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SPEAKERS

Edroy Odem, Emily McKay, Scot McKay



Edroy Odem 00:05

From the mist and shrouded mountaintop fortress that is x&y Communications Headquarters. You're listening to the world famous mountaintop podcast. And now, here's your host, Scot McKay.



Scot McKay 00:18

How's it going, ladies and gentlemen, welcome again to another episode of The Big Show. My name is Scot McKay.



Emily McKay 00:24

And I'm Emily McKay.



Scot McKay 00:25

And today we're going to talk about a topic that's way overdue. We should have done this probably years ago, humbly. Oh, yes. Especially



Emily McKay 00:32

since we've done this for most of our lives. Well, is it most of our lives? A good chunk of



Scot McKay 00:37

it? I'm afraid to break it to you. We're older than that. Anyway, the topic du jour is indeed, blended families. And I'll tell you what that's an interesting choice of words to describe the

blended families. And I'll tell you what, that's an interesting choice of words to describe the phenomenon. I think some families go through more of a Vitamix than a mere blender, don't you?

 Emily McKay 00:59

That's funny. That sounds about right. You get pulverized.

 Scot McKay 01:02

pulverized and polarized, something like that. Yeah, right. Okay. So let's just throw it on the table. Here's what we're talking about here. A man and a woman meet each other. They both have kids from quote, unquote, previous relationships. That's very common. The man and the woman choose each other. I mean, we hope it's not an arranged marriage. Right? Not in this country. At least. Oh, no. An arranged second marriage. Does that exist? Is that a thing? Anywhere?

 Emily McKay 01:27

Not that I've heard of me either. Wow, that's Google worthy. Interesting.

 Scot McKay 01:32


Yeah. If any of you all are in an arranged second marriage, a please write us or call us. We'd love to interview you. I like to know that's going absolutely. Yeah. But anyway, back to the show at hand. Probably a less interesting topic than arranged second marriages. But anyway, it's probably going to be more meaningful directly

 Emily McKay 01:50

to a lot of people. Because it's going to apply to a lot of people. Oh, yeah,

 Scot McKay 01:54

absolutely. Tons of people, probably millions of people, especially kids.

 Emily McKay 01:58

Well, especially since they didn't get to make any choices here.

 Scot McKay 02:01

Haha. See, now there's the kicker, man and woman, like I said, before, we get so much


nana. See, now there's the kicker, man and woman, like I said, before, we got so rudely interrupted by my imagination wandering off in another direction, a man and a woman choose each other. They may have children, those children, assuming they're not adult children and off on their own, will be living in the same household from now on. So today, we're going to talk about all the complexities associated with blending a family. And really, once it's a blended family, it's still going to be a family. It's a unit of people living in the same household together, we hope, but they are going to not necessarily share the same parents. So what are your initial thoughts on all this? Emily? Why don't you riff on it for a while?

 Emily McKay 02:47

Well, you know, we all would love to think that we can you know, get married and get together put both families together. Everything's gonna be wonderful and shiny, happy. You know, the Brady Bunch imagination.

 Scot McKay 02:59


Oh, yeah. Let's talk about the Brady Bunch of imagination for a second. Back in the day, sitcoms on television, were shiny and happy. All the way back to Leave It to Beaver. Right. And Father Knows Best and all that stuff. Father Knows Best Man. Can you imagine that to come title in the year? 2022?

 Emily McKay 03:18

Yeah, that's funny. No, that would be more like mother knows best.

 Scot McKay 03:22

Or who in the world can possibly know best mother's Boss, boss, Mama, boss mom that yeah, there you go. That would probably get great ratings. Anyway, what happened in the Brady Bunch, of course, is man meets woman. Man has three sons who are conveniently the exact same age as the woman's three daughters. And any problems that arose from there were innocuous basically, right little little things, right. There were no incidences of say, step row porn going on in the Brady Bunch household?

 Emily McKay 03:55

No, just off the set was other thing. It was really Yes.

 Scot McKay 03:59

So Marsha and Greg were banging each other offset?

—

E

Emily McKay 04:02

What? At least a couple of them were Yes.



Scot McKay 04:05

Wow. Young ones would have been a little too young, too young for that. We would hope. But yeah. Obviously. That would probably be a very different show nowadays.

E

Emily McKay 04:15

Oh, yes. It'd be more like how much drama can we produce for entertainment purposes?



Scot McKay 04:19

Right, exactly. And ultimately, that would probably be more realistic, or somewhere in between somewhere in between, we hope. So anyway, you have the kids who are brought into this. I mean, we hope that the mom and the dad or the respective parents would at least have the kids meet each other. And of course, we hope that the man has met the woman's kids and vice versa. And if there was an impending disaster looming, I would say that probably would have to hopefully have affected the decision making process of whether to blend this family to begin with. I mean, obviously kids aren't going to make the remain Antek decision on behalf of the parents, but it should at least factor in shouldn't it even if the kids aren't in charge?

E

Emily McKay 05:06

Well, it depends. We're assuming the kids are not in charge. What if one of the kids is an absolute brat impossible to deal with mom or dad, whichever the case might be chooses not to deal with it. And you're just going to have to put up with this brat that will just drive your life insane, or call it quits,



Scot McKay 05:26

I'll be the first to admit that I've broken up with women because of their kids before. But I don't think I was going to marry any of the women I'm thinking of anyway. Well, it's

E

Emily McKay 05:35

important to realize whether you can get along with their kids. And I mean, you're gonna have to be honest about it. I mean, there's a situation where it's just, you know, the kid is out of control, and there's no rain and rain in it back, mom chooses or dad chooses not to handle the situation, this is the key point, because mom or dad may be trying with all their heart, but some situations, mom or dad have no control over. And this is where they need your support. And you have to be willing to do so if you can, well



Scot McKay 06:06

agreed. And that's going to bring up the whole idea of a kid saying to the step parent, you're not my father, you're not my mother, You're not the boss of me, you have no control over me. So in a situation where a kid is out of control, no discipline whatsoever, and the kid has a very strong personality and tends to make life miserable for everybody. Assuming that the mom and the dad decide, alright, well, we're going to take on this challenge anyway, the mom is still the mom who has no control over her kid and the stepdad. That kid's not going to give control over to the stepdad. It would have to be one amazingly charismatic stepfather to be able to turn that ship around, given the circumstances. And to be clear, this is not gender specific. Okay, it could easily be the father son is out of control, the father's daughter is out of control. I mean, when there's a gender dynamic to have stepmother, stepdaughter versus step, mother, step, son, etc, that can factor into, but we're talking about a superhuman expectation, if the mother can't control their son or daughter, and the stepfather comes in, and magically fixes everything, because they're just so darn cool. You know, it sounds like a Jocko Willink book, you know,



Emily McKay 07:21

just isn't gonna happen. But the two who are dating are going to have to be one united front and come up with a plan. And the natural parent is the one who leads



Scot McKay 07:31

I agree with that, you know, whatever the natural parent says should be the case in terms of the upbringing of their own child, it can certainly be discussed, there can certainly be suggestions made. But at the end, the step parent can't take over the parenting of the natural child of the other parent, because that'll just lead only to resentment.



Emily McKay 07:55

You brought up a great point, there are parenting styles. So let's look at this. If you're going to be dating somebody, as you're getting to know them, you need to learn each other's parenting styles, do they coexist? Do they get along? Are they in line with one another? Or are they polar opposites? Because if one is, Am I just going to talk to them? And I'm just going to discuss this problem with my child and let them decide what they're gonna do or, or is one of them so heavy handed that you're like thinking this is know borderline abusive, you're gonna have to decide whether the two of you can parent together because those are so different, like someone wants to live in Antarctica, and the other one wants to live in the desert?



Scot McKay 08:40

Well, no, there's a marriage made in hell. No, seriously, though, the point you're bringing up is a matter of baseline compatibility for that couple.



Emily McKay 08:51

Absolutely. This is one of the deal breakers, you have to be compatible and



Scot McKay 08:56

for Exactly, I mean, how you spend money where you want to go on vacation, what you eat, the God you pray to the lever, you pull in the voting booth, all of those things are basic matters of whether this couple is going to be built to last or not,



Emily McKay 09:10

whether they're going to be miserable for the rest of their lives are happy, where at least until the end of this relationship.



Scot McKay 09:16

Right? Exactly. It is, like I said, something to be considered along with every other way to figure out whether we're going to make it wow or not, except there's one big difference. other human beings are involved.



Emily McKay 09:30

And these other human beings are super smart. They know when there is a divide between parents and how to play it. Oh, really like a perfect instrument?



Scot McKay 09:41

Oh, yeah, exactly. And just to kind of finish my previous point, those kids probably didn't have a direct say in the matter,




Emily McKay 09:51

which kind of sucks if you think about it kind of okay, so



Scot McKay 09:55

it royally sucks. Yeah, I mean, if these kids are brought along for the ride, and These two should never have gotten married because of their parenting styles being too different, or because this blended family is going to be a blended family disaster, right? Then really, they're going to have to suffer through it. And they didn't choose it

 Emily McKay 10:15

now. And if you think about it, we're setting a bad example for them to repeat our mistakes.

 Scot McKay 10:20

Yes. And not only that the kids are going to act out. So you're setting an example of what a quote unquote family looks like for every child in the household going forward, which is going to be dysfunctional by design, right? And at the same time, those kids are not going to be happy with the situation, they're going to feel a little bit victimized, and then they're going to act out.

 Emily McKay 10:43

All in the name of but I'm in love will make it work somehow.

 Scot McKay 10:47

You're talking about the parents Exactly. Siblings? No. Okay.

 Emily McKay 10:51

But when the parents are so blindsided, or they're too afraid to take risks, or give in or compromise, whatever the case might be, this is the disaster that's created. sounds extremely

 Scot McKay 11:03

selfish to me. Well, it


 Emily McKay 11:05


is yes, absolutely.


 Scot McKay 11:07


So what happens when the family is blended? We've had everybody move into the house, let's say, Dad had a little boy, a little girl, mom had little boy, a little girl. They're all between the ages of say, five and 12. All right. And mom is an incredibly laissez faire parent, like you were alluding to earlier. Oh, the kids get to make their own decisions. You know, children are little angels. They would never do anything wrong. Sure, honey, you can have half a dozen Krispy


Kremes right before bedtime. And chocolate cake for breakfast. Dad is great. He gives his chocolate cake and Bill Cosby skit. And then dad is a disciplinarian. And his kids basically are run like a military platoon sergeant dad.


 Emily McKay 11:53
Right. Exactly.

 Scot McKay 11:54
Sergeant dad, good one.

 Emily McKay 11:56
That'd be a great title.

 Scot McKay 11:58
I think it's already been done, hasn't it? I don't know. It'd be interesting to find out. Yeah, there's another sitcom idea, right? Or probably terribly wrong. But anyway, onward, we have a situation where one little boy and one little girl are used to being raised a certain way. And the other little boy and little girl are used to being raised a completely different way. Now, that's going to create a whole lot of resentment. And you know, behind closed doors, the kids who have the quote unquote, cool mom are just going to stick it to the kids who have a dad who's lording it over them. And then there's going to inevitably be some bleed over, there's going to be an attitude that arises on behalf of every one of those kids and the entire household. That one, this isn't fair. And two, it needs to become more fair. And three, I want things more like they have it. And I'm not going to listen to you and the way you lead anymore, Havoc will ensue there.

 Emily McKay 12:57
That's why the parents have to be in lockstep, you have to agree on how to move forward with stuff like this, if we have this situation, how we're going to handle it, or we're going to let the kids divide us, or we're going to be a united front.

