

Doug Smith ([00:05](#)):

Hey leader and welcome to episode number 324 of the L3 Leadership podcast, where we are obsessed with helping you grow to your maximum potential and to maximize the impact of your leadership. My name is Doug Smith and I am your host. And today's episode is brought to you by my friends at Beratung Advisors. If you're new to the podcast, welcome, I'm so glad that you're here. And I hope that you enjoy our content and become a subscriber, know that you can also watch all of our episodes over on our YouTube channel as well. So make sure you're subscribed there. And if you've been listening to the podcast for a while, thank you so much. And if the podcast has made an impact on your life, it would mean the world. To me. If you would leave us a rating and review on apple podcast or Spotify or whatever app you listen to podcast through, that really does help us to grow our audience and reach more leaders.

Doug Smith ([00:47](#)):

So thank you in advance for that. Well, in today's episode, you'll hear my conversation with Mike Tomlin, coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers. I got to interview him recently at the ManUp Pittsburgh conference, which he founded in partnership with an organization called the urban impact foundation. And the whole purpose of the conference is to put a dent in the fatherlessness epidemic in our country. And they've been doing this conference for 10 years and I've been there every year. And it's just been incredible to see men step up and say, I'm going to commit to being a better father at home. I'm gonna be committing to being a father to the fatherless. And I'm gonna support organizations like the urban impact foundation who are doing something about this issue of fatherlessness. And so if you've never heard of the conference, I really encourage you to look it up.

Doug Smith ([01:27](#)):

It's called ManUp Pittsburgh. And again, check out urban impact foundation who are really doing a lot around this area, area of fatherlessness. And so you're gonna love this conversation. We talked to Mike about why he, he started this conference and what he's learning currently about being a dad at this stage in his life. We talk about his favorite sport outside of football, which his answer actually really surprised me. We talk about what he's learning about listening as a leader, really good insights there. And then we talk about why one of his favorite leadership phrases is I'll tolerate you until I can replace you, which is so profound. And so I think you're gonna enjoy this interview. And again, this was the fourth time that Mike has been on the podcast. And so if you enjoy this, I really encourage you to go back and listen to the other three interviews.

Doug Smith ([02:07](#)):

They're all profound. He has so much to say, and he's gonna add so much value to you. But before we dive into the conversation, just a few announcements. This episode of the L3 Leadership podcast is sponsored by Beratung Advisors, the financial advisors at Beratung Advisors, help educate and empower clients to make informed financial decisions. You can find out how Beratung Advisors can help you develop a customized financial plan for your financial future by visiting their website at beratungadvisors.com. That's beratungadvisors.com, securities and investment products and services offered through LPL financial member, FINRA, and S I P C Beratung Advisors, LPL financial and L3 Leadership are separate entities. I also wanna thank our sponsor. Henne Jewelers they're jeweler owned by my friend and mentor John Henne and my wife, Laura, and I got our engagement and wedding rings at Henne Jeweler.

Doug Smith ([02:56](#)):

And we just had a wonderful experience and not only do they have great jewelry, but they also invest in people. In fact, for every couple that comes in and gets engaged, they give them a book to help them prepare for marriage. And we just love that. So if you're in need of a good jeweler, check out, [Hennejewelers.com](#). And with all that being said, let's dive right in. Here's my conversation with Mike Tomlin coach 10th year of ManUp, it's hard to believe it's been 10 years. But for those who may not be familiar with, ManUp just tell us, you know, what is ManUp, why'd you start it and why are you so passionate about this?

Mike Tomlin ([03:26](#)):

It's it's really interesting. I was thinking a lot about it particularly on my way, driving in today, you know, 10 years ago I had three kids, you know, 12 years old or younger. Wow. And so I was seeking community support. I wanted to, you know, grow as a golly husband and father, and wanted to seek community and people who, who were likeminded in that way. But also my boys, particularly at an age where they had friends and I saw the father fatherlessness in our community. And so, you know, I wanted to kind of formalize that thought of, of dad and the fatherless and, and taking advantage of opportunities to, to, to parent and, and be a father-like figure for those that you come in close proximity with. And so, you know, that was my original intention. And so and it has been awesome.

Mike Tomlin ([04:25](#)):

I was telling the group at the breakout today, just how thankful I am, how, how excited I am, how, how everyone's presence inspires me and we all need encouragement. And, and so it's been really good, but it's also been interesting how my profile has changed in 10 years. Yeah. And, and so it, I'm continually thankful because I'm needing new things. And so I'm able to, to gravitate the people who are in a different space and gain wisdom from, from people who've been in the place that I'm at now. Yeah. in terms of parenting 21 and 20 year olds and so that's awesome.

