

FOR PARENTS CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF RAISING A TEEN & YOUNG ADULT

INBETWEEN

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015

BROOKE BURNS

EXPLAINS
THOSE

**BAYWATCH
SEX SYMBOL**

DAYS TO
HER TEEN
GIRLS

THE COST,
THE COMMITMENT,
THE CONCUSSIONS

**IS HOCKEY
WORTH IT?**

plus
HOW TO
PROTECT
YOUR TEEN
FROM BEING
**BULLIED IN
HIGH SCHOOL**

WINTER STYLE

28 COATS

FOR THE
WHOLE FAMILY

INBETWEEN

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Alyson is a therapist, TV personality, columnist, spokesperson, educator and consultant. She is one of Canada's most notable parenting experts who provides expert advice in *HuffPost Canada Parents*, *Today's Parent*, *Parents Canada* and numerous other parenting portals in Canada and the U.S. On page 22, Alyson shares tips on how parents can learn how to let go of control.



MELONY TEAGUE

Melony Teague is an author and an editorial contributor for various newspapers and magazines in the Greater Toronto Area. She believes that everyone has a story to tell...and sometimes truth really is stranger than fiction. In this issue, Melony chatted with cover girl Brooke Burns and tells her very personal story on page 39.

ERIN HESSELINK

Erin is the editorial assistant at INBETWEEN. Though Erin never played hockey herself, growing up with a family of hockey players gave her a front-row seat of what really goes on at the rink. You can find her story, *The Good Ol' Hockey Game?* on page 18 where she breaks down the cost, time commitment and risk of injury and answers your burning question: Is hockey really worth it?



TEAGUE PHOTO BY KAREN MERK OF MERK PHOTOGRAPHY; HESSELINK PHOTO BY ERIC PUTZ



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Brooke
Burns

no day at the beach

After breaking her neck in a life-threatening dive, actress and mom Brooke Burns talks to INBETWEEN about making her way back into the biz, being part of a blended family and how she explains those *Baywatch* babe days to her teen daughters.

BY MELONY TEAGUE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOVE SHORE

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Brooke
Burns

Brooke Burns was living her dream. She had recently come off starring roles in popular TV series *Baywatch* and *Ally McBeal* and had appeared in the film *Shallow Hall*, alongside Gwyneth Paltrow. Her star was shining bright.

Then, on Nov. 11, 2005, she took a dive that would change the course of her life. In the backyard of her Los Angeles home, Burns dove into her swimming pool and smashed her head at the bottom of the pool, breaking her neck. Miraculously, Burns survived the incident with no signs of paralysis; however her recovery wasn't without its challenges.

At the time she was working on the television show, *Pepper Dennis*, for Fox. To protect herself from others accidentally bumping into her, and setting back her recovery, Burns walked around set with a neck brace and hoola-hoop. A doctor's note allowed her to take her neck brace off in three-minute increments, just enough time to shoot her scenes.

Despite her physical challenges, Burns says the accident also had a strong emotional impact on her daughter, Madison, who was just five years old at the time.

"I think she internalized it in the beginning and then about a year later we were hiking together and I stubbed my toe and she started crying and asked if I was going to have to go to the hospital," says Burns. "I realized that it was still alive in her, that an injury, no matter how small, could be much larger and scarier to her. ►



“I TRY TO STRESS, ESPECIALLY AS WOMEN, THAT WE NEED TO CHAMPION ONE ANOTHER. WE ARE ON THE SAME TEAM. WE COVER FOR ONE ANOTHER. WE HAVE EACH OTHER’S BACKS.”

We had many conversations about that with her.”

Today, Burns’ daughter is 15 and she also has a 13-year-old stepdaughter, Bronwen. She sat down with INBETWEEN to chat about the new adventures she has ahead, including a movie, a TV game show and, of course, raising teenagers.

BLENDING FAMILY LIFE

Born in 1978 in Dallas, Texas, Burns married Madison’s father, actor Julian McMahon (commonly known for his work on *Nip/Tuck* and *Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer*) in 1999. They divorced in 2001. In 2013, Burns married producer, director and writer Gavin O’Connor (known for *Warrior*, *Pride and Glory* and *Tumbleweeds*) who had a daughter of his own, 13-year-old Bronwen.

Although blended families can sometimes be complicated, Burns says she considers herself one of the lucky few. “Step-relationships can be difficult, but Bronwen and I have always had a great friendship,” she said, adding both Bronwen and Madison used to visit Burns on set when they were younger, but not as much now that they are tackling the demands of high school.

Burns was raised with the view that family comes first, so making the girls a priority for her is easy. “I try to cultivate communication by leading by example,” says Burns. “In every relationship the girls will ever have, be it with teachers, family, (boyfriends!) you have to be able to ask for what you want, communicate fears, learn how to listen, and be able to

come up with creative compromises.”

To stay close, Burns enjoys special girls’ days with her daughters. “I was a single mom for 10 years, so I was definitely used to having Maddy all to myself. When I got remarried, that was something I talked about with my husband. We both carve out time to be alone with our biological girls, and then we swap days and go solo with our ‘second’ daughters. We are very lucky that for the girls, it was love at first sight. They met at a lunch and Bronwen said, “I wanna sit with HER!” (meaning Madison). On our third date they told us, “If anyone asks, tell them we are sisters. So, Gavin and I just hoped we liked each other!”