 Scot McKay 13:10
Alright, so what does that united front look like? Where's the compromise? What if laissez faire mom says, Oh, my goodness, that sounds really abusive. I'm not going to be a disciplinarian with my child. And meanwhile, the other parent goes, you've got to be freaking kidding. You have feral children as funny. And they're basically running this house right? Up until all hours eating half gallon of ice cream at 3am. And how are we first of all going to rein in the kids who are used to doing whatever the hell they want. And meanwhile, give over a little bit more

freedom, maybe not rule with such an iron fist, the other kids and have it somehow be equitable, because in that situation, Emily, I think the kids are used to an extreme disciplinarian are going to be like, Wow, this is freaking great. I got some breathing room, I got some autonomy. Meanwhile, the kids who are used to well being feral children are not going to want to be tamed. Or they,

 Emily McKay 14:13

no, they're not. And this is where you have to be honest. And realize this is a situation is not going to work. There's no way you can get these kids are going to be on board with the situation.

 Scot McKay 14:24

So all we have to present to this audience is nihilism. And that case,

 Emily McKay 14:27

well, this is where when you're dating somebody, you have to be in lockstep with ideas and principles is like we mentioned earlier,

 Scot McKay 14:34

okay, we've established that though, but what if we're in that relationship now? What?

 Emily McKay 14:38

Well, then you're gonna have to put up with been miserable.

 Scot McKay 14:42

Well, I don't know if I'm ready to throw in the towel on the whole thing just yet. I think you have a family meeting. And I think you throw out the truth on the table. All right, you too have been raised a certain way so far. You too have been raised a certain way so far. Why don't we We have a discussion, a brainstorming session on what way to proceed. That's equitable. And then I would absolutely yes, let the kids have some say in that matter, because it's kind of like the same psychological dynamic as first grade teachers. Well, good first grade teachers know full well, if you tell the kids at the beginning of the school year, they need to sit down, shut up and behave. They'll all try to push those boundaries. If you let the kids decide what the consequences are for breaking certain rules, the kids will come up with far more draconian rules than the teacher would have.

 Emily McKay 15:00



Emily McKay 15:33

Yeah, that is interesting. That is, that is how it works. Yeah. So



Scot McKay 15:36

why couldn't we do that as a blended family?



Emily McKay 15:39

Well, that's an excellent point. And before you may have that meeting, mom and dad or you know, this couple, have to get together and have a discussion of how this meeting is going to proceed. What will be acceptable? What's not again? lockstep you have to be a united front?



Scot McKay 15:55

Yeah, well, and also, if it hasn't been said yet, let's be perfectly clear. If the parents aren't in lockstep about how they're parenting, they need to at least be honest about that. They can't put their head in the sand, and go now.



Emily McKay 16:10

It'll be alright. He'll see it my way eventually, right? I



Scot McKay 16:13

can change this other person. Exactly. It's a fixer upper. But you know, we got it. The bull in the china shop ham fisted approach, right? We got iron fisted like a ham fisted, we got heavy handed men, my wrists hurt already from all this weight. But anyway, the parents are going to have to be realistic with each other like, Look, honey, you and I have very different styles. I love you, I want to make this work. But we're going to have to break it to the kids, that we all have to live under the same roof. And we're going to have to run this parenting thing in a way that's equally distributed to these children and serves all their needs.




Emily McKay 16:49

And the word set goals. This is the goal for the family. We want to be happy and united. So let's discuss how we can be happy and united.



Scot McKay 16:57


I think that's a great way to start.

 Emily McKay 16:59

Now we love y'all, you're wonderful, but in order to get along and have satisfaction in our lives. Let's have discussion about it.

 Scot McKay 17:07

Well, what's one of our favorite phrases to utter when disciplining our children? It's Is there anything I just said? That's unreasonable? Oh, yes, exactly. Right. Of course, the answer is no. Yeah, absolutely. Because if you give the kids a chance to speak up for what's going on, then I would say, if it's not unreasonable, they have no room to say it is. Now if they do call you out for being unreasonable, the kids I'm talking about during this discussion, let them have their say, respect the opinion. But if they're just being selfish, or if they're just trying to have their own way, or if they're just resisting the change that they already know is eminent well, then you can have a little good natured banter back and forth about it. Now, I believe in cranky, funny, you know that, Oh, yes. In the midst of such a family conversation, there has to be a little humor injected here and there to remind them that you love them that this isn't all about, you know, a bunch of rules. You're not trying to run a totalitarian state. Although I would argue the parents are the totalitarians kids don't get to make the rules. But they do it with love. Right? Exactly. It's benevolent totalitarianism. But back to our family meeting, the kids will agree to rules that are reasonable. And they will have input on what the consequences should be. And if there is more than one child, which there will be by design here, otherwise, the natural parent would have the final say, and how to raise the one kid in the house.

