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A PODCAST FOR BLENDED FAMILIES

Summer: Well, hello, everyone. We're back.

Mike: Well, hello, hello, hello. Where did we go?

Summer: We've been to some places since our last recording. It's been a couple of weeks since you have heard from us.

Mike: It feels like it's been a long time.

Summer: It has been a long time. We had a little hiatus. We had some 4th of July. We had some travel. And we just took a little break, but we're back, and we thought it would be appropriate to talk about our relationships since we are now married for...

Mike: Two years. We actually just celebrated our second anniversary.

Summer: Yes, and it wasn't a terrible place to celebrate.

Mike: We were down in beautiful Cabo, San Lucas. We'd like to thank the country of Mexico for supporting our podcast. Thank you very much.

Summer: We got delayed while we were... We stayed an extra night. We were actually there to marry our really good friends.

Mike: She was an officiant.

Summer: Yes. We've never done it before.

Mike: And she was very efficient.

Summer: That's very efficient about being an officiant.

Mike: A lot of words.

Summer: It was really an incredible experience, actually. And it was so awesome to be there. The views were spectacular. The house that the wedding was at was just-

Mike: The venue was amazing.

Summer: ... gorgeous.

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Mike: Super fun trip.

Summer: Another blended family married and united, and happy. And it was so great. The kids said vows to their stepdad who they just call Daddy, which is awesome. And they have another daddy as well, but they've just been in each other's lives for so long. They were so little. And it was just another really great thing to watch this, this family come together and to see that these kids have all of these parents that love them. Another testament to getting divorced or having a broken family doesn't mean that there's no chance for happiness again. And it's so wonderful that these kids get to experience that.

Mike: Super Cool. So first off, let's say thanks a lot for tuning in again to another episode of the Everything Always podcast.

Summer: Yes.

Mike: Summer and I's little adventure in terms of opening up ourselves and the things that go on in our family and trying to share the experiences and the things that we've done. Some of the challenges, struggles, and good things to try to make other people's lives maybe just a little bit better to maybe help them avoid some of the mistakes that we've made, and maybe try some of the things that are working really well for us.

Summer: Yeah.

Mike: And in transition, I think this podcast is going to be some of the things that we do to stay connected.

Summer: That's exactly what we're talking about today.

Mike: That's why I brought it up.

Summer: Whether you have children or not, blended family or not, life comes up with surprises and challenges. And one of the most important things is that you stay connected because you are that much stronger to get through those things. And so we just wanted to talk about some of the things, now that we're two years into marriage and 11 years into our relationship. Like what have we, what have we learned about each other? What are things that we know work and things that haven't worked for us?

Mike: Yeah, and there's probably a lot. I will say one of the things that came to mind when we were bringing up this topic in life, anything that's important requires attention and focus, and time and energy being put on it in order to make it continue to grow, to develop, to get better, right? If you want to be an amazing musician, you need to

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practice. You need to do your craft. In relationships, and I think a lot of people learn, especially people that are going into their second marriages. If you want things to work, it's not set it and forget it, it's not just go like, oh, we made we got married, boom, it's done, you've got to work at it. You have to put time, energy, and dedication into something that you want to be beautiful.

Mike: So that's one of the things I think at the forefront, go into your relationship with intention. Go at it from the standpoint that this is something that I obviously love right now, but I want to see if I can push it to the next level. And it's funny too, because I actually was having this conversation with my dad and I was like, "It's funny, I super love Summer, and I love our family, and it seems like every day it's just getting better and doesn't stop. And he was like, "No, I've been married to your mom now for who freaking knows how long.? I mean, they're creeping up-

Summer: Yeah, a long time.

Mike: They're going to be creeping up on 50 years possible. My dad is almost 90. So I mean, either way. They're creeping up on a lot of years. But he was like, "No, I love your mom more and more every day." And I'm like, wow, that's freaking awesome. And that takes time, energy, and giving.

Summer: And it's a choice. It's a choice too. My parents have this... I mean, my parents were married over 50 years now, 54 years I think. And it's a choice, and it's a deeper level, so it's a different kind of love that happens. That you're like, "Wow, I didn't even know that this was possible or that we were even capable of this." And you and I say this a lot, and it sounds super cheesy, but we're like, I feel like so much stronger for you. I feel like so much deeper. So much-

Mike: The connection is getting better and better.

Summer: There's like this overwhelming gratitude and I feel like we have that a lot. Like it's a feeling that I feel like I'm experiencing more and more as the days go by. And a lot of times I think it is because of the challenges that we've had. It's like this incredible feeling of, wow, we got through that. I love you so much, and you made me feel this way, and I made you feel that way.

Mike: Well, there you go. You found the struggle, the hard times. Boom. There's your positive takeaway. Get through it, it'll make you stronger.

Summer: It's true.

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Mike: Unless it kills you.

Summer: One thing that you had said that I always loved, and you said this at the very beginning when you and I were dating. I remember you said how important it was to do the things that makes another person feel appreciated and to know what those things are. And I notice you do that a lot for me. There's little things, and my dad actually would do this for me and my mom, and I always noticed that. It can be the tiniest thing but it's something that you do because you know, I will notice and it will make me happy.

Mike: Well, they say that every person gives and accepts love in a different way. And the things that are right for one person aren't necessarily right for the other people. In fact there's a book about it and that's probably... I'm drawn on it.

Summer: The love languages?

Mike: Yeah, where it's got the colors, and like the you know...

Summer: Do we know what each other's... I know we've talked about it.

Mike: And I'm not... It's been so long now, but the sentiment, the takeaway that I got was that listen, sometimes the way that I like to be loved is not the same way that another person likes to be loved. And as soon as you can identify what that thing is for them, then you can deploy love in a way that's going to be accepted the best.

Summer: What do you think it is for me?

Mike: Yours is definitely appreciation. You like appreciation, and I think the other thing is like there's... What's the word for it? Like affirmation.

Summer: Words of affirmation, totally.

Mike: What do you think mine is?

Summer: I think yours is touch.

Mike: I do. Hey.

Summer: But you like to feel connected so you're just like... You're very cuddly and want to be touched, and want to feel loved.

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- Mike: It's true. Like in the car if you reach over-
- Summer: That's how you feel love.
- Mike: ... and put your hand on my hand or like put your hand on my leg or something, I'm like, "Oh, yeah. Okay. I'm good."
- Summer: Feel connected. That's a big thing.
- Mike: That's where it starts.
- Summer: You even did that like in the story we were talking about something. I had one opinion, you had another opinion and you just like froze in the store and you just like grabbed my hands, and we looked at each other. It's like this thing that we do almost to the point where it gets a little bit like, okay, this isn't... It's like that awkward long hug, but it's that kind of like, no, we're just going to sit here and look at each other and then I'm going to tell you whatever it is. And then we just like connect instead of being like, "I'm in this planet, and you're on that planet."
- Mike: It works every time. I'm like, "Put the broccoli down. We've had enough broccoli."
- Summer: Why does it always come back to broccoli for you?
- Mike: You know what, you got to start somewhere.
- Summer: All right. That's fine.
- Mike: To my roots.
- Summer: So those are some things. Well, okay, I want to talk about something that I have learned a ton being in a relationship with you. And I actually learned it from you, and I may have talked about this or mentioned it on one of our other podcasts, but it's really being mature about taking ownership of your behavior or being like, "Yeah, I'm irritable today or I'm grumpy and I'm sorry about it," because I know that there have been times where I'm just like, "Ah, I get overwhelmed and stressed." And then it means that I'm being cold to you and not very warm or very sweet. And I know that that's something that like kills you. You don't like that.
- Mike: I don't like that very much.

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- Summer: And it's so important to be nice to each other and you have always said, those are the times if you're feeling irritated or stressed, whatever. That's the time to be extra like sweet and nice because I'm on your team.
- Mike: But that's not Summer's style.
- Summer: It's not. I'll be guarded.
- Mike: She withdraws and goes into a cave, and basically puts up a wall, and it's like, "You can't get to me."
- Summer: That is. That's my natural tendency.
- Mike: Luckily I'm a freaking rock climber, and I'm climbing over that freaking wall. Here I come.
- Summer: And if you have watched any of our lives or maybe read some of our blog posts, which I'm not assuming you have at all, but if you have, you might-
- Mike: Don't make assumptions.
- Summer: No, you might know that I've been really all about Mel Robbins. She's @melrobbinslive on Instagram. And she has this book called The Five Second Rule. And it's really about all things in your life. And so I've been working really hard at... One thing I love about it is that it just gets you to do the things that you know you need to be doing, but you don't do it. So for example, if you were like, I need to work out, but you're stalling, stalling, stalling, or you need to call this person, or I need to just like sit down or I need to clean my room or do the laundry, whatever it is. The things you don't want to do, you five, four, three, two, one. Count yourself down and then you just do it. You launch yourself into doing it.
- Mike: If you remember in one of our past podcasts, Summer was talking about how she used to hit the snooze button all the time. Basically, she'd be like, "I'm going to start snoozing at 5:00 and then it's 6:00 I'll wake up." And we joked around because basically as soon as the alarm goes off, the first time, I wake up and I don't go back to sleep.
- Summer: Which is good. Which is what you're supposed to do.
- Mike: And the Summer every eight minutes for another hour was just hitting the snooze button. Again and again.

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Summer: Snooze, snooze, snooze.

Mike: And I felt that actually was not very fair to me.

Summer: It also wasn't healthy. It also wasn't attributing to my productivity. So in her book, like the first thing she talks about is getting yourself out of bed, and not hitting the snooze button. So now for a good... I was looking back actually. It's actually been a month. I have the phone now. Even when we were on vacation, I put it in a different room. I have the alarm go off in the bathroom, and then I have to get myself... I literally hear it and I go five, four, three, two, one, I am out of bed. Even if I'm super tired still, and I get up, and I turn off the alarm, and that's it. There's no like going back to bed.

Mike: She basically has to get out of bed, and then I'd grab her and I'm like, "You're not getting out of here."

Summer: And now I'm like I have to go to the workout class that I signed up for at 5:30 AM or 6:00 AM or whatever it is, and I just do it. But my point going back to this is that you can five, four, three, two, one yourself into a different attitude. You get to choose, am I going to be grumpy right now? You know that you don't want to be irritable, or like icky to somebody. You don't want to be-

Mike: It's that mindset change.

Summer: ... the female dog.

Mike: You go, you've got five seconds.

Summer: I'm trying not to curse.

Mike: Five seconds to change your world. Boom.

Summer: You do. So that's something that I've learned. That's something that's a choice, and being mature enough to say, "Hey, I know it's not right. If I'm feeling grumpy about something else to be that way to the person that loves me the most, that's not cool." I know that's not right. So I've got to switch that. So that's something big that I learned and I've learned that from you too, is not to put up a wall, but I still struggle with it, but I have to work myself out of it. And you've always been so great about, okay, let's talk about this. This is when we need to come together.

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Summer: And it's not to say... By the way, I would like to say something. A lot of times when we talk about this, it's about me being grumpy, and as almost perfect as you are, you're human too. And there's times where you get grumpy about something or feisty or like, oh, that makes me upset. We all have that. So I just wanted to clarify that.

Mike: Thank you for saying that. I'm almost human.

Summer: You know I said almost perfect.

Mike: And almost human.

Summer: But none of us are perfect.

Mike: That's true.

Summer: We really want to be perfect. And where do you go? Where do you go from here?

Mike: No one's perfect.

Summer: No one's perfect.

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

Mike: So as we're talking about the things that we do to stay connected, I think one of the things is that we dedicate time to each other-

Summer: For just the two of us.

Mike: We dedicate and schedule with intention, time for you and I to go do something together. And it might be walk to a coffee shop and get coffee. It might be like, hey, let's

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just, you and I go sit in the swing and watch the sunset for 15 minutes. That's all we have time for.

Summer: It might be Mike saying, "I'm turning on the hot tub. Let's go sit there and watch a show together. Let's watch some comedy or let's watch whatever." That's a common-

Mike: Some of you may not know, but we actually have the ability to sit in a hot tub and watch television.

Summer: We do now.

Mike: Due to science.

Summer: Due to science.

Mike: We have this new ability, which actually makes me super happy. We're like sitting in there. Like I squint because the TV is super far away, but you know, whatever. It's great.

Summer: No, it's true. And doing sometimes, even just one night getaways or a weekend together, just the two of us. Because sometimes we travel and we're with other people, but even on this last trip we were on, we're like let's take that extra night. It ended up being two extra nights because our flight got canceled. But, yeah, it's just really having that time together. And there are times even with the kids, even when it's our time with all the kids and we haven't had time together, we will say, "Hey, we're going to go sneak out and grubbed Sushi together for an hour because we just need to connect."

Summer: Sometimes people go, "Oh well that's selfish. You have your kids, shouldn't you be with them?" But actually we have to be good. Like we have to be good, the two of us, and we have to be united, and it's not good if we're not. So we have to do those things. And it's also a good example for them to see. And our kids, they love it. It's always like, "You guys are so adorable. Oh how cute." They're also older now that they are so fine with us doing stuff. I remember when it used to be like, "Hey, don't. Don't please."