Doug Smith ([05:11](#)):

Yeah. That's what I was gonna ask you, you have two in their twenties, outta the home, one still at home. You made a statement a few years ago. I love just dad and hard. I think your son said that to you or something, but yeah. What does dad and hard look like in the Tomlin household these days?

Mike Tomlin ([05:24](#)):

It is not quite as hard, you know? Yeah. It, it is funny. When your kids get 21 and 20 you're less aggressive. Hmm. You know I'm appreciative of them sharing what's going on with them. I do probably more listening, than talking in terms of, the nature of our relationships. Um don't see 'em every day. And so it's more difficult. You can't be as aggressive, you know, when you're parenting from a distance. Yeah. And you don't see 'em daily. And so, you know, it, it definitely has changed. Um, but I'm excited about the change. It's also really exciting to see that they're capable of making their own decisions. Yeah. And, and oftentimes, you know, when they're discussing stuff with me, they're not seeking my counsel. They're just explaining to me their thought process. Yeah. And I'm, I'm thankful for that. Yeah. You know, as long as they're talking.

Doug Smith ([06:32](#)):

Yeah. So at home, I'm in that season, I have a six year old, a four year old, a one year old we're talking about expanding our family beyond that. You've lived it, you have a high demand job. I'm just, what

advice would you give to me going into the crazy busy season where we are hands on every day, how did you balance family? And so make that a priority in the midst of a crazy schedule.

Mike Tomlin ([06:51](#)):

You know, I didn't very well at times. And, and, and that's why, you know, that's why marriage is such a significant component of parenting the partnership component of it. My wife is awesome. She's been awesome. At times my, my job and the urgency associated with my job doesn't afford me an opportunity to have the balance that I desire all the time, big picture, certainly. But there are moments in time because of an obligation and so forth that is very difficult. And in those times, man, my lean on my wife and I'm thankful yeah. That, that, that we, that we work as a partnership in that way. Uit's something that, that I work at,ufinding that work home life balance, if you will, is something that's worth working at. But it, I also learned, and I learned very early on that you can infuse the two.

Mike Tomlin ([07:56](#)):

And in, in ways that one might not think, or at least traditionally, you might not think I'll never forget. My first day on the job in the national football league, I got hired by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. My boss was Tony Dungy. We had an introductory press conference that went well. He said, Hey, when you get a second come by the office, he had something he wanted to run by me, no problem. You know, I went and put down whatever I had and I immediately went to his office. It wasn't like I was gonna keep him waiting. You know, I go in his office, his son was sitting on the floor with, with a PlayStation game, projecting onto his big screen.

Mike Tomlin ([08:42](#)):

Where he watches film, but his son was playing video games on it.

Doug Smith ([08:47](#)):

That's awesome.

Mike Tomlin ([08:48](#)):

And it was just, I was like, Hmm I didn't expect to see it. Yeah, yeah. You know? And so it, it, it left an imprint. I'm thankful that I was able to work for guys like Tony Dungy and see some of the things that I saw from a leadership perspective where balance doesn't always mean divide your time. But sometimes balance is infusing. The two were appropriate. It's so good. And what a vision that was for me to walk in his office the first time I ever walked in his office and his son was playing video games on his wi on his big screen.

Doug Smith ([09:33](#)):

So did your kids get to do that?

Mike Tomlin ([09:35](#)):

Absolutely. Like, I, I, I took, I took my boys to camp. We moved into camp together. Wow. You know, they they've spent more days at Latrobe probably than a lot of professional football players. And so, you know, I, I learned that, I learned that that that's something that's possible. Yeah. And, and traditional thought I don't know that I had an image of that. I had to see it and seeing ithelp me and help me in a big way. Yeah.

Doug Smith ([10:07](#)):

I'm, I'm curious for, for someone who may be watching this, and maybe they're on the other side of dad or their kids are out and maybe they missed it, maybe they, they weren't a great dad. Maybe they weren't present whatever. What would your encouragement be to someone who's on that side of, of being a dad?

Mike Tomlin ([10:20](#)):

A couple things. I think as long as I'm breathing on this planet, that I'll, that I'll view my relationship with my kids in the ways that I do in terms of being a dad and, and, being wise counsel for them, even as they gain their independence. And certainly, they're sharp young people and capable of making decisions. And, and so there's a let go component of from a parent perspective, but there's still, there are always gonna be those opportunities. And, you've also found that, you have a little bit more time now maybe to, to, to, to be a dad, to the father listener, the fatherless, the young people that I come in contact with, that I mentor, you, I have more time for, for them now, because my sons don't live at home.

Mike Tomlin ([11:18](#)):

Yeah. And so I can be, I can be helpful man, and, productive in a, in a lot of ways, not only for mine, but for those that I come in proximity to. And that's important for me too, being someone that came from a broken home. And, and part of the reason why I gravitated the sport is because I just admired my sport coaches. Hmm. They were, they were examples of, of the type of men that I wanted to be alike. And so I, I gravitated to that. And one of the reasons why I probably pursued the vocation of coaching. I had no idea that I'd be coaching grown men at the professional level to be quite honest with you and definitely not the head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers. I just wanted to impact young people and particularly the father, the fatherless

Doug Smith ([12:12](#)):

Yeah. Coach, it seems like every year you have a different message on your heart for, for men and dads, what what's on your heart this year,

Mike Tomlin ([12:19](#)):

You know? It's interesting. I think that's the beauty of, of being able to come here for, for 10 years you know, my profile changes and so do the issues that come with it. And, and so it's new things to talk about and new opportunities to learn and share. My parents are getting older mm-hmm and I moved my parents here years ago because we have three kids and, and so we were playing zone, my wife and I. And so, you know, they were retired and provided an opportunity for us to get some assistance and who better to help raise your kids than your parents. Yeah. but over the course of the last 10 years, my stepfather has Parkinson's and, and they've gotten older. And so you know, I moved them up here to, to get help and, and now I'm in a position to kind of help them.

Mike Tomlin ([13:15](#)):

And so I was sharing that with, with the breakout group today that, you know, what an awesome opportunity it is and what a blessing it is to maybe get some parenting opportunities in regards to my parents. Yeah. To, to make sure that they're comfortable to wow. To help them with life and to be close by, to make sure that they're getting what it is that they need and, and, and, and medical attention and, things of that nature. And so really cool to be where I am in life. I'm thankful for it. I don't take any of it for granted. It's a blessing. But it is ironic. Yeah. eight, nine years ago, man, it came up to help me

parent, and now I get the opportunity to help them with some of the challenges yeah. That, that, that older life presents them,

Doug Smith ([14:03](#)):

Yeah. Wanna move into to some more fun questions, just with what you do, vocationally you're entering your 16th season as a coach. Do you have one or two favorite moments from your 16 years of the Steelers?

Mike Tomlin ([14:13](#)):

Oh man, man, there been so many you know, to me as funny as it sounds and, and it, because it's insignificant, there's so many more significant moments. But one of the things I enjoy most is driving home after one o'clock home win and sitting in traffic. And, and just looking at steel nation, huh. You know, whether they're walking across the street to the tee or sitting in traffic themselves, it's just really cool to get the job done wherever the job may be that week, the challenge when,ubut to, just to entertain, to see the impact,uto see how happy everybody is,uthat, that I I've grown to really enjoy that. That's probably that's the best part of the week, any week for me. Wow. That's cool. Uis about five 30. So I'm getting in my car, leaving Highfield and sometimes a trip home and I probably live four miles away from Hines.

Mike Tomlin ([15:30](#)):

Sometimes it may take 45 minutes or so. Wow. But it's a cool time. Yeah. because I'm just, I've been, I've been at it long enough that I know that Monday's problems are waiting on me. I'm not thinking ahead to the next challenge. I actually have a few minutes to appreciate what transpired and, and to watch the fans enjoy it as they move on with their day. That's just a real awesome, quiet time for me. I don't turn the radio on or anything. I just, I look around and take in the sight and sounds as I make my way off the north side after game. And that's, that's a pretty cool thing for me.

Doug Smith ([16:15](#)):

Which sport do you enjoy? Most outside of football,

Mike Tomlin ([16:17](#)):

Baseball.

Doug Smith ([16:17](#)):

Baseball. Really?

Mike Tomlin ([16:18](#)):

I love watching baseball.

Doug Smith ([16:19](#)):

You Bucko fan love.

Mike Tomlin ([16:20](#)):

Really?

Doug Smith ([16:21](#)):

Yeah.

Mike Tomlin ([16:21](#)):

That's

Doug Smith ([16:22](#)):

Is that your number one team

Mike Tomlin ([16:24](#)):

In no doubt. Wow. No doubts, man. I'm a long suffering pirate fan.

Doug Smith ([16:27](#)):

Aren't we all.

Mike Tomlin ([16:28](#)):

I love it. Yeah. Yeah. I do, man. Like that's cool. I got my Jersey just came in, always picking obscure guy. Right. One of the less known guys. And I go to the game, it's always a big deal.

Doug Smith ([17:02](#)):

That's surprising. I wouldn't guess that. Yeah.

Mike Tomlin ([17:04](#)):

Yeah. I like it cause it's slow, not intense. It's an afternoon. I'd love to be like a baseball scout or something. Really? Yeah. Yeah. I'd like, go watch, go watch baseball every day. Every afternoon,

Doug Smith ([17:26](#)):

Post retirement plans?

Mike Tomlin ([17:28](#)):

I Would love to be a minor league's baseball scout. Like travel to these league, man. Just watch games every day back.

Doug Smith ([17:36](#)):

You guys just hired Andy Weidl has been a long time friend.

Mike Tomlin ([17:40](#)):

Andy, good people, man. I'm just getting know him, man, Pittsburgher and all of that.

Doug Smith ([17:45](#)):

He's a Long time supporter and I met him through light of life. He mentored one of our guys for years and him and his wife are phenomenal. So it's been fun to follow their journey.

Mike Tomlin ([17:52](#)):

Yeah, man.

Mike Tomlin ([17:54](#)):

That's Really cool. Isn't it cool. How it works out, man. Got Mount LIBO guy, man.

Doug Smith ([17:59](#)):

Yeah. And all four he's one of four. They're all in the NFL man.

Mike Tomlin ([18:02](#)):

Yep.

Doug Smith ([18:02](#)):

Yeah. And then I, yeah, I have some questions. I would ask you if we had like hours, but I think I read article on you like probably 10 years ago of like your favorite leadership principles. Is one of your favorites, did you say "I'll tolerate you so I can replace you?"

Mike Tomlin ([18:17](#)):

Cause people always view that as a negative thing. It's not necessarily a negative thing. Sometimes tolerating somebody is an absolute joy. You know what I mean? Umt's just, that's the nature. That's the essence of our business. We're all tolerated until we can be replaced. And that's just a component of big business, hootball level. Sometimes you can be replaced because your skills wain sometimes you can be replaced just simply because it's cheaper labor. Wow. You know? And so I just, I just think as in our business, as long as that, we all understand that nature of our business, then we're all just respectful of the days that we have. You know what I mean?

Doug Smith ([19:01](#)):

That recorded? Yeah.

Mike Tomlin ([19:01](#)):

We're all in the same boat. Like the players, coaches. Yeah. Like, you know, Art Rooney is tolerating me. Wow. Until he can replace me, if he can find somebody can do the job better, particularly if he can find somebody to do the job as good, cheaper, because I've been on the job a while now I'm expensive. You know what I mean? Yeah. And so it's just, that's what makes the wheels turn in big business and I, and I just never want to get so comfortable that I'm not acknowledging that. So, you know what I mean? Yeah.

Doug Smith ([19:32](#)):

And last question for, for time sake, but I'll just leave this open and it's podcast for leaders, anything on your heart for leaders as we close up?

Mike Tomlin ([19:40](#)):

I say this often and, but I don't say it enough. One of the number one tools that we have is listening. I believe as leaders, we gotta continually listen, we gotta continually be open to new and different ideas

that might be different than ours. That might move us in the group that we lead forward. And so that's something that I continually acknowledge. I have a note card that's on the corner of my desk that says listening is a skill. And, and I leave it on the corner of my desk because I just wanna remind myself that things are the skill related. You better continually acknowledge you can work at it. You can get better, you can also get worse. Wow. And so, you know, it's like swinging a golf club is a skill related thing that those of us that fail at golf the way I do understand. Yeah. And, and I try to, I try to treat listening with the same level of respect and I want to continually work at it and hone my talents in that area and hopefully get better in that area because I think just part of good leadership is being open to ideas and, and, and understanding that great ideas, innovative thought and so forth oftentimes oftentimes comes from those that you lead. And so that's something that I'm always working at. I challenge other leaders to do the same.

Doug Smith ([21:04](#)):

So good coach. Thanks again for your time. Thanks for your investment in men today. Thank you

Mike Tomlin ([21:06](#)):

Yep. No doubt.

Doug Smith ([21:09](#)):

Well, Hey leader, thank you so much for listening to my conversation with coach. I hope that you enjoyed it as much as I did. And if this episode got you thinking about fatherlessness and what you can do about it, I would encourage you, especially if you're in the Pittsburgh area, check out ManUp Pittsburgh and check out Urban Impact Foundation. I encourage you to check out both of those and we'll include links to those in the show notes at l3leadership.org/324 and leader. I wanna challenge you that if you want to 10 X your growth this year, then you need to either launch or join in L3 Leadership mastermind group. Mastermind groups have been the greatest source of growth in my life over the last seven years. And if you don't know what they are, they're just simply groups of six to 12 leaders that meet together for at least one year in order to help each other grow, hold each other accountable and to do life together.

Doug Smith ([21:51](#)):

So if you're interested in learning more about masterminds, go to L3Leadership.org/masterminds. And as always, I like to end with a quote. And today I'll quote, Greg Groeschel. Craig said this. He said, the pain you endure today often leads to the strength you enjoy tomorrow. Don't give up. Perseverance is the hard work you do after the hard work you've already done leader. I say it all the time, but Laura and I love you. We believe in you. And just like Craig said, don't quit. Don't give up the world desperately needs your leadership. We'll talk to you next episode.