

Summer: Hi, I'm Summer.

Mike: And I'm Mike.

Summer: And we got married.

Mike: With children.

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

Mike: But we've been together for 10.

Summer: He brought two.

Mike: She brought two.

Summer: Together, that's four kids.

Mike: That's way too many kids.

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

Mike: And what doesn't.

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

Mike: Everything.

Summer: Ready, babe?

Mike: Always.

Summer: Well, hello. It is Mike and Summer here for another episode of Everything Always.

Mike: What's up, what's up?

Summer: So, actually, we're recording this on Stepmother's Day, which happens to fall ...

Mike: Hey, hey happy Stepmother's Day.

Summer: Thank you. It happens to fall a week after mother's day. I'll be super honest being a step mother. I didn't know that this was an actual legit holiday until I started to see it on social media and I was like, "Oh my goodness."

Mike: Well, and to get everybody up to speed it's 10 o'clock at night Sunday night and we're like, "We've got to do a podcast."

Summer: Yes.

Mike: We've been so busy and there's been so much going on it's been crazy. But Summer was like, "Hey check it out, it's also Stepmother Day." Which I think is a little odd. There's no big brunches. People aren't running radio commercials about what are you getting for your stepmom this year.

Summer: There are no cards at Hallmark that say ...

Mike: In the category of stepmom.

Summer: No.

Mike: Man, talk about underappreciated for something that potentially is a lot of work.

Summer: I will say that for my two step children I actually did some great appreciation once they were reminded today that it was Stepmother's Day. I did get some appreciation on Mother's Day.

Mike: I was like, "Hey guys. You know today's Stepmother's." And they're like, "Oh we love you."

Summer: "Oh happy Stepmother's Day. We love you. Thank you so much."

Mike: It's a little funny because I mean Mother's Day is a big to do. You can't buy flowers, all the restaurants are booked out. There's like ...

Summer: It's a big deal. But I do think that on Mother's Day so many, like myself, so many stepmothers, mothers, they're appreciated for the different roles that they play.

Mike: Fair. Fair. Fair. Yeah. For sure.

Summer: So, tonight in all fairness we have been if guys have been following us we have been in the middle of a move, lots of things going on and normally we have interviews and things lined up so that there is no lag in episodes coming out but ...

Mike: We have been busy.

Summer: We have been busy. It's just that time of life for us right now. It is a busy time of life and as much as I am the person that is super staying ahead of it, getting all of the things.

Mike: Oh and for all of you out there that think that doing this podcast is our full time job and this is what we do no.

Summer: There's a lot of other things going on behind the scenes, there's a lot. We planned in the very beginning. We were like all right we've got all of these interviews lined up and but right now these are, a lot of things are scheduled next week, and the week after. And so, we are ...

Mike: So, tonight we're pulling it out.

Summer: We're pulling it out. And here's the thing. We have so many important topics that we talk about all of the time. We're like, "That needs to be a podcast. That needs to be a podcast." Because the thing is is that these things are super important to us. They're things we talk about all of the time and we want to share with you. And so, one of the things that we've been talking about ... Well, there's tons of things that we're always talking about when it comes to blended families.

Mike: It's not just talking about it. We're living it. We're in the middle of it.

Summer: Yes.

Mike: We are a blended family with teenagers in the middle, we're right in the middle.

Summer: We heard something the other day from one of our children and the only reason I won't repeat it is because there's certain things that we keep confidential. But it brought up a topic and we started talking about this with some our adult friends that were children of blended families. And we thought, "Wow this would be a really great topic to discuss on the podcast." And that is using your children as a therapist or using your child as a counselor or somebody who ...

Mike: When you confide in your kid.

Summer: You confide in yeah.

Mike: And you're basically talking through your issues with them.

Summer: We've had some experiences that we know with very close friends, with other family members. I mean there's a lot of things that we have heard which has made us very passionate about this topic. And we always say, "We are not the actual counselor, or therapist, or 'expert'." What we feel makes us have an expertise in this topic is that we're actually living through it and that we've been through a lot.

Mike: Yeah.

Summer: And so, just like anything if we can help you go through or navigate some of these tough issues.

Mike: So, let's talk a little bit more specifically in terms of what's ... Where we've observed.

Summer: Okay.

Mike: Right. So, in this particular topic the situation is basically a lot of times when your kids are a little older normally between the ages of maybe 10 to, 10 and up, you get into a situation where you're like, "Okay I've now found myself in this scenario where I'm no longer with the other person and I am dealing with all of these feelings and all of these emotions, all of this stuff that is going on and I need to vent and I need connection." And it's really hard because you have kids. So, now it's not like you can be out with your girlfriends all of the time or out with your boyfriends all, boyfriends whatever. You know what I'm saying.

Mike: Anyway the point is you're not out. So, then all of the sudden you find that you are now connecting with your kids and using them as the sounding board and the thing to talk about the issues and all of this. But it is so important to know that that is a terrible. It puts them in a position that is not fair for them. They need to look at you as their role model. They need to look at you as a person that is giving them stability. And when you use your kids as your friend it does not work. It does not work and it will actually damage them. And we've seen it first hand. I don't know we want to get into who specifically. But in general, it's hard to generalize when you just want to be like, "This is what's up."

Summer: Here's the thing. We actually have some adult friends who have gone through that in their personal life. We know children that have gone through that where one parent might be venting their frustrations about another parent. And we've done several, in a lot of our podcasts because we are so passionate about, "Please don't talk negatively about the other parent." We've talked about that a lot. But what happens sometimes is that people are venting to their child because they're like, "Oh child you know your dad, you know your mom just like I do and you're the perfect person that I can vent to about this situation that I'm upset about." And what we have ...

Mike: And even in the moment the kid might actually be like, "Yeah I totally get that", but man they're dying inside because they don't want to be in the middle. They don't want to be thrust into that situation, and that scenario, and having to deal with all of that.

Summer: So, I would like to give an example. Anonymous friend back when I was a young teen mother had discovered that father was having an affair and this young teen was in love with her father. I mean she just [inaudible 00:08:11] her dad was the greatest person on the planet. And mother started giving all of these pieces of evidence much like you would a girlfriend. "I just found that he bought flowers for this woman." Or, "I just found out that he did this or did that." And there were all of these different things that she was sharing. And the frustrations about her husband she was sharing with her teen daughter. And it was so upsetting.

Mike: Are you sure this is when you were a teen or is this something that?

Summer: No, this was. This was actually a teenage experience or even pre teen.

Mike: Like one of your girlfriends or?

Summer: This was a girlfriend from many many years ago and it was a heartbreaking thing. Because I remember even at that time as a young teen going, "Oh my gosh. I can't even imagine having to get that information and how you even have to process that."

Mike: Yeah that's terrible. So, at the root of it though now the situation is your teen friend right?

Summer: Well, the teen friend is going, "You're talking about my dad who I absolutely adore and love."

Mike: And is being forced to be in a [crosstalk 00:09:26]

Summer: And now you're telling me all of this information about him and so now I have to be mad at him but I still love him. This is very confusing. And you also, the teen, the girl, doesn't even know all of the truth of what's actually happening. And so, I just remember at a young age thinking what a horrible thing.

Mike: And at the end of the day there's reasons that lead you to not being together. [crosstalk 00:09:46]

Summer: But hold on. We're not going there. I just want to talk about the experience of a young person having to hear the negative things about her parents that are still together and having to hear something so devastating. "But wait a minute, you're my mom and dad. You're supposed to be together forever and now all of the sudden you are telling me that dad is doing X, Y, and Z."

Mike: [crosstalk 00:10:16] Create teams.

Summer: Which may or may not. We don't know all of the facts. She doesn't know all of the facts. All we know is that she is being told all of this information that is extremely disturbing. This is just an example that I'm saying because ...

Mike: I feel like the real takeaway here is that you're supposed to leave your kids out of it.

Summer: You are.

Mike: Create a protective safe environment.

Summer: But there is also, I know adult children who have divorced parents and they talk about their experience as a child when their parents were just going through a divorce or even their upbringing having grown up as a child of divorce.

Mike: Is there a certain word for that?

Summer: Adult child of divorce, is that what it is?

Mike: I don't know. It sounds fancy.

Summer: Anyways, there are adult friends that we have, there are adults on this planet that actually have been raised with divorced parents. 'Cause guess what? Divorce is at a high rate and these are some things that are happening today. And my point is is that we can take away from the experiences that they have had. And I have heard several times women, men who have grown up with parents that were divorced and they have heard from one parent or the other too many details of why they are divorced. "This one had an affair." "This one did this to me." "This one broke my heart." There's so many specific details that that young child at that time absolutely does not need to hear at all.

Mike: And the weird thing is it's your ego, it's your own selfish side that is using them to get credibility for the reason why you're going through your hard thing and that's no fair. And it will damage their relationship with that parent in the future. So, hey all of you listening that like to buddy up with your kid and talk about why they should be on your side versus your now ex side stop doing that. It's stupid and terrible.

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 in everything. We want to make sure we bring you all of 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: I think this is if you are in pain enough that you want to vent and you want to talk about those things find somebody else to talk to instead of your child. Because it is not their responsibility to have to bear that pain that you are having. They are going through their own set of emotions and pain because you guys are not getting along, or you are going through a divorce, or whatever it is that's happening they feel it and that makes them feel very insecure and at such a young age to have to deal with that insecurity is way too much intensity that they should have to deal with.

Mike: Oh man and they're dealing with all of those emotions and all of the struggle themselves of going like, "What's my life going to be like? Where am I going to live? How is this going to work? Everything in my life is going to be disrupted." You know what? Don't be selfish. Don't put more on top of what's going to happen.

Summer: You know what? I have actually heard from people that have gone through divorce that are still triggered, children that have gone through the divorce of their parents who are still triggered by the trauma of their parents not getting along or of the things that one parent has said about the other parent or the things that they have had to hear still as an adult.

Mike: In their forties.

Summer: Well into their forties. And it boggles my mind. And I'm like, "You know what? But no wonder. I can totally see how that can happen." One of the biggest reasons as you know if you've heard past episodes that we wanted to start this podcast is for the hope that people that are going through the breaking up of a family and starting a new family is to A, please remember that kids are kids. They are not adults going through this same experience and they don't have the maturity level. They don't have the smarts to say, "Okay I'm going to do it this way." Don't bring them into the drama that is unnecessary. Let them have the easiest transition that you can possibly provide because it is your responsibility as an adult and as a parent.

Mike: And it's going to be super hard but sometimes just bite your tongue.

Summer: Yes. And B, B is also that just because a family is breaking up does not mean everything has gone to hell for them. They can still have a most beautiful life and maybe even better because now they're going to see things differently. They're going to see their parents in a different light. They're going to have a different experience with different people in their family. It doesn't mean that everything has gone to hell because their family has broken up.

Mike: It's the kids, remember you're doing adult transitional things, your kids don't have to be involved in that. Make it easy for 'em.

Summer: Right.

Mike: Make choices that are going to make it easier for them. And sometimes that is having discretion in the things that you say and the things that you introduce to them. They don't need to know about all of the drama. They don't need to know the details. It will be easier if you keep

it neat and tidy. They're going to have to know that you're not going to be together but they don't need all of the details. They don't need the reasons why. They don't need the brain damage.

Summer: No they don't. When they're adults and they have questions you can share with them then.

Mike: When they're 48 or 50 years old on your death bed you can share all of the dirty laundry but until then.

Summer: Wait for them to ask those questions but until then they don't need to know that. If you've been divorced for five years or whatever and all of the sudden you're having an argument about your schedule, or money, or whatever that thing is they don't need to be involved in that. Handle that business between the two of you. But back to the whole reason. One of the biggest things is about protecting the children in their experience. Because it's hard enough being a kid growing up anyways in this world. I mean there's so many things that are coming at you. And so, as parents if we can be there to make it the most secure and stable environment whether you are together with the partner that created this child, or together with somebody new, or to a single parent. Do the things that teach them and guide them but don't get them that unnecessary drama.

Summer: And so, that leads me to something else which is it's not that you're hiding that there's real problems or there's real issues that are happening in life. It's more about not bringing them into a part of something because it affects your ego. If it's something that you're trying to bring them into because it will make you feel better about yourself and justify why you're doing the things that you're doing then it really has nothing to do with them.

Mike: Yeah for sure.

Summer: If it's something that can actually teach them and help them grow ... Like for example, parents are going to argue. People are going to have disagreements. It doesn't mean that you should hide those things from your children. One thing that I noticed even with my parents growing up is that parents will have arguments. They will disagree on things. You don't need to hide the fact that you've disagreed on something. It's actually a good thing for them to see you have a disagreement. It's a good thing to actually see, for them to witness how you work that out. However, the dangerous part comes from when you're trying to leverage the kids and leverage their, "Oh hey I think you should side with me." Or, "Your dad did this wrong and this is why I'm upset with him." Or, "Your mom she's gone crazy." Whatever, do you see what I'm trying to say here?

Mike: I totally do.

Summer: Come on back me up. It's late. We are doing this at 10:30, you mentioned this before, on a Sunday night. We are tired. We have been moving. We're like, we are still showering outside in an outdoor shower for three weeks now.

Mike: I call it camping.