THOSE FIGHTIN’ WORDS

Now that Burns and O’Connor have been together for a while, the girls act more like sisters, including some bickering. “I think teaching them to forgive each other, and not to let pride get in the way of moving forward quickly is so important,” Burns said. “None of us agree all the time, but there’s a way to be respectful in disagreements. A big part of that is remembering they love each other, and are different, and that’s OK. I especially try to teach them to lift each other up, and not tear each other down. Words can wound, and there are plenty of people out there waiting for you to mess up and point it out. I try to stress, especially as women, that we need to champion one another. We are on the same team. We cover for one another. We have ▶

“I WANT TO BE PRESENT FOR ALL THOSE THINGS THAT I THINK ARE IMPORTANT MILESTONES IN A CHILD’S LIFE, BUT IT IS DEFINITELY A BALANCING ACT.”

each other’s backs. It’s challenging, but in the most rewarding way, and I think like most families, we all have good days and bad days. As a parent, I always tell them, ‘Love covers a multitude of sins.’”

SHARING LIVES WITH NEW WIVES

Also, added to the family dynamic is Burns’ ex-husband’s new wife, Kelly Paniagua. “There may be certain things that I want to do with my daughter, that are special to mothers and daughters, and I appreciate having that space respected, but at the same time if Madison is at their house and I am not able to do something, and she needs help, they are available to step in, like being a second hitter.”

Burns did not grow up in a blended family. “My parents are still together, so it took me some navigating in the beginning to figure out those boundaries,” she said. “I think you have to have a special set of boundaries in being respectful of the mother and knowing your place as far as not stepping on the toes of the biological parent. I know that from being a mother and then trying to understand what that is like as a step-mom. It’s all about respect.”

BALANCING CAREER AND MOTHERHOOD

Today, Burns hosts the Emmy-nominated game show, *The Chase*, which returned for its fourth season on GSN this January. She has also returned to her love of acting, starring in *Gourmet Detective* for the Hallmark Movies and Mysteries Channel. When Madison was young, Burns says she made

a conscious choice to reconfigure her career so that she could be the kind of mom that she wanted to be, choosing roles that did not take her out of the state for long periods of time. Today, now that her daughter is a teenager, Burns still finds herself making those same decisions. “I have always wanted to be a mom,” she explained, “I pride myself in being a good mother and I really believe that family has to come first and career has to come second to be the kind of mom that I wanted to be. I want to be present for all those things that I think are important milestones in a child’s life, but it is definitely a balancing act.”

TALKING TO DAUGHTERS ABOUT POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

As an actor and model from a young age, having spent time in front of the camera and in the spotlight, Burns has dealt with the sex symbol image that comes with being a *Baywatch* babe.

Today, when talking to her daughter about body image, Burns is fast to expose the industry secrets. “I will show her pictures and say, ‘You see that mole on my face? That is not there in that picture is it? See the cleavage in that shot? Mommy does not have cleavage like that!’ I just go through it with her and demystify it for her because as teenagers, you compare yourself to others, and there is always someone that is taller, skinnier, or fatter. I try to teach Madison and Bronwen that it is important to love yourself just the way God created you and that

inspire

Brooke
Burns

everybody is different and everybody is unique. And those things they probably hate about themselves is what someone else will love about them. “They will say, ‘That is my most favourite quality of yours because it makes you, you.’”

Looking back on her own career as a *Baywatch* babe, Burns recognizes it was built largely on her physique and admits she was naive to being sexualized at the time; it’s a lesson she doesn’t want her daughters repeating – especially with the significance social media plays in today’s world.

“I want to be able to talk to my girls about what you save for yourself, what you save for an intimate relationship in your life later, and especially now it is even scarier with all the social media stuff, to be so careful, because you are making a footprint with photographs and images for the rest of your life. It is one of the big reasons why I never did *Playboy*; I never took it to the next level which a lot of the *Baywatch* girls did.”

As for being a role model for her daughters she said, “It is a difficult thing to find the balance to instill that sense of wanting to be classy and elegant. You want them to feel fantastic about their bodies, and beautiful at the right time and in the right situation, but I think that the most important thing is teaching them that inner beauty outshines that and outer beauty which is fleeting. As we age it gets worse for us on the outside, but we can only get more beautiful on the inside.”

CHARITY INVOLVEMENT

Burns is involved with a variety of charities – all of which have some kind of personal connection to her. “Never before would it have been on my radar to be working with a spinal cord charity and yet it

is so precious to me now, because you think it will never happen to you.” Her experience has made her aware of spinal cord research and the leaps and bounds being made in science to put people’s lives back together.

After breaking her neck, she entered that world and was given a natural platform, especially being in the entertainment industry, to raise awareness and to give financially. Burns is also actively involved in the Life Rolls On Foundation, which assists people with spinal cord injuries get back into an active lifestyle. In 2006 she became involved with the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation and the North American Spine Society, which both aim to raise awareness of spinal injuries.

Burns is also the spokesperson for Give Back a Smile, a program in which dentists donate their time and expertise to restore the smiles of women who are victims of domestic violence. Burns got involved through a dentist friend who showed her pictures of women and children who had been victims of domestic violence and abuse and testimonials of how the little things bring people back to life.

“Obviously first impressions are important and when you see someone’s face after abuse it is devastating. It meant so much to these women and children to be able to smile again. They never wanted to smile because not only were they abused but they lost so much of their joy and were embarrassed about smiling because of missing teeth or disfiguration. It really does change their lives, Burns said. “I know over the course of my career people have said, ‘Your smile is what walks through the door first.’ So I felt everybody deserves to smile and to want to smile.” ■