

[We Are Family](#) Season 2, Episode 8: The D'Amelios

Marc D'Amelio:

My name is Marc D'Amelio, and family to me is unconditional love.

Julia Dennison:

Hello and welcome to *We Are Family*. I am your host, Julia Dennison, and I'm here with Marc and Heidi D'Amelio. Anybody on TikTok whatsoever will know them as the parents to Charli and Dixie. Charli D'Amelio shot to fame and she started recording herself dancing on TikTok at age 15. She now has a whopping 126 and a half million followers on TikTok and 10 billion likes. The mind boggles. If you don't know her, you don't know TikTok. The whole family is now stars of the D'Amelio show on Hulu, and mom and dad host their own podcast, *Marc & Heidi - The Other D'Amelios*. Welcome to the show. Thanks for coming on.

Heidi D'Amelio:

Thanks for having us.

Marc D'Amelio:

Thanks, Julia.

Julia:

I'm so excited, because this is obviously, this is for Parents, so we're all about parenting over here so I am just totally fascinated to hear about what it's like to be a D'Amelio parent. I can't even imagine what your life has been over the last couple years, so obviously you've got two girls, Charli and Dixie, and as I mentioned, Charli shot to fame really quickly. Can you talk to me a little bit about how quickly, what that was like, what was that journey? Just that moment in time when all of a sudden, it was like, you became the D'Amelios, as everyone knows you.

Marc D'Amelio:

It did happen quite quickly. Everyone asked us, "What was that one time that you knew?" And she started posting dance videos on TikTok, and we were into social media so we kind of understood. I think when she first hit 10,000, I started to say, "Oh boy, this is interesting." And then when she hit a hundred thousand, it was like, "Wow." And it was just fun and I remember making a cake for her and she did a TikTok video in our backyard, and it was still, we knew that a hundred thousand was a lot, but we still were thinking like, "Okay, this is still pretty normal."

And then when she started to get recognized around, outside of our town, because obviously everyone's famous in their hometown, outside of our town, we were up in New Haven, which is about 40 miles from us. And these kids walked by while we were at a restaurant and were like, and I was like, "Do you know these [kids]? How do you know these [kids]?" And then they ended up messaging her saying, "I was too shy to come and say hello." And Charli was like, "They knew me from TikTok, dad," and I was like, "Wow. Okay."

Julia:

And that's when everything changed. So tell me a little bit about life before TikTok.

Heidi D'Amelio:

I mean, pretty much like any other family, that our oldest was going into her senior year of high school, she had already been accepted into college, and then Charli was a freshman, going into her freshman year. Just normal stuff. - driving to dance, going to field hockey games, going to dance competitions. Just the hecticness of having teenagers. And Charli didn't have her driver's license yet, so driving her all around, and then Dixie getting her license and now she's driving Charli to school and that whole dynamic and what that meant for us.

And so it was kind of nice to have those mornings where we're just not running around, get them out the door, and then it's just us, which was, it was fun. And kind of just starting to think about when the girls graduate and Dixie will be off in college, Charli's going to be graduating. What do we want to do? We were always open to like, "What if we ever moved away or did something different?" So, that's kind of where we were at the time.

Julia:

And so I know growing up, I have a sister also. And my mom would always say, "I love you both but in different ways." She always prioritized equality between sisters. I can imagine it must have been hard because Charli shot to fame and of course, Dixie became famous too, but what was their relationship like before fame and after? And is there a rivalry? And how do you kind of contain that as parents?

Marc D'Amelio:

I think because Dixie is the older sister, there were times that she was heavily involved in BMX, which is bicycle Motocross, and it was something I did. So she raced BMX and it was a sport that we had to travel to pretty often, either within Connecticut or outside of Connecticut. It was something you had to get in your car and drive pretty far to be involved in, and Charli just kind of came with us and didn't start racing till later. So it was just like any older sister. It was the Dixie show for a little while because she was the older sister, but I'm super proud of how Dixie handled it.

If you hear her talk about it, where a lot of people are like, "You're famous for being Charli's sister," she's like, "Absolutely. I don't care." And even for us. I mean, people say, "Oh, you're Charli and Dixie's parents." I mean, that's great for me. If we were able to bring up two kids that got into a position where we're now known as their parents, I couldn't care less. I'm pretty secure with what I've done over my life, and so to be known for being my kids' parents is super cool.