 Emily McKay 18:44

Absolutely. That would make it so much easier. Right.

 Scot McKay 18:47

But you know, when you have a Brady Bunch kind of situation, there are more dynamics? Yes, exactly. Now, in our situation, you had a son and I had a daughter. And we were very fortunate and that they got along great. They really did. Oh, most


 Emily McKay 19:04

people thought they were natural siblings,

 Scot McKay 19:06

and even kind of looked like they do right. It's interesting. Your son is four years older than my daughter. And interestingly enough, the son we have together John is four years older than his natural sister, Sarah. Yeah. So we have that same dynamic happened in the house all over again. It's like deja vu. And those two kids got along really well. I think we got Lucky, had they not gotten along really well. If one was abusive in any way, shape, or form towards the other,


we would have had to have had a serious sit down about it. And we would have had to have seen if that behavior pattern was going to change, or else it may have been the end of our relationship.

 Emily McKay 19:47

That's right, or the end of the relationship with a child depending on the severity of the situation. In other

 Scot McKay 19:53

words, you would just abandon the child for the sake of your new husband or wife. What do you mean by that?

 Emily McKay 19:58

Well, if the child poses that an absolute threat. Like there was one family that I knew of that she called me she was that they were having to split up, not divorce. But the son was abusing physically the daughter.

 Scot McKay 20:15

Right. I've heard of a family situation where the son was sexually assaulting your daughter also. Right? Yeah, well, that's extreme

 Emily McKay 20:23

that that's not very common. But you know, those things do happen? Well, I would say,

 Scot McKay 20:27

let's just throw a blanket over such a situation. In the manner of any time there's an abusive situation, physically or sexually within your household, that person needs to be removed from the household. I don't care who they are.

 Emily McKay 20:43

Yes, different plans need to be made for them. Or if the child becomes a threat to anyone in the family, you know, mom, dad, stepmom, stepdad?

 Scot McKay 20:53

Right. Right, exactly. So with that in mind, let's talk about some other ways the parents are relating to the children going forward. I am not your son's father. One of the things that in my estimation, I did right, was make it perfectly clear to your son David, that I'm not his father, I'm not going to try to replace his father, I don't expect him to call me dad, he has always called me Scott, which is fine. And my input in his life is going to be based on how much he welcomes it. Now, if there are situations where I feel like some intervention has to happen right here, and right now, I wouldn't have been shy about it. And I wasn't. Anytime you want me to be in support of your parenting, because you felt like having a man by your side, representing in front of your son was going to be helpful. I did that. But you took the lead and parenting your son. And I took the lead in parenting my daughter, and indeed, my daughter Danielle never was required to call you, Mom, you're not her mother. And you never tried to be her mother. That's right. Right. And I think that worked out very well.

E

Emily McKay 22:07

I think that helped a lot.



Scot McKay 22:10

Now, what if there's a situation where one or more of the kids has an absentee parent? Like in other words, what if your son's father wasn't in his life? Or vice versa? Would that empower the other parent the step parent to take a larger role? Or would it even necessitate that parent playing a larger role?

E

Emily McKay 22:31

Well, you're a team, right? So seeing it as this is his or her problem. In a case like that you have to work as a team, with, you know, the natural parent taking the ultimate lead, but always as a decision that's made in private between the two parents.



Scot McKay 22:49

In other words, hey, I could really use some help, and giving my son a male role model. Yes. Would you be up to that challenge? Are you willing to take it on.

E

Emily McKay 23:01

And this can be done without replacing the missing father, you know, being an example, being a role model doesn't mean you have to be dad, to this person. I mean, even as adults, we have role models, but we don't think of them as parents. Well.



