was like, didn't realize till I got back in the car after drop off because I was so frazzled in the morning. I too had my kids eat a granola bar off the ground as we were walking into their first dentist's appointment. It was so normal like every other parents being like, I can't come across and try to be someone that is actually non existent because they're kids and they're unpredictable. Therefore, sometimes the situations that we're in are unpredictable as well.

Heather:

It's so normal across the board. I think society doesn't necessarily maybe see that and maybe it's because they do this separate, like well you don't have all the responsibility on you, or you don't have to do this thing, and maybe that so and I think some people do separate things like, "Oh, well, the step mom doesn't know how to do that." That's fine but you still support your husband or your spouse, your partner in any way. You're still ... whether it's on the forefront that you're being seen that you're dropping the ball on some things because it's just a hectic crazy morning, or that it's between your own household. It still happens.

Summer:

It still happens no matter what, whether you're only seeing them one day in a month. Stuff just happens. You could be babysitting for your nephew and stuff [inaudible 00:35:32]. It's just the way life is and if we can focus more, plus think of ... I always say this, think of what you're doing and how you're modeling ... your behavior as a model to your children. They're seeing that you're constantly picking out the negative things and hearing that then they're going to start doing the same thing. Instead just like oh, had a little mess up, it's fine. Just look at the positive things. At least it wasn't worse.

Summer:

It's just really a mindset of being more positive and think about the good things. But yes the nitpicking stuff I see a lot of and I just think what a waste of energy to think of all of that. It's almost like you're searching for it. You were talking about creating your blog and all of that. I want our listeners to be able to find you and follow you and connect with your stories because I think that you obviously can speak to so many different women in your situation.

Heather:

Yes, absolutely. I have a blog it's wickedstepmom.com. All one word. I chose wicked step mom because, no I'm not evil wicked, my interest so that you use wicked in your boat. So you got it. I'm from mall area, the most Eastern point of Canada, and ... I don't live there now but wicked means, "You're wicked awesome. Wicked cool. It's wicked good." It was play on words, just like the blog scary mommy.

Heather:

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I was like I'm a wicked, awesome, cool, step mom but what does society really see me as? You know what, that might change with the kids as they get older, but today I know that they think I'm wicked awesome. Then otherwise just follow me on Instagram because that's where the funny shit happens. Sorry [inaudible 00:37:19]. It's me and just being really raw. Some days I feel ... some they say don't have socks on and I'm like, well that's cool, we're going out and I'm like where's your jacket today? We're at the school.

Heather:

It's just real life and I think it's important for people to see that, that we're just real humans to.

Summer:

What's awesome is that you're providing ... You have this voice for other women that are childless step moms and it's a huge thing and I think there's a lot that... there's a lot of non acknowledgement that happens and sometimes the best thing that you do get is from other people seeing what you're going through but really it's from your husband and then those moments with the kids, but other than that, it's not like you're getting kudos from other people.

Summer:

Sometimes you feel like there's judgment happening. You just offer really great voice for those women. Even though I am a mother and I have my two biological children, I so relate to step moms in these situations, there's still so many things that I just get and have happened. I'm just like, "Yes." And I am a mother. I just connected with it and I love it, and I just love that you're so real and honest and thank you so much.

Heather:

It's been a fun journey so far. I honestly can't believe and I'm sure you feel the same way, the community of women that ... I mean, they're so supportive and it's been really cool to just communicate with people. My husband will sometimes say, he's like, "Are you talking to your internet friends again?" I'm like, "Yes they're awesome. They're asking me for how to navigate through this, and how to get through this." or just generally asking me how are you today? You seem like you were struggling yesterday. I was like that's so cool. That's so cool.

Summer:

No it's so cool I love it and I love that people are talking about these things because I feel like it's only been recent that blended families and step parenting, these has happened for so long, but I feel like with social media, people are finally starting to talk about it more without having this shame or guilt for sharing their hard stories.

Heather:

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Yes, I agree but I think it's ... You're right, for so long, everyone hid or they couldn't talk about it and now the stigma is changing and I think that's ... Maybe it's because it's becoming more normal for blended families and all of that and I just want to navigate with other women who are like minded who had funny episodes as first time mom or instant moms or the struggles that come with being in a blended family and a part of it.

Heather:

Sometimes it feels like you want to pack your bags and run and then you're like, right, but I love these humans and there's a reason why. I'm in this role because at the end of the day, I'm strong enough. I wouldn't be put in this position if I wasn't capable, and I wasn't strong enough. I think that's the end of it, all women out there in to this is that if you love that partner that much that you're even considering this, you are strong enough for it.

Summer:

Yes, I love that. What a perfect way to close this. I love that. We're going to have links to everything Heather in our show notes and on the blog. I'm so thrilled. I feel like I chased you down for a little bit to [inaudible 00:40:48] my show and I'm just so excited. I remember when you were coming on, I told Mike I was like, "Yes, Heather is going to be on the podcast. She said yes."

Heather:

Any time.: