WE CHAT DIVORCE PODCAST • LISTENER GIFT

Beneath the Argument

A Blended-Family & Stepparent Companion Guide

Featuring April Aldamire, LMFT — founder of Couples Thrive

In a blended family, an argument may sound like it's about bedtime, screen time, discipline, an ex, or money. But underneath, the real questions are usually more personal: Do I matter to you? Do I belong here? Are we still on the same team?

THE THREE QUESTIONS UNDERNEATH

> Do I matter to you?

> Do I belong here?

> Are we still on the same team?

FEELINGS ARE INFORMATION — NOT THE FINAL DECISION

When people are emotionally exhausted, they may agree to arrangements just to reduce conflict — without fully weighing the long-term impact. Your feelings are valid and worth listening to. They just don't have to be the only thing deciding your financial future. Sound decisions usually draw on both kinds of clarity, side by side.

Emotional Clarity

- Naming what you're afraid of or protecting
- Understanding your own attachment patterns
- Getting support to process, not just to decide

Financial Clarity

- Knowing your income, expenses, and lifestyle
- Understanding your assets, debts, and obligations
- Making decisions you own, not ones you default to

THE POST-DIVORCE ATTACHMENT CYCLE

For a long time, your ex may have been a safe attachment figure — someone you reached for when you needed reassurance. Divorce doesn't automatically end that instinct. Reaching out for acknowledgment and being met with withdrawal can feel like proof you didn't matter. More often, it's simply that they can no longer fill that role. Recognizing this pattern can help you stop personalizing it — and look for that reassurance and support elsewhere.

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Before You Blend

A Financial & Emotional Readiness Checklist

FROM THE EPISODE

READ THE AGREEMENT FIRST

- ☐ Have I read my partner's marital settlement agreement and parenting plan — not just heard about it?
- ☐ Do I understand their financial obligations to their first family?
- ☐ Do I know how shared expenses (school tuition, extracurriculars, medical costs) are split?
- ☐ Have my partner and I aligned privately on parenting decisions before presenting them to the kids?
- ☐ Do we agree on what "our" household money covers, versus prior obligations that come first?

TRY THIS EXERCISE

START THE MONEY & FAMILY HISTORY CONVERSATION

Sit down with your partner and talk through these questions together — not to solve anything on the spot, just to understand where each of you is coming from.

- ☐ What did money mean in the family you grew up in?
- ☐ Was money a source of stress, secrecy, or security for you growing up?
- ☐ How were big financial decisions made in your previous relationship?
- ☐ What do you want money to represent in this family, going forward?

A Pattern Worth Naming

If a settlement decision is tied to a promise about your ongoing relationship with stepchildren — "take this deal and you'll still get to see them" — treat that as a signal to slow down and get real clarity, not as pressure to agree.

Guest resource: April Aldamire, LMFT — Couples Thrive — couplesthrive.com • @CouplesThrive

Gather both kinds of clarity before you decide.

The MDS Financial Portrait™ helps you see what exists, what may be missing, and how different decisions could affect your future — before you negotiate or sign.
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Clarity is power.