

# DEAR MINDFUL CHANGEMAKER,



HOSTED BY  
MEICO MARQUETTE WHITLOCK



## Dear Mindful Changemaker Podcast

### Episode Eight – Ananda Leeke Transcript

#### Podcast Intro

**Meico:** As a changemaker, you're dedicated to making a positive difference in the world. You love what you do, and you're good at it. But here's the thing. With all the things on your plate, you may struggle with finding the right balance between work and having a fulfilling personal life. And as the world becomes more complex, it may seem change, disruption, and uncertainty have become new norms in your life and work.

**Meico:** But it doesn't have to be this way. I'm Meico Marquette Whitlock, and I'm on a mission to help changemakers like you improve your well being while increasing your well doing and changing the world without burning out. In every episode, my intention is simple, to share practical wisdom about the inner and the outer work required to take care of yourself while building a better world, especially when it feels like work doesn't love you back.

**Meico:** So, let's get started.

#### Part One

**Meico:** I am excited to be here with my sister, my friend, my colleague, and so much more on this journey we call life. And I want to introduce you to her and then we're going to go ahead and get diving into what I know is going to be an exciting conversation.

**Meico:** So, she is Ananda Leeke, an artist, an author, a thriving mindfully coach, and a human design doula based in the Washington, DC area. And she is also a mindfulness teacher. And so, Ananda discovered mindfulness when her career as a lawyer and an

investment banker and a digital communications professional stressed her out and caused her burnout and did not produce the level of success that she expected.

**Meico:** So how many of us are in roles or doing things where we expected one thing, and we started on a journey that turned out differently? Ananda has a whole story and career that is based on that. And so today she has turned that into. Inspiring and empowering people to nurture, transform, and celebrate their life, relationships, and career.

**Meico:** And she does this as, the leader of Ananda Leeke Consulting, a wellness company, and also the Thriving Mindfully Academy, an online learning platform and membership site. And she also hosts the Thriving Mindfully Podcast that airs on Spotify and YouTube. And she is the author of three mindfulness books and so much more.

**Meico:** That is just a brief snapshot. Ananda, welcome to the podcast.

**Ananda:** Thank you, Miko, for having me. I am super excited to talk to you and your audience and to get this party started.

**Meico:** All right. Awesome. with that, let's go ahead and get this party started. So, we've told folks a little bit about who you are. We're giving them the bio sketch, which is really just scratching the surface. But I'd like to start off every one of these conversations really by just asking you, who are you, who is Ananda Leeke and what is it that you want people who are listening to know about you?

**Ananda:** I am a human being, not a human doing. Did you hear? And this is a mantra that I have to repeat to myself many times throughout the day, because the recovering type A individual that I am, gets sucked into the whole thing that society says that you've got to do this a certain way. And so first and foremost, I am a human being having a very, very, very deep spiritual experience here.

**Ananda:** I believe that spirit is at the core of everything that I think, feel, say, and do. I don't always remember that, but I believe that. And I have people like Meico around me to remind me as I tap into and share my gifts in ways that really help people see their real selves. I am a guide. And I am using what I have experienced over the past 30 plus years in my journey that I now call Thriving Mindfully, a heart centered approach to being present, well, and the real you. And I'm taking things from my life and I am blending it with the divine downloads that I get from creator, from my loving, wise, and well ancestors, spirit guides, master teachers, and through the studies that Meico and I are involved in, ongoing studies in mindfulness and practicing it, breathing it each and every day.

**Ananda:** So, I'm first and foremost, a human being, spirit, daughter of the Most High someone that is here to serve with Thriving Mindfully as the core of what my life's work is. That's me.

**Meico:** Well, that is a mouthful, but I got the essence of what it is that you're talking about. So, folks that are listening, human being, having a human experience and supporting other people in essentially living their best life and doing that in a mindful

way. So, I absolutely love that. And so, let's talk about where you started on your journey.

**Meico:** So, one of my favorite questions to really kick this off is really just to ask you if you can remember, what was your first real job you ever had and define real however you would like to but the first real job that you ever had if you can remember, what was that?

**Meico:**

**Ananda:** Okay. The first real job that I had was as a Washington Post and Washington Star newspaper person. In the seventies, I was 12, 13 in the seventh grade and I wanted to be fashionable in junior high. And my mother told me that her money and my dad's money together it's not going to make me a Soul Train dancer.

**Ananda:** I needed to find a way to earn my own living and she gave me some suggestions: babysitting, doing chores for others in the neighborhood, or a paper route. And so, I decided to do a paper route, much like what she did when she was a preteen. So that was my first job, and it was the first job that taught me the importance of what it means to be a part of a community.