Heidi D'Amelio:

Yeah. And when Dixie was in high school and Charli's coming up, she was Dixie's little sister and Dixie was modeling and she was an athlete and doing all these things, and Dixie would go into the city, she'd go to concerts. She was the cool older sister and Charli was just Dixie's little sister. But Charli had her own life. She was a competition dancer, so they were doing very different things at the time, and this really brought them together, and all four of us together. In a way when you have teenagers that are not wanting to hang out with their parents, now we are.

Julia:

Right. Right. Totally.

Julia:

Okay, so moving on to LA, your big move over to the West Coast. Obviously, you have this whole context in Connecticut and you were leaving behind I'm imagining friends and family. What was that like? Because I know as a family, it's so great to have that support network in place. Did it feel like totally an upheaval?

Marc D'Amelio:

I think quarantine and COVID had a lot to do with it because we were quarantining in Connecticut, so it wasn't like we were getting to hang out with family all the time. I have, like Heidi's saying, I had an office. I have a clothing showroom in New York City which was basically shut down so we couldn't go into the city. So it made it pretty easy for us to uproot our whole family and move out West. And we're pretty adventurous and we're a little fly by the seat of our pants, and I don't know that I'm the type of person that really maps things out all that well, so we just jumped on a plane and came to the West Coast and now we're here full time.

Julia:

That's awesome. So let's talk a little bit about your parenting style. Now that they're a little older, is there a sense of feeling maybe even more protective over them just because they're exposed to so much public scrutiny into all the comments? And I know watching the show on Hulu, there's there was a lot of that to kind of sift through.

Heidi D'Amelio:

I think early on, we were in that protective mode. Hate comments, and even, there were other people that had bigger followings that was questioning, "What's happening? Who are these girls? What's going on?" In a negative way, and so us being protective and we would respond and go back and forth with random people in their comment section. And we learned early on. The girls really were like, "It's not worth it. Don't even go down the fight because then you're going to bring more spotlight on the negativity that they're saying," so we're still parents and so we'll always protect their emotional state and make sure they're healthy and happy, but as far as online with the negativity, it's just not worth it to engage with it, as far as what we've learned.

Marc D'Amelio:

I have softened up my parenting style because I was big in accountability and when kids come home, sometimes it's the parent's first idea to say, "Wow, honey, that's too bad." And I kind of used to err on the side of, "Well, tell me both sides. What was the accountability on your side?" Nowadays, it's not just one kid in the hallway or one kid in the classrooms saying something, or you having a disagreement, someone posts a comment and there's a hundred thousand likes on a negative comment, so I have become way more sympathetic and way more, I just said to Charli, the other day, I was just like, "Wow. What you deal with, with all the positive and all the great things that go on, you do an incredible job balancing out." And I don't know if I could have navigated through this process the way she has, and she's done a really great job balancing just the fame and the negativity and all that, so I think to answer your question, we used to be probably a little bit, I don't even know if the word would be harder, just ask more questions and now we're more, I think, "Yeah, man. You're dealing with a lot of stuff. We're here for you to comfort you."

Julia:

Mental health is such a key part of when you watch the series on Hulu and watching you as a family, and it can be a little bit uncomfortable. We see a scene where Dixie has a real meltdown. She's reading these comments, and it must sort of feel tempting to kind of put the brakes on it all sometimes, and so do you ever have those thoughts? And then also, just how do you support them with their mental health and their anxiety? You've spoken openly about the fact that they both talk about their anxiety.

Marc D'Amelio:

What we didn't show in the show was that there are times, multiple times. I mean, we have these checkups all the time and where it's, "Hey, what do you guys want to do?" This has never been something that, we didn't say, "Hey, guys, let's pack up the house and move to California." Both Dixie and Charli were pushing us to do it for a while, and now that we're here, we do continue to do the checkups and say, "Hey, are you guys as happy?" And I say this all the time, "Are you guys as happy today as you were before this all started?"

And both girls have said, "Dad, we're not going to quit because of the negativity," we sat there and said, hey, we're going to be there for them, monitor them and always tell them, "Look, this isn't about mom and dad. If you want, we're good. If you guys want to stop this at any time, we're good. Let's not go forward with this."

But the girls, you see one part of, in the show, you do see a part where it seems like 80% of the time, they're battling this, and that's really, we talked about it. It's probably 80 to 90% of us having a good time and having a lot of fun, but those moments were coincidentally caught on camera and it kind of opened up this whole thing where, wow, this is something really important that we have the platform to talk about, and people don't see. And I think that's one thing that's cool about TikTok. Because Instagram was all these perfect pictures. TikTok let all these kids into other kids' lives, and TikTok was all about more authenticity and truth. And I think our show has been more about authenticity and truth.

Julia:

Yes. I totally can see that. I think that's true about TikTok. And what about professional support? Is that something that's important to your family or your mental health?

Marc D'Amelio:

Yeah, absolutely.

Heidi D'Amelio:

We're constantly having those conversations and best ways to help, and it's not always a professional in the way of a therapist. It's with working out and exercising and eating right. So there's lots of different professionals that can help your body feel good, which in turn helps your mind feel good.

Julia:

And how are you two? How's your mental health through all this as parents?

Heidi D'Amelio:

I think we're doing pretty good. I mean, when you have three, for me and for each of us, we have three people in our lives that kind of help each other work through these different scenarios. The highs and

the lows, and there's just like, when we're going through it, to have your kids help prop you up is incredible.

Marc D'Amelio:

You don't really analyze it because it's happening so fast, and I'm sure five years from now, I'll look at it and then say, well either, "Wow, that was really cool and that opened up a ton of opportunities for us to do cool charitable things and use our platform for good," but I do think there is part of it where we were also thrust in, I don't want to say unwillingly, because we could have stayed home. So it's not unwillingly, but it's almost like not knowing what to expect, to have your name out there. And with the show, it's people really know who we are and there's no roadmap for it. I mean, Charli's been able to talk to some people who have been helpful, that have been famous for a long time, but you just kind of do it.

And then hopefully, you're prepared from what my mom and dad taught me and how I grew up to be able to handle this. But there's really no roadmap, and every person's different. I went back to my college the other day and all these kids were coming up to me and wanted to take pictures with me, and I was like, "That's odd that a bunch of college people want to take pictures with me," but whatever, I don't care, and my friend said, "How do you do it?" And I'm like, "That's the easiest thing to do." I mean, if someone, if they want to do a selfie with me, I find it extremely odd and why they would want to, but I don't care, but that's me. Other people might think that's a total invasion of their privacy and might not like that, so that's kind of my take on it.

Julia:

So parenting teenage girls is apparently hard, so I've heard. I have a five year old, so I'm sure I have a lot to look forward to. How do you ensure that they have time to just be teens? And is that something that's important to you?

Marc D'Amelio:

That was one of the main reasons why we moved to California is because there were other kids going through the same thing. A lot of people think it's the business that takes away from them being... We're usually, like there's a part in the show where I'm like, "We're trying to get you out of the house." That's the thing.

It's like Charli, I think even before all the fame, she was a homebody and where Dixie's a little bit more likes to go out and hang with friends. So we not only set up her work situation where if they can't get what they need out of her from a work perspective Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, then we don't work with them. And I don't want her workload to be any more than what let's say, a school day would be. It's probably less than a school day, and then we got to work with her, or we kind of just make sure that we nudge her a little bit and say, "Hey, it's a weekend. What are your plan?" Most parents are like, "I don't want you going out." We're more like, we want her to be more social and more, for lack of a better term, just have a normal teenage childhood through all this fame and notoriety.

Julia:

And what does her school situation look like? What is her week schedule kind of like? Is it a juggle between, you were saying working and obviously school, and is she in a special school for that now?

Heidi D'Amelio:

Like so many others during the pandemic, she was in online school, which she still is, and it's a curriculum where she can do it, she has her assignments and so she does them and then there's a due date. So she works on them, and when she needs extra help, she logs in and she has one on one help, so that's kind of her school situation. And like any teen, I think sometimes she gets it done way ahead of the due date and sometimes, she's doing it last minute, but I think that's very normal. But it's not because she's got so much work. It's because she procrastinates.

Marc D'Amelio:

She's a great student. She loves school, so yeah.

