

# Done with Dieting Podcast #61: Surviving Blended Families with Mindy Neal



## Full Episode Transcript

With your Host  
Elizabeth Sherman

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On today's episode, my guest Mindy Neal is a coach for women in blended families to help you create where unity without requiring anyone else to change. That sounds amazing. And honestly, as we were talking, I was thinking the entire time, this is a conversation that I think everyone should be listening to.

So, tune into today's episode to be blown away by Mindy and how you can create more connection and closeness in your family.

You are listening to the done with dieting podcast. The podcast for women in midlife, who are done with dieting, but still want to lose weight and feel good in your clothes. You know that diets don't work long term. But you feel like there's this secret that everyone else knows that you just haven't figured it out yet.

I am your host, Elizabeth Sherman. And I've helped hundreds of women get off the diet roller coaster change their relationship with food, exercise, and their bodies. Through this podcast, my goal is to help you too.

Welcome. Let's get started.

Hey there everyone, welcome to today's podcast episode number 61. Today, I'm interviewing Mindy Neal, who is a life coach who helps her clients overcome the challenges that go along with combining two families together. As we started talking about it, it became obvious that when folks decide to get married for a second time, it's not just about the couple getting married anymore.

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All of a sudden, there are so many more personalities involved, which creates a unique set of circumstances and challenges. But I don't want to give away too much because whether you're in a blended family or not, I think that what Mindy shares in this interview is so incredibly valuable for anyone who struggles with all of the dissatisfaction and frustration that can come along with living with other people.

So, tune in.

**Elizabeth:** All right everyone, welcome Mindy Neal to our show. Welcome, Mindy.

**Mindy:** Thank you for having me. Me too.

**Elizabeth:** So, first Mindy, tell us all about you. Who are you? Who do you help? Just tell us all the things.

**Mindy:** Yeah. So, I'm Mindy Neal, as you said. I help women who are blended families. Because I got divorced and that was traumatic. And then, I was single, and I would say an adventure. And I thought I was in this great place, and I got remarried and I had no idea how hard blending families would be. Like, it did not meet any of my expectations. And my expectations were probably actually the problem because reality did not match caused me a lot of pain. I didn't know what coaching was back then.

And so, hubby and I were going to therapy, and it wasn't really helping very much. I told my therapist I was drowning in pain. It was so miserable, and I thought for sure that I was either going to have to settle for marriage and family that I didn't really want to be in, or I was going to get divorced again after I didn't even plan on getting divorced ever.

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So, I was just in a really bad place, and I found coaching and it changed everything for me. So, my blended family still looks pretty much the same as in my husband still does all the same things. My step kids do the same things. His ex-wife still does the same thing. My ex still does the same thing. And it's like a totally different experience.

Everything is different and absolutely nothing is different. And because of that, I really want to help other women do this because when I get into Facebook groups for stepmoms, or blended family support, or whatever, I see so many women out there struggling and they don't know how to do it, and it's not their fault because nobody ever taught us how to do it.

And so, that's my mission, 70% of blended family marriages end in divorced and I'm on a mission to help change that. If you are in a blended family and you do not want to get divorced, there is a way, I promise. So, that's what I help women do.

**Elizabeth:** Well, it's so funny that you say it that way and what I mean is that I'm divorced. I don't have children; my current husband does not have children. And when we got married, I remember everyone telling me, oh, you know, that second marriages don't work. Why would someone say that to someone who's getting married, I'm not sure.

But it was so interesting, and I was like, well, but I think that that's different for people who don't have kids because when we add more personalities to the relationship or to the dynamic. Then, of course, it's going to make things more difficult, right?

**Mindy:** Yeah. Because we have all these kids. So, it's their relationships with each other, their relationships to their step-parents. And then, we also have other parents in the mix who are always wanting to have a say of what's going on in our family. And it is like you say a lot of personalities. I think that is what makes it so complicated. So, we really focus on relationships. Like it's all about relationships.

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**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And when I was thinking about what are the struggles that many blended families probably have. When you're getting married, you're just thinking about the two of you, right? You're just thinking about, oh, this is going to be so amazing, we're in love, and we want to share this with the rest of the world or live off into the sunset.

And then, all of those different personalities come in and I would imagine that there's a lot of judgment or conflict around each partner and the new rules that each partner has about their kids. Right?

**Mindy:** Yeah. Because you have kids and who have been living a certain life for X amount of years and they could be totally different. So, in this family, maybe video games are limited to one hour a day and this family they're completely unlimited, you can play any game you want for as long as you want, and you have to bring those together.

And sometimes we don't want to compromise or sometimes we try to but then the kids rebel. There's just so many things that can come into play because you're bringing two families that have been doing it a certain way for a long time and trying to put them together.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. So, I have to imagine that when you have kids and they're used to having things done a certain way, they're really not thrilled about mom or dad bringing this other person into their sphere. And they're resentful because what I'm thinking teenagers right now, and teenagers just make things so easy for their parents.

So, how do you manage that? Like, how do you manage that there's this new person in and maybe we should start with, when do we start this process? When's the ideal time to start coaching with a blended family?

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**Mindy:** Well, anyone in the world start coaching today. Whether you have a blended family or not, coaching is the very best thing I have ever found to help me have a good life. So, obviously yesterday is the best time to start coaching today would be the second best time. Coaching is amazing.

But I love that you brought up the teenager thing. So, my stepson, he's 15 and I coached lots of women with teenage stepchildren as well. And it's so fascinating how our brains want to make everything about, the fact that we're the step-mom or the step monster. He's 15, that's pretty typical behavior for a 15 year old male. And yet our brains, like to make it all because I'm the step-mom, because he doesn't respect me, because he resents the remarriage.

And so, I think we, as women in blended families we create so many extra problems. Like you're talking about actual things that exist, like bringing two families together. But on top of that, we add so many problems with our own brains because we see the world through that lens of the blended family. When it could just be, oh yeah, he's 15 year old boy of course, he's acting like that has nothing to do with.

**Elizabeth:** My own kid acts like that, right?

**Mindy:** Right, has nothing to do with the remarriage, or the divorce, or him not respecting his step-mom like none of it. It's just he's a 15 year old boy of course he acts like that, we don't see it. Our brain is looking for all the ways they don't respect us, or it's not working, or we're two separate families instead of looking for all the way, and we are.

**Elizabeth:** So, we know that there's a challenge between the stepparent and the step kids, what are some of the other challenges that blended families have?

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**Mindy:** I think it's a lot of expectations. I just to have all these pretty thoughts, like families should love each other. Families should spend time together, quality time obviously. We have all of these expectations of what a family is supposed to look like. And blended families don't look like first families, they just don't, they're different. But we're still wanting to have all those things. And as long as we're holding on to them, we just keep making herself miserable over and over.

So, it's a lot of 'should', a lot of thinking people should behave certain ways and families should look like a certain thing. And we just are in pain all the time because that's not what reality looks like. I think that's actually the biggest struggle.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. I would have to imagine that you're absolutely 100% right. And especially, when it comes to exes cause what we're talking about right now is just the family unit of the new mom and the new dad and their kids. But when you take into account also exes, like my ex should be supportive of what's happening with the kids. My ex should be taking 50% responsibility.

**Mindy:** He should be following the court ordered paperwork. He should put the kids first. Yes, lots of that. And then we tie it to like you said, when we get into this, it's like, I just love this one person, we do it to our spouse too. He should parent his kid differently. He shouldn't treat my kid different than his kid. He should stand up to his ex-wife. So much 'should' in going on.

**Elizabeth:** My brain is exploding right now. No, it's absolutely true. So, how do we manage that? Because for so many, I would have to imagine they believe that that's absolutely true that he should take his parenting responsibilities more seriously. He shouldn't allow his kids to eat ice cream after 10 o'clock at night. He should make sure that his kids are home by a certain time.

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**Mindy:** Yeah, they definitely feel true but here's the other thing they feel, terrible. Because every time I'm thinking them, the first thing is checking with your body. When you think he shouldn't let his kid get away with that or whatever it sounds like, check in and see how that feels. I don't know about you. It feels terrible to me.

And when I feel terrible, I don't show up as my best self. So, what I've noticed for me and for my clients every time I think someone else should be doing something differently, as in they're doing it wrong. I do it wrong because I don't feel good, I create negative emotion, and then I react to that negative emotion. And then, I'm not showing up as who I want to be either.

**Elizabeth:** I can imagine that there are folks who are listening to this right now, who are thinking to themselves, okay, so what's the alternative, we just have to let go of all expectation. And that sounds like chaos, I'm sure to some people.

**Mindy:** I'm sure it does. So, where I like to start is just being willing to be wrong. Not that I am wrong, I'm just willing to be wrong. What if I really am wrong about this? What if husband parenting his kid this way is actually the best choice. What if he did it my way and it turned out way worse. I don't actually know; I can't see the future. What if I'm wrong?

So, it's like stepping into that willingness where I'm like, you know what? It looks wrong to me; I wouldn't do it that way but maybe it's fine. Maybe his kid does need that kind of treatment from his dad. Maybe it's good that all the kids in our family have two totally separate parenting styles so that they can learn from each of us. I don't actually know.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Okay, I can get behind that.

**Mindy:** Well, it's remembering. The reason we're doing it is not to say, well, I guess I just have to be a doormat. That's not what we're saying, it's like when I think this way, I

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feel terrible. It's really hard for me to enjoy my blended family. And what if I took ownership of that? What if I just decided I don't want to feel terrible anymore. I would actually love to enjoy my family.

So, I'm going to try it different. The way I'm doing it now, it's not working. What if I was just willing to be wrong, willing to experiment, and try different things so that I could create something different for myself. It's not actually about other people. It's about how I get to feel in my own family and in my own home. And right now, it feels terrible.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And I'd have to imagine that for so many of my clients, we, women are people pleasers, right? And when we're trying to please our partner, and trying to please our new mother-in-law, and our ex-spouse that we're just pissed at for whatever reason and that anger and resentment and all of that just bubbles up.

And what happens is we just create this anger monster that just blows up all over the place and what's making me think about that is when you said being a doormat. Because I think that so many of us believe that in order to keep the peace, we have to be a doormat. We have to allow everyone else to do what it is that they want to do and that our feelings don't matter.

**Mindy:** Yeah. We do it like for the sake of the relationship, right? To keep the peace, to help everyone in the household feel loved, and appreciated, and happy whatever that means. But when we create that resentment, resentment is toxic to relationships.

So, it's like we tell ourselves we're doing it for the relationship and then we poison the relationship. Because resentment does not help relationships. It's terrible for relationships. So, the people pleasing doesn't work. It's a lie. Our brain tells us, and it never gets us where we want to go.

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**Elizabeth:** So yeah, like all of that resentment that we have when it comes to our relationships can really take an impact on our health. What are some of the things that you see your clients coming to you with that are health-related, that are really fueled by this trauma or it's not trauma but fueled by this situation in their home.

**Mindy:** You know what? Actually, sometimes it is trauma. For me specifically, I had some trauma in my past like when I was a child and then I had trauma related to my divorce with my husband cheating on me and things. I was actually diagnosed with betrayal trauma.

And when I got into my new marriage, it would be like a look on my husband's face or the tone of his voice. I would have a trauma response which I didn't even know that that was still there cause when I was single, there was nothing to trigger those responses. It was like a response that was tied to my first husband, which I didn't even know that was going on.

And so actually, when you say trauma, there actually is a lot of trauma in blended families that hasn't come to the surface before. It's like that remarriage kind of triggers things. And most women don't even know if they haven't done this work, you don't actually realize it's a trauma response either.

And so, they find themselves reacting in ways that they would call crazy, or dramatic, or maybe their husband is actually telling them that. They don't even realize it's because they're having a trauma response.

**Elizabeth:** That is fascinating? Tell me more. Seriously, I have never thought about this. This is so cool.

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**Mindy:** Yeah. So, this is because I'm constantly doing my own work as a life coach. It was like slowing down those moments, why? What was the trigger and why did I feel that visceral response in my body? Because as life coaches we're always telling our client, Hey, these exact words, they're neutral. They're just letters strung together in a sentence. They have no charge. They have no power. They do not create emotion.

And yet, when my husband would say words, it didn't feel like there was a thought in between was like my body reacted. And so, I had to slow down those moments and from a place of compassion, and love, and curiosity, what is it? Oh, this is the trigger, it's this exact look on his face. I'm guessing my ex-husband had to look very much like this. It's this exact tone of his voice.

Again, tied to ex-husband's tone of voice. It's like my body, what happens in a trauma response is my brain will say, I'm not safe. Now, I don't notice that sentence, it's subconscious in my survival system. But there's "I'm not safe," so there still is a thought and then my body response.

And so, once I recognize, I slowed it down enough, that was when I was able to start changing it so that I could show up in my marriage the way I want it to. Because this has nothing to do with my husband. If not his words, it's not even his facial expressions or his tone of voice. It's something that has nothing to do with him.

And if it's not his fault, it's like taking all that responsibility back on myself and saying, I can change this if I want to. So, every time I would have like a trauma response, the thing I found the most helpful was to just pour love onto myself. Don't judge myself for it, don't react. This is a trauma response. My brain thinks I'm not safe, it's okay. My body is reacting and loving on myself in that moment of course, I am.

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Look at the things that I've been through, nothing has gone wrong here. And now, I'm able to just show up in those scenarios as my best self because I've slowed it down, I've studied it, and I've practiced.

**Elizabeth:** I love what you said there because I think that first of all, it drives me nuts when women are described as crazy, right? It just men aren't described as crazy only women are. And it totally makes sense that I don't want to say a lack of understanding, but it is a lack of understanding of what preceded you. That what happened in this current event, she didn't respond in kind to the severity of this event, she went off.

And divorces are very traumatic? Like, what happens in a divorce? Even in a peaceful divorce, when both parties in the marriage want to make it an amicable divorce. It's still really emotional. And so, to imagine that something would happen that would cause the future. And yeah, when you were single, of course you didn't have that because it wasn't a partnership. That was so brilliant.

**Mindy:** Yeah. So, it's okay if you get into a remarriage and you thought you were in one place and you're not. It's okay, because none of that was triggered and that's just an opportunity to do more work on me so that I can up level and grow. Like thank heavens, my husband is here to trigger those things for me.

In fact, my husband bless his heart, does not love me the way I want to be loved all the time. And that's the best thing ever because I have had to learn how to love myself on a totally different level. It's the same thing. It's like our spouses are not there to fill all our needs, and make sure that we're whole, that is our job.

So, if he was doing that for me all the time and I just felt loved and adored every second of the day, I wouldn't have to do that work for myself. And it is my job. Loving yourself will take you to levels you never even imagined in your life if you can learn how to do

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that. And so again, it's like thank heaven, he's here doing it wrong and screwing it up so that I can actually grow into the person I have the potential of being.

**Elizabeth:** And that just goes directly back for those of you can't see the video, which has all of you. I'm sitting here or laughing because I can imagine that most of us are like, wait a minute, I have to thank my husband for not loving me the way that I want him to love me. Wait a minute, what is happening here? This lady is just sharing so many truth bombs here.

**Mindy:** You don't have to actually say the words to your husband. I don't know that I've said them to him but sometimes I think it. I'm like, you know what? This is good for me. It really does challenge me to learn how to love myself.

And that is so much more important, that helps with my food choices. And it helps when I go after goals. And it helps when I fail at something. My relationship with myself is the foundation of everything. And if he was really loving me all the time the way I wanted him to, I wouldn't have to do that work.

**Elizabeth:** Well, and when you're relying on your partner to provide you with the validation that you need, they're not going to be able to do that 100% of the time. So of course, we need to do our own self-validation, self-acceptance, self-love so that we're not looking at other people. Because going back to expectations what you were talking about before, people aren't going to do it, right. They're not going to do it to our level of specification.

**Mindy:** Almost never. That's how it works. People don't do it the way we want. If I could teach you how to make your husband, or your step kids, or whoever do it the way you want it, I totally would. But they don't and it's never going to happen. So as long as we keep thinking it should be different, it's like banging your head into a wall over, and over, and over and the wall, it's fine.

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Like, we're talking to a brick wall here. The brick wall is like laughing at you and in the meantime you have blood streaming down your face. And that is what we're doing when we fight those expectations fight reality, it's like we're in pain and nothing has changed at all.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Well, and I would have to imagine that for many folks who are in blended families, they really don't see a way out that just like you, they really only know of marriage counseling. That's not the problem.

**Mindy:** Right. So, we would go to therapy, and we really did do that exercise where it's like, okay, what are your needs? How can you do better at filling each other's needs? And we can do that with the therapist, and then we come home, and my husband's still sucks at filling my needs. And let's be honest, I probably s\*ck at filling his sometimes too.

We are not the best person to fill someone else's needs, they are. So, that's true for us, we are the very best person to do that. So, yeah, we'd go to therapy, didn't work. I mean, it was probably more helpful than not going at all, but it was not moving us forward, I was drowning, I did not know what to do.