Summer: He calls it campening That's all ... Campening

Mike: Campening.

Summer: We're tired.

Mike: This is glamor camping actually.

Summer: Glamping? It is. I mean it's true it is. But I will tell you that I have a little plastic kit that I bring out that has all of the things I need to shower with, and brush my teeth with, and all that kind of stuff. It very much looks like camp.

Mike: And here's the thing, we're doing it with our family.

Summer: We are.

Mike: And guess what? It's not the first time we've done this before so we are experienced, we are ready for the challenge, and the kids sort of like it. We do a lot of barbecuing. We do a lot of hanging out outside.

Summer: I feel like they're having a blast. There are no complaints from them which cracks me up. Because at some points we're just like, "All right kids. You've got to get out of your rooms. We need to plastic coat everything because there's going to be some drilling."

Mike: For all of the people that don't know we have four kids.

Summer: Yeah.

Mike: Summer had two, I had two.

Summer: Well, when we came together now there's six of us.

Mike: Too many actually. In fact any listeners out there that are maybe needing a kid, private message us. Maybe we can send you a kid. I don't know. We have too many. I'm just kidding.

Summer: We've got 12 through 16. It depends on what you need. No, I'm just kidding. We love our kids.

Mike: Now, of course. I'm just joking around. All right so here's the thing. Thank you for tuning in tonight for another episode of Everything Always.

Summer: This is funny so.

Mike: We're tired. We're like, "Okay let's go to bed. No, let's do a podcast."

Summer: Yeah. We're going to see how this one turns out. I just want to close this last point though of the main points are please don't use your children as a counselor. It's not their responsibility.

Mike: They're not your best friend. They're not your counselor. They're not your sounding board. They're not the thing that you're going to use to justify your position.

Summer: It's not fair for them to have the burden of the things that you are stressed out about and you know what those things are. When you are feeling upset and you are looking for somebody to justify how you feel your child is not the person to have to do that for you. You've got to figure that out on your own and this is us just being like, "Hey you've got to man up, woman up, put on the big girl panties. Put on the big boots. Whatever you've got to do."

Mike: Big girl panties?

Summer: Yeah.

Mike: I like that.

Summer: I'm just saying when it comes to women or men put on things you need to put on to make you be a man or a woman be an adult and do not burden your children with the stress that you have. It is not fair.

Mike: That's right. That's selfish. Don't do it.

Summer: Don't do it.

Mike: Drop the mic boom.

Summer: At the same time if you are in a new relationship now or you are in a blended family like we are for 10 years or somewhere where you've been together for a little while it's also okay for them to see the real things that you guys are going through, but remember to be mature about it. Remember that every time you have a disagreement, every time you feel sad those are all real feelings. It's okay to have those real feelings but remember that you are an example of how to get through that. So, if you are having an argument or you are having a disagreement you can bring the kids in and say, "Guess what? We didn't agree on X, Y, and Z and I want to take responsibility for how I treated your mom." Or, "I want to take responsibility for how I treated your dad or things that I said." Let them see some of the real stuff that happens but don't bring them into the stuff that you are personally struggling with that has to do with your ego. Does that make sense? Am I making any sense?

Mike: I think we're saying the same thing again and again.

Summer: Okay.

Mike: I think we should wrap it up.

Summer: All right. Let's wrap it up.

Mike: Let's go watch a movie.

Summer: Okay. We're going to go watch a movie. Thank you guys for listening.

Mike: Hey and by the way what do we do on Fridays?

Summer: We do with Brewing with the Moulders Friday mornings at 7:00 a.m. Pacific. I kind of cringed because that just seems so early.

Mike: It's so so early.

Summer: I think we have been talking about merging that into a different hour of the day. However ...

Mike: Not yet.

Summer: Not yet. Not yet. Not yet. Until then because we have to get up early you guys should get up early too.

Mike: Friday mornings Pacific Standard [inaudible 00:23:52] with us.

Summer: Brewing with the Moulders, EverythingAlwaysshow.com to see the podcasts, show notes, all of the good things.

Mike: And if you like listening to us on this podcast tell your friends and subscribe.

Summer: Please like, please share, please subscribe, and email us, info@SummerFelix.com if you have any specific questions for us. We would love to address them. Thank you guys so much.

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." So, that's what we did.

Summer: Yup. I scoured the internet and looked for the tribe that spoke to me and I just couldn't find the community that was raw, vulnerable, and really wanting to make change to the millions of families like ours. So, I decided to create it and figure out what 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 screen shot, 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.