**Ananda:** And also, to serve in ways that take you outside of your emotions, because there were a lot of neighbors that I may not have liked, especially their kids. But I had to show up I had to serve. I had to serve no matter how I was feeling, Monday through Saturday, and on Sunday, double time.

**Meico:** Well, so that's amazing. It's amazing start. And it's very interesting that you mentioned what you learned from that and how you're bringing that through into what you're doing today and how you're serving and how you're showing up and how you're supporting other people. So, I want to fast forward real quickly to where we are now.

**Meico:** So, we talked about where you started with the newspaper route and what that meant for you in terms of what you learned and really your motivation behind wanting to do that. You want to be fashionable, Soul Train fashionable as you describe it. So, talk to us about what you are doing now professionally,

**Ananda:** and the way that I like to ask this question is how are you currently making an impact in the world professionally? And I love the fact that you use the word impact and I want to just share a little bit about that word impact and what it means to me. Meico knows that I've struggled over the last many, many years on defining what a success is, and getting clear about what success is. And it wasn't until last year that I decided to swap out the word success and use impact, because that's really what my heart was calling me, the impact.

**Ananda:** And when I sat with that, the only thing that my creator and loving wise and well ancestors wanted me to do was to impact one person per day. Not 2000, not the best sellers list one person. And that could be through a smile, it could be through a greeting, it could be through a coaching session, it could be through an art piece like

behind me, it could be through a blog post, a social media post, It could be through a prayer, it could be through Reiki.

**Ananda:** And now as I'm sitting here with you, my daily intention is to make an impact in one person's life. And to use my skills, my gifts and tapping into my intuition to find out what is it that I am, I'm called to, to say, do in order to make that impact most days that impact comes through the work that I do with my clients and the Thriving Mindfully Academy, as well as my coaching clients. That involves going deep into someone's life and looking with them at the areas where they may be stuck, where they may be struggling, where they may be stressed and helping them determine small steps that they can take to get to what their goal is. Whether it is to be at ease, whether it is to just be aware, whether it is to have a business and a life that is joyful. Whatever it is getting people to take small steps. It's getting people to be soft as F. U. C. K. I don't know if we're allowed to cuss on this podcast, but I have a, an acronym that I use with my clients slow down and offer yourself freedom today by any means necessary.

**Meico:** And that's the A. F. And getting people to be kind, and gentle, patient, and compassionate, and forgiving of themselves so that they take it easy as they grow as they get up as they fall down as they figure out what works for them and each day because we're always changing. Get it, give yourselves grace, So you summarize that with a quote. I'm going to ask you to repeat that. So, you said it's the slowdown. Can you give us that quote one more time?

**Ananda:** sure. So soft AF is the S is slow down. The O is offer yourself. The F is freedom. And then the T is today. That freedom could be a deep breath. It could be grace. It could be maybe you give yourself a moment to hug yourself. It could be loving kindness, compassion, whatever is going to ease the critic, the judgment off of you, the blame, the shame, whatever is going to give you some space just to take the step. And then today is yeah today, and then every day after that.

**Meico:** I love that. And I love that the invitation is to find the small thing, right? Often, I think we are socialized into thinking that we have to be focused on what you talked about earlier, which is massive success, right? And massive overnight change when really the small things add up to the kind of life that we might want to have and the kind of impact that we might want to have.

**Meico:** With that, I'm curious if you can help us to understand how you got here, right? So, we're talking about a particular point in time where you mentioned that just last year that you're getting clarity about the language around impact and impact versus success. And so, is there a specific experience or a specific project that stands out to you that started you on the journey that you are on right now?

**Ananda:** I would say what started me was my own pain, my own stress, my own discomfort, that happened in, in 1992. I had been taking the bar exam numerous times. I think I was on my 6th or 7th time and I was getting to a place where I knew it was coming to an end because I was realizing the universe had something else for me. But it took a lot to let that go and I was when I look back now, I see that I was in grief mode. I was traumatized. I was depressed. And what really opened the door was, some

sorority sisters, and you know Kamaria, my Sigma Gamma Rho sorority sisters, them saying to me, You keep calling us at lunchtime with these long poems. This is your therapy, and we think you need to go to the spoken word events and read it so that you can get it out because we can't always talk to you at lunchtime. And you're available you have excess time so you can go to the poetry readings. So, I started going to the poetry readings and reading my work, and that was a way of me releasing. The poetry calmed me down. It was a morning practice. From there, we were invited to a meditation, met these two Buddhist women on the street, and they invited us to a free meditation. Had never gone to a meditation before.

**Ananda:** And they gave us a cassette tape. You could tell that was back in the 90s. And I used that cassette tape and I started to notice that I had some space, that I had a little bit more grace for myself. And in that time, I made a decision to leave the law behind. The way that I thought it was because it wasn't good for my health, and I started getting exposed to yoga.

**Ananda:** And then, when one door opens in terms of your healing and your wholeness, the whole shebang comes through, at least for me. Because you open yourself up. And that was the thing, the poetry, the creativity was where I found the healing. And then that opened the door to me as a Catholic who had left the church by then but was still struggling. Open the door for another practice another healing practice. And then Reiki came a couple of years later. And so, to wrap it all up,

**Ananda:** because you know I like to talk and I like words, to wrap it all up. I studied these practices and use them for myself, and I saw after a couple of years how much they had improved my life that I decided to get certified. I'm a lifelong student, and I took yoga teacher training, did Reiki master, did sound healing, started working as an artist in residence at Smith Center for the Healing Arts at Howard University Hospital and Walter Reed National Medical, National Military Medical Center.

**Ananda:** Woo, that's a lot. And from the years of working at the hospitals, I, in many ways, was invited into people's lives and their families to help them navigate, not just creatively, but they found out that I taught meditation. They found out I did Reiki. They found out that I did gentle yoga. So, I would get the invitation to say, can you help us calm down?

**Ananda:** Can you help us do X, Y, Z? And the staff would do the same. I was at the patient's bedside and then started working with staff. The whole idea for mindfulness came, I think, around 2016. I had been doing this work for, over 15 years. And like all things, if you stay in something and you just continue along the path and you're open, your evolution will reveal itself and its trust process.

**Ananda:** And so, I'm grateful that I'm aware and that at some point I get to a place of trusting the process. And you and I went to a conference that you gifted me with Rosetta Thurman, and one of the assignments was to come up with a simple explanation of what you did. And I was at a crossroads at that point, and Thriving Mindfully came after that weekend.

**Ananda:** That was my baby that was born from that experience, and it brought everything together. It helped me see, as I was looking back, how it all was coming together. Because a lot of times you live it, you work it, and you're not paying attention. You're just doing what is before you and I was blessed to be able to have some time to look back, and look ahead, as well as be present to what I was doing and what was calling me.

**Ananda:** I started to put the pieces together because I could see it all. And that's where we are now. I've just kept doing it. I don't know if that answered the question, but here we are.

**Meico:** Yes, and if I'm reflecting back and really bringing a thread here, I'm really tying this back to what you said earlier about impact versus success is really resonating with me deeply. So, when I hear you talk about where you are, the journey was birthed from failure. And it, I'm going to put that in quotations, right?

**Meico:** Failure in quotations, right? And. It reminds me of, spiritual teacher, Michael Brown Beckwith, one of the quotes, one of my favorite quotes of his says that sometimes your pain will push until your vision pulls you, right? And so, it sounds like you had this painful moment that was, I think, in part connected to a societal expectation about a certain type of success, right?

**Meico:** That then pulled you. In the direction that you're in right now to a place of having impact and through helping folks to heal to the modalities that you share with us very briefly. So, I'm curious, as you think about where you started

**Ananda:** and where you are now, I know that there are lots of things that you have done and that you're doing, but is there any one project, any one initiative that really stands out to you that you're like, you know what, I really did that. I'm really proud. I really want the world to know about this thing.

**Ananda:** Yes, it is the work that I did on U Street in D. C. I am a lifelong resident. I'm going to claim that right now. 30 something years is and my commitment to that block has, it's been something I've been very proud of. From holding poetry readings to holding writer circles to, now having had, two years of a meditation community that I built with the partnership of Qi Cratom CBDT.

**Ananda:** We partnered at a time when we all felt that folks in the D. C., Maryland, Virginia area were really overwhelmed by what was happening politically with the Trump administration. And I had been dealing with my own depression and anger and was coming out of that and had taken a, a yearlong program with Meico from the Engage Mindfulness Institute.

**Ananda:** And I, I took it because I was so angry and it was, I needed to put myself into a program, not necessarily thinking, Oh, I'm going to do this for the community. When I finished that program, I wanted to give back to the community, cause I saw again, how it helped me. And in a matter of about six or seven months, we developed a very strong community.

**Ananda:** It was standing room most Mondays. It was a mindful Monday meditation class that we, we started. And it was simple. We just wanted people to make their breath their BFF is one of the things that I say. And to have space for people to share what it is that was going on with them. If they felt called to, and we did that until things shut down with the pandemic. We have started again with the soft AF Sunday, which is a little different, but it's still an opportunity to build community. And I'm really proud of the impact that we were able to make during the 2018, 2019, and a little bit of 2020 with the community.

**Meico:** Excellent. And so you're doing this work in the community. And so, I want to, because less folks listening to this are part of the nonprofit change making community. I'm curious if you can speak specifically to the work that you have done and are doing in that space. I know that you've worked with a number of different nonprofit organizations over the years.

**Meico:** I'm curious if you could speak to that and how you have maybe been able to use the type of healing work that you do in those spaces.

**Ananda:** I think that the best example is how I was able to serve numerous nonprofits during the early days of the pandemic.

**Meico:** Because we had to put everything online, meaning I put everything online for resources and I was getting overwhelmed with requests to support people from my own sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated to organizations like the Sierra Club to Smith Center for Healing in the Arts, my own former organization that I worked with, and then helping people develop practices, easy practices that they could use to manage their anxiety. There were a number of organizations that I really loved working with one was the, and I may not get it right, but it's the Association of Greater Washington Wedding Planners

**Meico:** and Professionals.

**Ananda:** And so, I had a chance to work with them in person the year before. And then, during the pandemic, I worked with them a couple of times. And you can imagine that is a business, event planning is a business that relies heavily on in person events, at least at the time. So, there are lots of stress. And being able to, one, listen to folks and then to support them in using their breath. Not trying to get them to, to act like what they're feeling wasn't real, but to get them to a place where they could acknowledge it.

**Ananda:** And once they could acknowledge it to begin to look at one to three ways that they could take care of themselves when those feelings come up when that anxiety happens when that stress happens. That was one of my most beautiful experiences. I would also say working with a group of young, African American students at my alma mater, Morgan State University, touched my heart tremendously because they contacted me through the chapter that I joined through Sigma Gamma Rho, and they were desperate to be able to give their classmates some respite, a space just to be.

**Ananda:** Because now they were not on campus, they were all over the country, and they were having to figure out how they were going to make it through the semester and maybe even, finish college online, a lot of uncertainty. And so just listening to them, helping them figure out, in your, you're in class, you're online and you're having a moment, and you cannot not do it.

**Ananda:** You breathe. You hold yourself; you hug yourself. It was like three things I would tell people. Touch your heart, your belly, notice your heartbeat, notice how the breath feels, tune into the breath, and then hug yourself as you breathe. Because when you're hugging yourself, you are activating your serotonin, your feel-good hormone, and your oxytocin hormone, your love hormone. And together they reduce the cortisol, the stress hormone. And that really, just to see their faces light up, something as simple as a hug, something that we took for granted before COVID, you know, if you could just get hugs, that, that work, helping people understand how to take care of themselves was really, beautiful for me.

**Meico:** Thank you for sharing that. And one of the things that comes up for me now is, two things. So, one is thinking about the work that you do as a healer, I'm wondering how you take care of yourself. And additional context, I want to add to that is that typically when we have this kind of conversations and when we're looking at social media, people are curating their life experience, right? And so, we see the highlights, right? But we don't necessarily care so much about the lowlights, right? And how people, where people were and how they dealt with those. And so, the question I have for you is about, is there one practical strategy? For example, I know that there are probably lots of things that you're doing or have done, but is there one practical strategy that's like your go to in terms of staying inspired and staying motivated, especially when you have those valleys, right?

**Meico:** in the midst of, the peaks in between.

**Ananda:** I am in the process of accepting that my parents are older and they're aging, and so am I, we all are. But my parents are in their 80s and, I'm having to see them through a different lens, the reality lens. Not the lens of, oh, these are the same people who were in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and even 60s.

**Ananda:** These are people in their 80s and they need my support. And I get to support them. It's a privilege and an honor. At the same time, the little girl in me is wiggling the I don't know what out because I'm used to being the one that's taken care of, even in my 50s. And there's a lot of emotion with that because it's the reality of they have a lot of less time than most people.

**Ananda:** And so, I have feelings about that. I have thoughts, I have fears. And one of the ways that I manage that, especially when I wake up like this morning and, I didn't do what I normally do, which is, come into some kind of easy yoga pose in the bed, give myself some Reiki, start to say a prayer, move into meditation.

**Ananda:** I immediately got into all of those fears. All of that stuff that traveled with me through the night and the thing that I did that brought me to a space of, okay, you're



feeling this is I gave myself a hug. And I hug myself. I just, I got into the fetal position, and I just hug myself. And I, I just hug myself and I breathe.

**Ananda:** I breathe, and I hug myself. And I listen to my breath because the thing for me is that the breath is the closest thing to Spirit. And the breath is the present moment, and the breath is the anchor especially in the unknown because if there's another breath after the other breath That's all I need to know, because I'm alive.

**Ananda:** I don't have to get caught up in all the other details. I'm just breathing, and I'm just listening to my breath, and I'm hugging myself, and I'm bringing the stress level down to a place where I'll be able to eventually say, Okay, what do you need next? And what I needed next was to lay in the child's pose and give myself Reiki.

**Ananda:** And to let myself be like, this is normal. This is natural. you are experiencing some things and I'm not going to try to glaze over it. I

**Meico:** And so, what I am picking up from that is this theme of being courageous enough to confront the not so pleasant things in our experience. And being able to do that in a way that you extend to yourself compassion. And it sounds like one of the ways that one of the concrete practices is the hug that you talked about, and you just gave us a few moments ago, the explanation behind why that is so significant and why it's effective for us.

**Meico:** And so, I appreciate you for sharing it with the audience. And I think your story, I think, gives other people who are listening an opportunity to say if she can listen to and see and acknowledge her pain. And I can do the same thing. And then number two, I have an accessible practice that I can put into practice to help self-soothe as I process, move through, experience, whatever the this thing is that I'm experiencing.

**Meico:** So, thank you for that. That's I think it's so beautiful.

## Sponsor Break

**Meico:** All right, it's time for a break. We'll be right back after a brief message from our sponsors.

**Meico:** Changemakers like you are driven to do more and more, often with fewer and fewer resources. But there comes a breaking point where your passion dwindles under the weight of pressure, the mission suffers, and you feel like you love the work more than it loves you back. That's why I wrote the book *How to Thrive When Work Doesn't Love You Back*.

**Meico:** A practical guide for taking care of yourself while changing the world with a forward by Beth Kanter, author of the "Happy Healthy Nonprofit." This book is a succinct, practical, and action-based guide for changemakers seeking to make an impact without burnout. Learn more and order your copy at [mindfulchangemaker.org/books](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/books). That's [mindfulchangemaker.org/books](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/books). The reality is, if you really want to make a difference, you must start by taking time for yourself right

now because you can't change the world if you're not around long enough to make that happen. This isn't about working harder and smarter, it's about making a commitment to work differently so you can take care of yourself while making an impact for the long haul.

**Meico:** In "How to Thrive and Work Doesn't Love You Back", I share practical strategies grounded in the well being while well doing change framework. And I wrote this book after experiencing more than my fair share of burnout and overwhelm in the name of saving the world during my previous career in government and non profit work.

**Meico:** I share what I've learned to be the most impactful strategies for my personal practice and my experience helping changemakers around the world just like you create lasting balance in their lives. These are the same strategies I teach teams and organizations through my live trainings, self-paced courses, coaching programs, and tools like the Intention Planner.

**Meico:** Each chapter has a summary of key ideas and a checklist of practices you can start implementing right away. I know you need practical strategies and resources to help you create sustained balance in your life and work so you can lower your stress level. And focus on getting the important things done right now.

**Meico:** So, this book isn't about theoretical concepts. It's about what to do and how to do it. Learn more and order your copy at [mindfulchangemaker.org/books](http://mindfulchangemaker.org/books). That's [mindfulchangemaker.org/books](http://mindfulchangemaker.org/books).

**Meico:** All right, let's get back to our conversation.

## Part Two

**Meico:** So, I want to extend this question and I want to ask you about balance, right? And, I'm asking it in a traditional way because when we talk about work life balance, that is the most commonly shared way that we think about it. I know that there are different, people have different framings around that work life integration, work life balance. People have thoughts about nonlinear days where you're not just living life in one block and then working in one block, but it's all blended together. So however, that shows up for you, however, that works for you. I am curious how you balance the demands of the external world, particularly when it comes to your professional obligations with the work I should say, or maybe the space that you're creating personally, right?

**Meico:** You just talked a few moments ago about your parents and I know that you're spending lots of time with them and supporting them. So how do you balance that with your professional obligations and the way in which you're serving in the world.

**Ananda:** I don't like the word balance, but I understand why you,

**Meico:** because I think it's your choices,

**Ananda:** even in the midst of, and I don't know if I'll answer this because I'm still figuring it out, even in the midst of having a plate that's full, making sure that on that plate, there are some, like people say, eat your vegetables, I say, make sure there's some self care vegetables on the plate.

**Meico:** And that could be the reality is that there's a lot going on in our lives. And we may choose, because it's always a choice, we may choose to roll with what is before us. And a lot of days I choose to roll with what's before us. And so I keep the vegetables on the plate and those vegetables may be making sure I have my water by me, taking the time to make sure I have water, taking the time.

**Ananda:** To make sure that I normally stand at a standing desk and doing the exercises that my chiropractor has me doing so that I'll be ready for tennis season. And, marching in place, keeping music going, that keeps me engaged. Listening to podcasts, something that's uplifting, making sure that what I put in my body is, is nurturing.

**Ananda:** I don't always do that because I had two cupcakes on Sunday, but they were good, not but and they were good. Making sure that I, what I can choose and since I have chosen to go with the flow of all of these things is creating coziness around me from putting on my favorite lipstick, wearing my favorite gemstones,

**Ananda:** wearing colorful clothing, or my glasses, things that are going to ease me into my day. Like rolling out my yoga mat, and keeping that rolled out so that at least I see it. And when I see it, I'm going to spend a little time on it. So it's keeping those I don't know if this answers it. It's, I. On the days when I'm super, super, when it's super packed, I'll just go to YouTube and turn on some high vibration music and that helps me focus.

**Meico:** But it also helps me take care of myself because the vibrations are going in my body. Yes, I love how you are providing an alternative way of thinking about this traditional notion of balance about a series of choices. And I think what's so beautiful about the way you framed it is all the examples that you gave, from my perspective, sound like a series of small choices that add up to a massive impact and how you're able to be present for however life is going for you in a particular day.

**Meico:** And I know that there are lots of folks that are listening that are full time caregivers for older folks in their life. They have children. that might be on the younger end that they're dealing with and that need day to day support. they have other things, maybe a highly, high demanding position that they're in.

**Meico:** And I think what you presented to folks is essentially a buffet of small things that people can choose and try on and make sure that they're adding those onto the plate of the other things that, in some cases, you might not have control over. And so another thing I heard you share was making choices when you were able to make those choices.

**Ananda:** And so just acknowledging that they're going to be some days where life is showing up and you have less control some days than you would like. The plumber's coming.

**Meico:** Exactly. Yes. So the toilet overflows, right? And so you've had this happen literally and

**Ananda:** times.

**Meico:** Yes. So I want to shift us to talking a little bit about the work that we have done together, but is there anything more you want to say about this topic of balance before we do that?

**Ananda:** I would say for people to define it for themselves, because if we keep trying to do things in a cookie cutter way, you can stress yourself out trying to find balance. You can stress yourself out by trying to practice self care that is through a definition of someone else.

**Meico:** Yes. You remind me of that with the folks that are, Like the aggressive drivers, they're in a hurry to get to yoga class, right? They're in a hurry, they're in a hurry to get to church and they're mad at you that they're trying to get to church, right? And so I think you just gave us a perfect example,

**Ananda:** of that. But you were going to say something else?

**Ananda:** Yeah, I think the best thing that we can do is to give ourselves a moment to just ask, What is it that I really need right in this moment to be okay. What is it? What is one thing that's free? Not go, cause I can think of a thousand things, press Amazon and click it and can be here tomorrow.

**Ananda:** But one thing that, that would allow you to just be for a moment, just one thing.

**Meico:** Yes. And I think you, you also remind us too, when you talk about the cookie cutter approach, for the folks that are listening. And I talk about this in the training that I do with teams and organizations, which is that this idea of balance, it's not one size fits all, it's not a one time flip of the switch.

**Meico:** And we go through seasons in life, right? And so what looks like balance for you right now might be completely different for you in a different season. So you always want to be asking, I think, to your point, a really beautiful question, which is what do I need? In this moment and aligning yourself with whatever it is that you need in that moment to meet that needs.

**Meico:** So thanks for that. so we have intersected on this journey. And we've been connected in so many different ways for a very long time, but I want to narrow the focus to the work that we specifically done in partnership through Mindful Techie.

You've also been a client, and so I'm curious if you have thoughts that you want to share about that.

**Meico:** But let's start with the partnership piece and the work that we've done together with clients. Over the years, we have been co trainers and co facilitators working with organizations. We presented at the Nonprofit Technology Conference. We have done work with a number of large changemaking organizations across the country and leaders.

**Meico:** And so I'm curious, if maybe you can maybe share some highlights or some thoughts about what impact you have observed, for the folks we work with and what the impact has been for you as someone who's been part of this experience.

**Ananda:** I think one of my favorite moments was serving the NTEN and the Nonprofit Technology Network community, because they, which is we, hold a special place in my heart. For folks in the nonprofit world, especially organizations that don't have a lot of resources or a lot of people power in terms of staffing and NTEN really does an amazing

**Ananda:** job of helping people at all levels and to be a part of, of a training team for the conference, was just a wonderful blessing. And so the mindful communication component, I can't remember the name of the session, but I talked about mindful communication and, watching people participate in active listening and sharing how it felt to be heard and some people, sharing that was the first time they felt heard. In how important it is to have active listening and to be present to people to allow the folks that you are working with to know that you're present.

**Ananda:** Not on the computer, not in another moment, but to just be present. And that's a practice that needs practicing. And we all need it. But that was one of the best experiences is watching people recognize, of the value and the importance of it. The other experience was working with the Marisla Foundation in Sedona and working with their leaders, who are part of nonprofit organizations all over the country that were working in the environmental, sustainability industry or efforts.

**Ananda:** Session and a mindful journaling session. And these are things that people might think, Oh, this is just so easy. The freedom that people had in having space to just share their thoughts prompted by some questions. And then the freedom to just write whatever was on their heart.

**Ananda:** You don't have to follow that. And to hear what came up for folks, because a lot of us don't give ourselves the space or the permission, because we don't think we have the time to tap in and take our temperature, the emotional, the spiritual, the physical temperature, and to document that and then to read it back.

**Ananda:** And then if you have an aha moment to share it in a safe community and to hear others to know that you're not alone. That was powerful, very, very powerful and then working with other leaders in mindful creativity sessions. I think it was at the National Association of Corporate Directors, in, in 2019 that we work together. And

having people come up to me after the session and saying that they didn't realize that they were creative. Empowering people to recognize who they are inherently.

**Ananda:** That is another gift of doing this Mindful Techie work. You're helping people slow down to see who they really are. To see how they can own who they are. With the support of technology or without. A full deep dive attachment, having tools in place so that you have digital wellness so that you can see yourself, and you can be connected to technology and use it in a mindful way, and how it can help you be who you are.

**Meico:** So yeah, so that I appreciate you sharing that in such a I think you've had such a an amazing impact on the folks that we've been able to serve together. And so I'm honored that you've been able to be part of this journey. and then we've been able to share part of this experience together.

**Meico:** I'm curious if you could, speak to the work that we've done together directly. I know that you are a fan of the Intention Planner.

**Meico:** You were one of the first adopters, when it was made available. And. and I'm not sure, I couldn't remember if you actually attended any of the workshops that I've done as an attendee or if you've experienced any of those, but if you have any of those experiences that you want to share, I'd be curious to hear what your thoughts are.

**Meico:** But why don't we start with the planner?

**Ananda:** So let me first say that Meico and I are accountability partners and have been accountability and prayer partners since 2014. So before he even decided to create the Intention Planner, he brought the framework to our partnership, our accountability partnership, and I adopted it. And, when he decided he was going to create this tool, of course,

**Ananda:** I wanted to use it. I was always looking for the next version of it. I was like, look, I'm about to run out. I need another one. What's going on? Meico's way of helping us navigate life intentionally, and with mindfulness has had a dramatic impact in my life in terms of helping me have one place to go in the morning, afternoon, or evening.

**Ananda:** I can't you know, that was that was my Bible. I've fallen into my own version of. of an astrology, human design creative kind of experience with my sketchbook and my other day planners. However, before I got there, I was using the Intention Planner for numerous years. And, what it did for me. It helped me focus. It helped me focus because there was space for gratitude. There was space for your daily intention. You could change your intention. You could have more than one intention. There was space for me to let loose and I started using it as a journal, like I was all it was written all over the place because I liked it and what it did for me as a creative,

**Ananda:** is that it helped me track. And I kept them cause I will use them when I write the next book, my notes are in there, my thoughts, crushes ideas. I brainstormed a lot of the things that I do in my business came from the intention Planner. all of the different exercises. it gave birth to a lot of what I do today.

**Ananda:** Because I was using my intention on a daily basis and I could go back to it. We talk about how you take care of yourself. That was one of the main ways that I took care of myself, especially on busy days. I plop that bad boy right next to me and flip it open. Flip it open. It captured quotes. It captured all kinds of things for me.

**Ananda:** It was my, my, my intention Bible in many ways. And it, and in doing that, I had a practice that was an active self care practice. It may not have happened in the morning. It happened at lunchtime or it happened at night, or maybe at all three times, or maybe throughout the entire day. It got me into a rhythm of acknowledging and honoring myself with my birthright to, to be who I have been created to be intentionally.

**Ananda:** And I'm able to go back now and look and see who I thought I was, who I was pretending to be, and who I am now. I can see all of them. Because it was a system that helped you track not only your intention, but your small, medium, and big wins. it helped you see where you may need to shore up some things in certain areas.

**Ananda:** It really gave me my own accountability and then to have Meico as an accountability partner, that's just the ice cream and the cherry on the top. I'm sorry, everybody can't have it like that. But, hey, I'm blessed. But yeah, I didn't take one of your online classes, or at Unity.

**Ananda:** However, I have sat in the audience numerous times where you have talked, you've given pieces of your Mindful Techie Intention Planner training. I know when it comes out, you roll it out. There's different parts of it that I've been able to soak up, because I've been in the audience or when we've done trainings together, so I feel like I've had the best of both worlds. But it, it systematized things for me without me feeling like it was a heavy thing. It wasn't, it wasn't work, it wasn't, I didn't, say oh today's time to write in my Intention Planner. That wasn't the feeling I had.

**Meico:** It was, today, in this moment, it's time for me to take care of myself and the Intention Planner is my tool for doing that. I appreciate you sharing that. And so we are, I do want to move to the final segment and wrap us up, but I want to ask you, is there anything more you want to share about the impact of the Intention Planner? You also mentioned being in the audience for many of the trainings that I've done that we've done together.