Mike: We're like, "Do you guys want to come with us?" They're like, "No, we're cool. Thanks. See you later."

Summer: It's so crazy.

Mike: And different stages, right?

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- Summer: All these stages of independence. So these things are important because I can tell you this, if you don't do those things...
- Mike: They say you're either growing or you're contracting. So either you're going down or you're going up, but there is no staying and at the same spot. It is impossible. You're either getting better or you're getting worse.
- Summer: But you never want to get to the point where you are, like you said, contracting. And so it's important to both take responsibility and be mature enough to say, "Hey, we haven't spent enough time together," because there's been times when you and I had been so busy and we're like, "Ah, one or the other is saying, I miss you. I haven't gotten time with you to just be with you." Even if we've been together in the same place there's just so much going on.
- Mike: That's true. We're in proximity to each other, but there's so many other things were people or attention or whatever.
- Summer: Demands.
- Mike: I don't think you get to count that time.
- Summer: No, exactly.
- Mike: Dedicated, focus, quality time.
- Summer: Exactly. I mean I will say you and I are definitely both workaholics. If we didn't have things scheduled, like a social life or dinner with the kids, or things like that, we could easily just get lost.
- Mike: It's easy to work a lot when work is fun.
- Summer: It is. Work is fun. And we-
- Mike: Building is good.
- Summer: We love it and it's so much fun. But we also have other things that are super important that we need to attend to like ourselves and our families. And so it can definitely happen where we're like, we haven't had enough time together. Or we're getting so excited about talking about work, work, work, work, work. It's like, okay, what about us? Let's just talk about us.

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Mike: We have had that issue before where we fallen into the like all we talk about is the kids, and all we do is talk about work. But so sometimes we put actual like, "Okay, let's do this. Let's not talk about the kids. Let's not talk about work. Let's just talk about something else.

Summer: Yeah.

Mike: Because you get a rot sometimes because those are the things that are happening in your world. They're the important things that are happening right then at that moment. But you know, maybe set the rules.

Summer: Yeah. I think another thing that's really important, which we already touched on, but I kind of want to go into it like hardcore and the reason I want to go into it hardcore is because I think we have all seen this with couples where you're kind of like, wow, he's not really being nice to her or she's not really being nice to him. And this is happening in a public setting. And it happens, and it's horrible to watch, but it's also eye opening because you might say, "Gosh, have I done that? I don't want to be that way."

Summer: And so I want to talk about it because it's important because it's something that your children see, and it's also something that can really put a wedge between you when you're simply just not nice to each other. And it's so simple to say that, but like what an incredible dramatic change your life will be with a person you love and just your life in general when you have that person that you are life partners with, like you are partners, you are married, you are in it to win it until the end. And depending on your beliefs beyond that too.

Summer: And to not be nice to each other is so... There are going to be times where you're a little bit snippy or whatever, but it's a consistent thing where you're waking up and you're just like annoyed at every single thing. You didn't do this for the kids, you didn't do this the way I like it. You're always home late. You're always this way. If you-

Mike: What you're doing is pushing the person away and they're not going to... Eventually, they're not going to want to come back.

Summer: No, they're not.

Mike: So be careful what you wish for.

Summer: So one of the things that I am... So I can't remember exactly what it was. I'd have to pull it up here on my computer, but I really loved the poem that I read at Jeff and Kelsey's wedding.

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Mike: You didn't memorize it?

Summer: I didn't memorize it. I had to read everything guys, come on. But it's said something like me not taking notice of small faults, meaning like don't be nitpicky about things because the thing is if something were to happen, you would probably look back and go, that actually wasn't such a big deal. I think there's things that you can get annoyed with each other about that. But then when that person is gone or maybe they're away on a trip, you realize how wonderful they are. Or you might see somebody else struggling with something and then you start to go, "You know what? Just because he leaves his towel on the floor or just because he doesn't make the sandwiches for the kids like I do, or just because..." Look at all of the other things.

Summer: So I would strongly encourage you to look at the positive things because there is so much truth on when you focus on the positive, those things will grow. If you are going to focus on the negative things about your partner or your spouse, because maybe you're actually grumpy about some other things that doesn't really have to do with them, those things will grow if that's what you're going to focus on. You're just going to find yourself getting more and more annoyed. So the way to test this is to just think about the thoughts that you're having about that person or what are the things that you're constantly saying to yourself. And catch yourself to be like-

Mike: And that's a lot harder than you think.

Summer: Yeah, it is.

Mike: Mind control. What Summer is basically suggesting is that you need to be able to control your own mind. Good luck.

Summer: Good luck. But you can do it. We all have the power to do it. And we know we do and we know what we need to do to do it. We just do. As much as you say, "I don't even know how, I'm annoyed. I'm this, I'm that." Just start with a simple, even the counting five, four, three, two, one, I'm going to find something positive now. When you're annoyed that your husband didn't have the kids ready on time, or whatever the thing is or he didn't show up to our family photo shoot on time. I mean, you can literally go down the hole of being so negative and upset about it or you can just go, "You know what? Let's turn it into something fun. Let's laugh about it. Let's whatever."

Summer: Because the other truth is you chose to be married to this person. You love this person, and if it's really that awful, if you're so upset about it, why are you with them? But that's probably not the case. It could be. It could be for some people, but the main thing is be nice. Like think about it. And also think this. Would you want to be... This is a good one.

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- Mike: Should we bust out some good rule?
- Summer: Would you want to be around you? Right?
- Mike: Yeah. Think about it like that.
- Summer: Think about it like that. Think of the way you're acting. You probably don't feel good when you're being... I know this happens to me probably once a month for a day or two. Sometimes it happens where I'm like I'm more irritable or whatever.
- Mike: It's funny because it doesn't happen to me.
- Summer: It doesn't happen to him. But no, it's true. And I will flat out say, "I'm grumpy today. I'm sorry." I mean I will apologize for it, but I know it's there. I know it's happening. And then you have to have that talk with yourself of like, "I feel so irritable. I'm finding something wrong with everything." And it literally is. It happens that one time a month. It happens. Come on.
- Mike: Oh, boy.
- Summer: We're all adults here. So it's true. You just ask yourself, if I were around this person, would I want to be here?
- Mike: Would I want to be around me?
- Summer: Do I want to go out with you tonight?
- Mike: And then sometimes I'm like...
- Summer: It's a great... I mean, you got to call yourself out sometimes. You really do.
- Mike: I do like it. All right. Well, listen.
- Summer: I mean, I think those are the main things that we do. I mean, it's not a difficult.
- Mike: Yeah. I mean, I think the thing is it's like so what are the takeaways? The takeaways are dedicate time, work on your relationship with intention. Have that thing in you that says, "Hey, you know what? I want this to be good. I'm going to put the energy, time and dedication into making it that way." Because what you work on, what you focus your energy and time on will get better. It doesn't matter what it is, it will get better.

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Summer: And you're not going to nail it all the time. That's the other thing is stop thinking you're going to be perfect all the time. That's part of what a relationship is.

Mike: Have a little empathy to the other person that's with you.

Summer: But just be aware.

Mike: Because guess what? You're not perfect.

Summer: You're not perfect.

Mike: Except for you, Summer.

Summer: We're not perfect.

Mike: You're perfect.

Summer: Far from perfect. I think we are aware of those things about ourself, and that's a great thing. And knowing like what it is that makes each other feel loved and appreciate, and feeling good. What makes you feel good.

Mike: Find out how you like to be loved, and find out how your partner likes to be loved, and then do it that way.

Summer: Here's the thing too, when people are feeling loved, they are nice to each other, they go out of their way to each other. They're more eager to please each other because it feels good. And it makes you feel connected.

Mike: If you find yourself in that place right now where you're like, "We are so disconnected. I don't even know if I freaking like this guy anymore. He's not nice to me." Sometimes you have to be the bigger person, and you have to go first. Just be nice. Say something nice, give a compliment. Even if you don't want to, do it a few times, because what you'll get back is exactly what you want, but sometimes even when you don't want to, do it anyway.

Summer: It's true. It's the five, four, three, two, one. You don't usually don't want to do the thing you need to do, but you're in a five, four, three, two, one, do it.

Mike: I like it.

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Summer: Well baby, happy two years.

Mike: Happy anniversary baby.

Summer: Happy 11 years too. It might be two years that we're married, but we've been married like-

Mike: We've been doing the things.

Summer: We've been doing it for a long time and I'm pretty proud of us. I love our family.

Mike: We have a great family.

Summer: I love you.

Mike: We're in a great spot. I love you too.

Summer: All right, guys, thanks for listening, and remember what to do. What do they do?

Mike: Like, share, tell someone about it. Come on.

Summer: Comment, rate.

Mike: This the Everything Always podcast where we're going to pretty much talk about...

Summer: Always.

Mike: All right. See you soon.