**Elizabeth:** And so, coaching is what brought you around to saving your marriage?

**Mindy:** Yeah. In fact, if you meet my husband, if he's talking about me like, when you're just meeting someone like, what do you do? What does your wife do? He will say, I've heard them say this many times. My wife's a life coach so she could stay married to me. That's full on true. And I just laugh I'm like, yep, that's absolutely true. He'd miss it.

But it's because I had to question all the things that were making me miserable. Because I thought it was my husband, and I thought it was my step-kids, and I thought it was his ex, I thought it was all those outside things. And it wasn't, it was all my own thoughts about all those things.

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Here's an example, when we first got married, I thought that we would be making decisions about our kids together. I thought there would be our kids, not my kids and your kids. And he would just make this decision and do all the things I don't even know about it. He didn't include me in it, nothing.

And so, it was like I wasn't really part of their life. And I had this thought, I cannot love them like a mom, if I am not allowed to act like a mom. Now, that felt really true to me. It was like a mom's love is different. If they're just like a kid that lives next door, I don't love those kids like I love my kids.

And if that's how this is going to be, where you're just going to make decisions, and they're just a kid who lives here. I can't love them like a mom. I just thought that was true.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, wow.

**Mindy:** And it felt terrible. So, coaching is what helped me see, that's totally made up. Why can't you love them like a mom? I can love anyone I want to, for any reason I want to, or no reason all. I can love someone just because I decide to. That is not a true thought. And it felt so true to me in my bones.

And that is what coaching does is it takes these things that feel like facts, like the sun rises in the morning and I can't love these kids because of my husband and how he's setting this up. It feels like a fact and coaching goes in and dissects it and helps us look at it and go. Wait a minute, maybe that's not true at all. Maybe that's made up. Maybe I can love them just cause I want to.

It's like stepping into this world where are you sure are we allowed to do that? Is that like real? And really embracing, oh wait, I can think anything I want to. Which creates a

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totally different experience. I notice nothing outside has changed only when I'm thinking about it.

**Elizabeth:** But I can only imagine how many sleepless nights you had. Like waking up at three o'clock in the morning and ruminating on this and not getting good sleep.

**Mindy:** It never stopped my husband's over there like snoring logs. And I'm like, how is he sleeping? Yes. All the time, it was like going through my head constantly. Everything has gone wrong. This is not how it should be. This is terrible, I'm never going to have what I want. Because I didn't know that it was my own brain creating all of it.

**Elizabeth:** I hear you saying it and I totally 100% understand it because I'm a coach. But I can only imagine that from the listener point of view, that they are really confused. Like, how do you just change your thoughts? How do you change your thoughts on this going from 'I need to be included in all the parenting conversations' to 'no, I don't, it's totally okay.' That seems like such a leap.

**Mindy:** Yeah. And a lot of times we don't leap from one mountain to another. A lot of times we build a bridge across, right? Like we take it a little slowly. Maybe I'm wrong about that. Maybe I can love them however I want, no matter what. I wonder what that would look like. We're not like I don't like to ever force my brain or my client's brains to go somewhere their brain is not ready to go.

But I like to create a space where we can play and explore and open up to possibility. And you can stay there and play as long as you need to play until your brain is ready to get on board.

One of the ways I love to think about this is it's like you're on the high school debate team and you have prepared your entire argument. You are ready to argue your case.

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You got a big stack of evidence. You show up to class and your teacher's like, surprise! You're on the other team today. And you're like, wait a minute, what? I don't have any evidence for that.

In fact, I really believe this is true because I've been collecting evidence for it for weeks. Now in real life, that's usually years or decades. I've been collecting this evidence for a long time. I got nothing over there. I can't believe that. But if you're on the debate team, you're like, well, this is a debate. There's always an argument for both sides.

So, it's like I love to just be like, okay, brain, let's say we have permission to believe this other thing. We have permission to believe that we really don't need to be in on the decision-making with the kids. And it's fine, and we can love them, and we can be a happy family, and everything can be amazing.

Go find me evidence. If we have permission to believe that we know maybe it's a possibility. Go find evidence that it's true. So, it's like I give my brain a job. Your brain actually loves to do what you ask it to. But if you don't give it a job, what it usually finds on default is not enough.

Any version of not enough, that's what your brain will do on default. So, it's like giving it another job. And every time it would try to give me evidence that this is a problem. I'd be like, 'oh brain, remember,' we already have all that. We're collecting evidence that it's not a problem that I can love them, whatever it is you're trying to believe.

So, it's like you don't leap from one to the other. You open up a space and give yourself a chance to believe something else. And then, tell your brain to find you evidence that you could.

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**Elizabeth:** And I would have to imagine that half the battle is just pointing out, or noticing what the beliefs, or what our perspective is that I have the assumption that I should be part of this decision making process. Right?

**Mindy:** Yeah. It was like being willing to question everything. Literally, everything your brain offers, be willing to question it. Because it's all made up.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. And so, how do we bridge that over into health? Clearly, when we talk about body size, right? Our brains are always telling us, we will be happy when we're at a certain weight, or that real women are this size, or they shouldn't be that size, or all of those types of questions. And so, it's starting to evaluate those assumptions that we make about how the world works, how our family works, how it should be.

Like with body size and shape. It's like, wait, who decided what the perfect body looks like? Because if we go back through history, you'll find a lot of paintings with much larger women than we would find in today's paintings, which is like social media or whatever. Those bodies look totally different.

Somebody decided back then that that's what was beautiful. And somebody new has decided that today, who probably some like 16 year old trendsetter that doesn't know anything about life who usually sets trends. Who decided what a beautiful body looks like? So, would you just step into that place of like, oh, maybe it is made up.

Now, it's okay that our brain thinks otherwise because our brain has been given one message over and over and over and over and over, it's a very deep neural pathway. But that doesn't mean it's not made up. Absolutely is. Somebody made it up because we can see through time that somebody else made up something different.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. What's really interesting is when we talk about body size as well as fashion, a lot of the body size has to do with money. And earlier in time, the rich ate a

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lot and that's what gave them the larger body size. And today, what gives us a smaller body size is exercise. And so, you see that the more muscley physique look is more in style. And yeah, so it all has to do with money and the elite.

**Mindy:** And totally made up probably by someone in that category. It doesn't make it real. Just means someone who has influence made something up and we all just believed it. So, that's true with body size. It's true with what a family should look like. It's true with how a partnership should operate as a partnership like all of it. It's all made up.

**Elizabeth:** Well, and it's so funny to even talk about to bring in another topic, which is money. And how I'm sure money plays into the dynamics of a blended family, right? In my first marriage, we had a shared checking account. In my current marriage, we have separate checking accounts.

And it's interesting when I talk to other people, and it somehow comes up knowing that definitely asks about it. But when it comes up, they're like, oh really? That's so interesting, why do you do that? But it just works for us, and no one says what is the right way? It's just what works for you and all the rules away.

**Mindy:** That is the key to a successful blended family as well. The right way is the way that works for our family with all of the components, and all the personalities, and all the players. The right way is just the way that works for us. It doesn't matter if it looks like anybody else's way. You really do get to decide. Hey, this works for me, let's do this. This feels amazing, let's do this. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks.

**Elizabeth:** As you're talking, it's making me think about how many families actually sit down and really talk about their mission statement, or their values, or whatever it is that binds them together as a family. I know that when I got married the first time, I was Catholic and so I went through the Pre-Cana and that did it to some degree, they brought up topics like insurance and things like that.

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But it really didn't set a mission for what we wanted to do as a family together. And I think that could be so important when we're talking about not only blended families but just families and marriages from the start. Do you do any of that work with your clients?

**Mindy:** I haven't. And here's, what's interesting is you're saying that I actually do. I did do this with my family, and we have it up on the wall and everything. And I tried to like, it was like pulling teeth to get participation and to get them to get their buy-in. And of course, my brain wants to make that a huge problem. Nobody cares about this, I'm the only one that cares, I'm the only one that wants us to blend. I'm the only one that wants unity. This is what our brains do.

But here's the awesome thing is I can look at that. And if I decide this is the kind of family we have, and I show up from that place, I don't actually need their buy-in. I don't need them to participate in it because I can create that in our home. I can create it for myself for certain, whether they agree with it or not.

So, we have way more power than we think we often think, well, I can't have that because my husband's not on board. We can't have that because step-kids aren't on board. If your step kids walk around with a big F-you on their forehead all the time, that doesn't actually mean you can't have the kind of family you want. And I know that sounds crazy, but it is absolutely true. You can really create what you want in your home, regardless of their choices.

**Elizabeth:** And what I really love about that concept also is that it at least gives you some guideposts for how you want to parent or being consistent in your decision making. That I know that if loyalty or trust is one of my core values, then I know that every single time I make a decision, I need to put those qualities into my decision making.

**Mindy:** Yeah. And that is work I do with my clients all the time. It's deciding what kind of mom do I want to be? What kind of wife do I want to be? What kind of step-mom

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do I want to be. What kind of ex-wife do I want to be deciding on purpose and then just showing up as that person and letting it be enough. Rather than trying to when we're talking about people pleasing, there's like lots of walking on eggshells in blended families.

I don't know what my role is. I don't know who they want me to be. And when you're in that place, it's so hard to actually be who you want to be because you're looking to other people and their reactions to decide that for you. But if you just decide, Hey, this is the kind of person I want to be, they can like it or not like it, that's totally fine because when I show up this way, I feel amazing.

And when I feel amazing, it's so much easier for me to show up as the person I want to be. So, that creates awesome. And when you're trying to be what everyone else wants you to be. Oh, it's terrible. You'd like you drive yourself crazy.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. There are two questions that I guide my clients to ask themselves when they're making decisions. One is what would I do if I loved myself. And the second question is who do I want to be in this relationship. How do I want to show up in this relationship?

And sometimes it's the relationship with self, sometimes it's the relationship with the other person but I love that because it so embodies our decision-making. Like yes, I could go off and ramble and rant about why you didn't do what you were supposed to do but is that really who I want to be remembered by as a role in this family?

**Mindy:** Yeah. And not only does it help with the decision-making itself, it helps with having your back on your decisions. So, for me, after doing that exact work that you're talking about, it would sound like this. My husband would be like, Hey, you shouldn't have done that that way. Maybe he doesn't like the way I handled something with one of my kids. And because I love myself and because I've thought about who I want to be.

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And then I showed up as that person. My answer, I don't have to be defensive about it. I just feel like, yeah, you might be right. I can't see the future; I don't know what the best way is. But that is the way that felt right to me. And as long as I'm being in integrity with myself, it's all that matters. Doing it another way would not have felt like being in integrity with myself.

So, it's easy when you love yourself and when you've thought about it on purpose, if husband doesn't agree, I just give him permission to disagree. I don't have to make it a problem. I don't have to get defensive. We don't have to argue. Just go, yeah, you might be right, but this is the way that feels good to me so that's the way I'm doing it.

**Elizabeth:** Well, as you were talking, I have to imagine that one toxic thought that many of us have is that we're against each other instead of we're on the same side. And so, when you can look at your partner and say, he's on my side, and so he's not attacking me but we're doing this together. Then, it creates such a different experience in that interaction. Right?

**Mindy:** Right. Cause the only reason husband would be saying this is because he cares. Because we do want the same thing. We want what's best for our kids. We want what's best for our family. Like he disagrees with the way I'm doing it, that's fine. But we actually do want the same thing and we are in it together, whether we agree or not. It totally changes it.

**Elizabeth:** I would have to imagine that a lot of your clients have just amazing transformation in their work with you. Because I have to imagine that they're coming to you with all of these complaints that we've been talking about and they walk out and they're like, oh my God, I just created the family that I've always wanted.

**Mindy:** Yeah. And not only that, I think one of the most beautiful things about that when you are struggling in your home and family, it is hard to do anything else. Because

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that's like the core of your world. So, if you can change that, now the entire world opens up to you. So, maybe you do get to go lose the weight, or you get to do your dream career, or start a business, or all of these things that you've always wanted to do.

But if you're so miserable in that core of your world is so hard to do anything else. So, yeah, like they changed our whole blended family experience and then it's like the entire world opens up.

So, even a client last week, she brought me something, I don't remember what it was. She just said, I can't even believe I'm having you coach me on this. It is so small. But she's like, I feel like all the big things I've taken care of. So now, I get to look at the little, teeny things. And she was just mind blown by that, that she could get coached on such a small insignificant thing. Because the big things are not problems anymore.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. As we've been talking, I really didn't think about it when we started the interview. But I can see here how this impacts just your entire life. We've talked about career. We've talked about business. We've talked about money. We've talked about our health. We've talked about relationships. Goals, we really haven't left anything unturned, right? Like when you get this together, then everything else, it sounds like just falls in line.

**Mindy:** Yeah. I never would have been able to start a business ever if I had not figured out this blended family thing. Because it was such a big struggle because these are people like out in the world, if someone is a jerk to you, you just like stop spending time with them. But these are people that you're seeing every single day in your house. Like you got to figure that out cause you can't get away from it.