Julia:

What advice would you have for other parents of famous kids? Is there anything that you would've done differently?

Marc D'Amelio:

I think one of the things we did is just help them follow their dreams and their passion. And I know it sounds cliché, and then listen to them because I do think parents end up trying to parent the way their parents handled them, and I try to parent to get to know my kid and try to help them achieve what they want to achieve. And sometimes, they don't know what they want, I think Heidi and I have both been very good about keeping the dialogue open with our kids, that they could come tell us anything. And I think that comes with trust. So I think to answer your question, probably talk with your kids, find out what makes them tick, and build a trust with them, and still parent. I mean, we're not their best friends. I think that's another issue that parents have is they try to be buddies with their kids. I think our kids are hilarious, we love hanging out with them, we have a great relationship, but at the end of the day, we're still the parents.

Julia:

And so how do the girls feel about you two being famous?

Heidi D'Amelio:

They love it. And they're like, "You guys should do more. You guys should do more." There's many times where we're going out to dinner or when we're on vacation, we're like, "Oh, they're probably not going to want to hang with us. We'll go do our own thing." And they're like, "What are you guys doing? Can we come with you?" They're like, "You're so much fun. We like to hang out with you." I think there's a sense of feeling protected too, like we know we got them and we'll take care of things, but they push us to do more. They're like, "You guys should be doing more deals, and you guys, you're funny," and all these things. They're very sweet, but I think they're fine with it.

Marc D'Amelio:

Yeah, and I think, we're not just saying this. I think part of us why we did this as a family is because at the time, Charli was 15, and I wasn't going to ship my kid across the country and deal with a bunch of handlers. We set out to do this as, being a family, not for us all to get famous, but for all of us to be there to kind of take the heat every once in a while, so it's not just Charli out there, but we don't really take it. We don't look at it as a career for us. There's benefits of having notoriety, and like I said, there's a lot of things you can do with your platform, but you don't see us doing TikTok dances and doing trends.

We're just, we're the parents of Dixie and Charli and we're totally cool with that. And if people happen to like the fact that we're in the limelight, that's great. If we're not, that's great too.

Heidi D'Amelio:

When a deal does come through, we're like, "For us? Really?" But I think we have fun with it. I mean, before, like in my late teens and early twenties, I was modeling and doing that kind of thing, moved to New York City for that. And so it's not foreign to me to be in front of the camera and doing all these things, and I'm like, "Oh, maybe I'll pick up where I left off. I don't know, see what happens." We're just kind of open. And we're parenting, we're running a business, but as long as it's fun and it makes sense, and the kids are fine with it. We're game.

Julia:

So in the show, Charli says, "I have no idea how this is going to work out in the long run." Your life is moving so fast right now. Where do you see your family in say, five, ten years?

Marc D'Amelio:

I think the girls will stay in LA. I think that we may also, just because I think we're a close knit family. This is what I hope. I hope that both girls and all of us find what we're passionate about, be excited and thankful and blessed that this opportunity will give us a vehicle to fulfill our passions, and also fulfill a social obligation that I think we take serious, and help others along the way. And I don't know that they know what they want to do, whether it's Dixie singing, maybe it's acting, maybe it's running a business. I just hope they find their passions and they pursue it, and they're happy as much as they can be happy throughout this journey.

Julia:

Great. That is a wonderful place to end. Heidi and Marc, thank you so much for coming on We Are Family. This has been just so great to chat and best of luck with everything in the D'Amelio family.

Marc D'Amelio:

Thanks, Julia.

Heidi D'Amelio:

Thank you. Thanks for having us.

Marc D'Amelio:

Appreciate it.

Julia:

Thanks so much for listening to my conversation with Marc and Heidi D'Amelio.

Next time you'll hear from the star of *Jersey Shore* and mom of three, the one and only Snooki.

Be sure to follow *We Are Family* on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen so you don't miss an episode. And we'd love your feedback. If you could rate this podcast and leave us a review, we'd really

appreciate it. You can also find us online at parents.com/wearefamilypodcast. *We Are Family* is presented by me, Julia Dennison, and produced by Sam Walker. Editing is by Vincent Cacchione and thanks also to the rest of our production team at Pod People, Rachel King, Matt Sav, and Danielle Roth.

We'll see you back here next week for more *We Are Family*!