**Meico:** Is there anything you want to share about that before we move forward?

**Ananda:** I want to share that when you live your life intentionally and you use a tool like the Intention Planner, you develop your muscle of self-worth, because you can go back and look at who you are, and what you are seeking to be and do. There's enough information there. You can look at the data, your own data.

**Ananda:** And you can also look at where you need to celebrate. We don't often celebrate, Meico knows I'm big on self-celebration. So, you can see your progress, you can track it and with that tracking, you strengthen your own first right to self-worth.

**Meico:** Yes. Excellent. Well, thank you so much for sharing. I appreciate your reflection and being a part of this journey with me. As we've iterated, we're now on the 3rd edition. I think I announced not too long ago that now we have the softcover edition is available now in addition to the hardcover. Thank you for being a part of that journey with us.

**Meico:** So, for folks that are curious and that are interested, they've enjoyed this conversation and they've heard about a little bit about the start of your journey, a little bit about where you are right now. Can you give us a little bit of a sneak peek in terms of what might be coming next? What might be around the corner for Ananda Leeke?

**Ananda:** Well, what's coming next is my dad and I are wrapping up his book and his book is about his life as a changemaker and it's his memoir of being a changemaker in diversity, as well as his digital citizenship as a senior wise man on the planet. So, we are both co-writing that he wrote most of it. I've just come in and provided support.

**Ananda:** So that's coming out later this year 2023. And then my art, which you see behind me one of my pieces, that is a big focus for me that's Thriving Mindfully that's heart centered approach to being the real me and the real me is an artist. More artwork coming, more community work coming through, the work that I do in my own U Street block as well as online and, my book is coming.

**Ananda:** I'm not going to say when, but Thriving Mindfully, my next memoir, my 4th book, my 3rd memoir. Is coming. So that's about me in the past 30 something years living on U Street and how living in this neighborhood has allowed me to express Thriving Mindfully.

**Meico:** All right, you heard it here first folks. We got a couple of books with the dad. We got a new memoir coming out the fourth one and we got more artwork coming down the pipeline So we're going to be on the lookout for that and excited to see when all those things are released. So, for folks that want to follow you and get the latest and greatest when those things are happening where can folks go to learn more about you and to stay connected?

**Ananda:** They can go to [anandaleeke.com](http://anandaleeke.com) and click on the pop-up button that allows you to sign up for regular email updates. And Instagram, TikTok. YouTube and LinkedIn at Ananda Leeke and anything else you can go to Ananda Leeke. You can find the podcast there that is on Spotify as well as Anchor. It's under Thriving Mindfully Podcast.

**Ananda:** We've got, six seasons, so check me out.

**Meico:** Awesome. Thank you so much for being here today, for sharing your story, for sharing your wisdom, and for being candid about the fact that we're all in the process of just figuring this out day by day, moment by moment, right? And I think so many folks are going to be healed by what you've shared today.

**Meico:** And so many folks are going to feel a lot less stressed because you've given them one small thing. That they can do right now in this moment that won't cost



them anything. So, thank you so much for that. And with that, mindful changemakers, we'll see you next time on the next episode of the Mindful Changemaker podcast.

**Meico:** Thank you for tuning in.

## Sponsor Break

**Meico:** I want to take a moment to tell you about a live virtual program to help changemakers like you take better care of yourself while creating a positive impact in the world. It's a live virtual two-day interactive experience designed to help you increase your well being so you can increase your well doing.

**Meico:** This retreat focuses on practices and strategies connected to the change framework for well being while well doing from my latest book, "How to Thrive When Work Doesn't Love You Back." The framework addresses the U. S. Surgeon General's five essentials for workplace mental health and well being. Learn more at [mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat). Again, that's [mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat)

**Meico:** During the retreat, we tackle the inner work of things such as guilt about not being able to always get it all done, fear of setting boundaries, the anxiety of imposter syndrome, and adjusting to the world of hybrid work, among other things. We'll also tackle the outer work of things such as setting intentional goals, effective priority setting, especially when everything seems urgent and important, setting and protecting boundaries, and making space to rest and recharge in a sustainable way.

**Meico:** When you sign up, you get support from a community of smart, heart centered changemakers just like you. And also, one year of unlimited access to video lessons, handouts, and an invitation to return to any of the live monthly retreat sessions we host. Learn more at [mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat).

**Meico:** That's [mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat).

## Outro

**Meico:** Thank you for listening to this episode of the Dear Mindful Changemaker podcast. Are you ready to finally prioritize your well being so you can increase your impact in changing the world? Join the Mindful Changemaker community and take the next step on your journey to increase your well being while well doing.

**Meico:** It's 100 percent free when you join at [mindfulchangemaker.org/join](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/join). Again, that's [mindfulchangemaker.org/join](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/join). Until next time, I'm Meico Marquette Whitlock. Take it one intentional moment at a time.