**Elizabeth:** I'm laughing. No, you really can't. You could kick them out, but then where would you be?

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**Mindy:** It's like, oh, let's just get divorced again. Well, that can't be the answer, we can't just keep running out of relationships. There's got to be a way to make this work. Now, we don't just make it work, we make it amazing. It's like I didn't get the marriage I wanted the first time around, so let's do it this time.

Let's make this the marriage I always wanted. Let's make this the family culture I always wanted. We don't have to stop it like, oh, good, I'm not drowning anymore. We can really create anything. And when you have that, anything is possible. Like I've revenue goals, I've never had revenue goals, that's crazy to me.

**Elizabeth:** That's great.

**Mindy:** Yeah, I'm just saying, anything is possible you could do anything you want.

**Elizabeth:** All right. So, we are creating a webinar for everyone who's listening that is going to talk more about this topic. Right?

**Mindy:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth:** And the name of the webinar is how to create unity in your blended family without relying on anyone else to change. Who doesn't want that?

**Mindy:** I don't know anyone. Every time I talk to women blended families, I'm like, okay, so what would success look like to you? And it is some version of well, would be a United front, or would be on the same page, or would feel like one family instead of like, always feeling like two separate families. It's always some version of that. Like women just want to feel like a family. And if we have to wait for someone else to do something different, we're going to be waiting a long time.

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**Elizabeth:** As you're talking, it's just making me realize how little support and knowledge there is before people walk down the aisle with their second marriages of how to make this successful. And so, this just seems like a no brainer to me.

**Mindy:** Yeah, I couldn't find any help out there either before we got married or after. It's like all geared towards first families and first marriages, which don't have the same dynamics. But it's not teaching you all of these new issues you're going to have, no one's teaching what to do with them.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Brilliant. So, the webinar is on March 22nd, it's at 1:00 PM Eastern time, 12 central, 11:00 AM mountain time. And I should back up and say March 22nd, 2022. So, if you are listening to this after the fact, you'll still be able to watch the webinar. And what you want to do is you want to go to [blendedfamilyunity.com/elizabethsherman](https://blendedfamilyunity.com/elizabethsherman), right?

**Mindy:** Yep.

**Elizabeth:** Awesome. So, tell us more about how people can work with you, Mindy, and just more about where they can follow you and learn more.

**Mindy:** Yeah. So, you'll get a lot of that in our webinar that we're doing. And if in the meantime, you can just go follow me on Instagram @mindynealcoaching, and that'll give you a really good idea and a place to contact me if you want to.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Awesome. So, thank you so much for being here today. This has been just so enlightening and just so great. I've learned so much from you.

**Mindy:** Yeah. Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure. I just want to help as many of those women out there as I can find.

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**Elizabeth:** Well, and just in those podcasts alone, I'm sure that you've helped so many because it just opens up the idea that, Hey, wait a minute, I don't have to suffer like this inside.

**Mindy:** And that is the first step is believing that something else is possible. Because as long as you think it's not possible, that leaves you nowhere.

**Elizabeth:** Cool. Thanks for being here.

**Mindy:** Thank you.

**Elizabeth:** All right. I know your brain might be exploding right now. I love how Mindy suggests that maybe we don't have to have all the answers. That maybe what's getting in our way of our closeness and connection is actually the expectations that we had going into the marriage.

So, I'd love to invite you to our webinar that we'll be hosting on March 22nd, 2022, at 1:00 PM eastern time, 12 central, 11 mountain, or 10 Pacific. It's called how to create more unity in your blended family without relying on anyone else to change.

And if you're listening to this after the fact, you can just go to [blendedfamilyunity.com/elizabethsherman](https://blendedfamilyunity.com/elizabethsherman), or you can also go to the show notes and register for the webinar or connect with Mindy. So, whether you're listening to this in real time or listening to it after the fact, make sure that you check this out because Mindy has so many great ideas.

That's all I have for you today. All right. Have a great week, everyone. See you next time.

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Hey, thanks for listening!

If the show resonates with you and you have a friend, mother, sister, or anyone else who you think would benefit, I'd love for you to share the podcast with them. You can leave me a rating and review in Apple podcasts which helps me create an amazing experience for you. And it helps other women who are done with dieting and want to get off the diet roller coaster to find it as well.

See you next week.