Scot McKay 23:15

And to help make your point, I always was very careful about the image I was portraying of

manhood for your son, even though I wasn't quote unquote, replacing his father. Now, that all said, I think some guys are very fearful of a single mom looking for a man to replace the father in his son's life as a primary goal, which if anything, only highlights the need for conversation between the man and the woman. And guys, those of you who are listening to this, if you're dating a single mom, and things are starting to get serious, have this conversation. Don't bury your head in the sand like an ostrich hoping you know what, maybe it'll all turn out, say to the woman? Are you looking for a replacement for dad in this relationship? Or are you looking for me to be your partner, your lover? And you're gonna raise this kid by yourself? And it's hands off? How are we going to approach this

E

Emily McKay 24:12

conversation? setting rules and boundaries? Yes,



Scot McKay 24:15

that's really what it all comes down to? Well, we've run out of time. And I think that this conversation has focused in all the right places.

E

Emily McKay 24:23

I think so too, because, you know, blended families are very common, and it's very important to find a way to make them work.



Scot McKay 24:31

Yeah. And if you're in such a relationship, drop us an email at Scott and Emily at SCOTTON emily.com. Gentlemen, if you're listening to this on the mountaintop podcast feed, write me at Scott at mountaintop podcast.com and ask us any questions you have about blended families. I know there are a lot of different ways this could go. But you know, ultimately, it will all come down to that basic issue of baseline compatibility. Like okay, she's Catholic. He's Jewish. Where do we take these kids to worship in the weekend? Well, that's something that has to be decided in terms of your basic compatibility before you even consider blending the family. It's all parenting styles, right? All right, it all comes down to the same thing. Do you have kids who only get cool stuff at Christmas time in their birthday? Or are you lavishing upon them whatever you need and spending the money all year long. Whether you spoil your kids, whether you try to make them earn every dollar to pay for everything they buy, all of that is decided as a measure of basic compatibility between the two parents before it gets handed down to the blended family full of children, right. And this

E

Emily McKay 25:39

can be so scary to sit down and have a talk with your significant other the person that you're in love with, to be vulnerable and say, Hey, this is how I'm feeling this is you know, how I like to raise my child. And here's the issues I'm having with your children or the situation between us.

But if we have that conversation, when we're not in the heat of the moment, it goes a whole lot better. If you approach it when there's not all this elevated emotions, it'll go much better,



Scot McKay 26:08

agreed 100%, which is probably why we're basically compatible. All right. So ultimately, yes, it comes down to discussion between mom and dad, early potential husband and wife and the measures of basic compatibility impacts everybody involved, including the kids, perhaps especially the kids,



Emily McKay 26:33

and then wrangling them in and having a discussion, right.



Scot McKay 26:36

I love that idea of the family discussion. And if it's important to have a discussion of compatibility with someone you're going to theoretically spend the rest of your life with happily. That goes double. If there are children involved. It is an absolute moral imperative, not to shy away from any hard discussion that has to happen face the music because you're doing it not only for each other, but for your kids as well. Otherwise, it'd



Emily McKay 27:04

be selfish. You bet.



Scot McKay 27:06

And with that, we want to thank you all for listening in gentlemen, you can go to mountaintop podcast.com Download my free book, sticking point solved get on my calendar to talk to me free for 25 minutes while you're there by clicking the red button in the upper right hand corner. And ladies if you're listening to this go to Scott and emily.com front slash podcast and remember my name spelled with one TSCOTANDE M I L y.com. Front slash podcast and you too can get on our calendar and talk to us for a for 25 minutes about what's going on in your dating life or your relationship. And perhaps we can put a plan of action together to get you well to where you want to be to help you reach your goals. Right Emily?



Emily McKay 27:51

We'd love to hear from you. Absolutely.




Scot McKay 27:53

And so from x&y communications in San Antonio, Texas. This is Scot McKay

 Emily McKay 27:59

and this is Emily McKay be good and have fun

 Edroy Odem 28:09

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