

# DEAR MINDFUL CHANGEMAKER,



HOSTED BY  
MEICO MARQUETTE WHITLOCK



## Dear Mindful Changemaker Podcast

### Episode Fourteen - Cherise Newsome 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:** Today, I have the privilege and honor of being able to talk to the awesome Cherise Newsome. So we're going to be able to hear from her in just a few seconds. But as we dive in, I want to give you just a quick sketch of who she is.

**Meico:** And then we're going to dive into a robust conversation that I know is going to be illuminating, and transformative, and just life changing, I think, for so many of you who are out there listening to this podcast episode. Charisse Newsom is an innovative

communicator, a social media whiz, a community advocate, and she describes herself as a hands on leader who believes in putting service and people first.

**Meico:** She is a former journalist and PR pro.

**Meico:** She is also heavily involved in the community, so I really love this. She serves on a lot of local boards and committees and is a long time advocate specifically for public education, the arts, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Meico:** And she's putting her money and her time where her mouth is because I read somewhere that she is a lifetime member. Hear that? Lifetime member of the Virginia PTA and a founding member of the Visionaries for Change Giving Circle. So she is passionate about the public education, giving her lifetime service to the Virginia PTA and is part of a giving circle, right?

**Meico:** So she's involved in philanthropy and giving back and she lives in the Norfolk, Virginia area with her husband and her three sons. Cherise, welcome to the podcast.

**Cherise:** Thank you, Meico, for having me and hats off to you for inspiring, encouraging and motivating all of us to be more intentional and be more mindful.

**Meico:** Awesome. You are very welcome. And I'm excited to dive into this conversation. So let's start with a bit of a level set, so that we just have a shared understanding of who you are, who's coming into the space. So we've already given you a bio sketch of who Cherise is, but Cherise, in your own words, if you could tell people who you are, what do you want people to know about you?

**Cherise:** Sure. That's such an important question. I am a woman of faith. I am a woman who loves her family. I'm a woman who loves herself and I'm a woman who loves her community. And I bring all of my heart and my passion to each of those things to just work to make my community better.

**Meico:** Awesome, and we got that from your bio sketches. You're really community oriented, you're really family oriented, and I love that about you. And I'm excited to be able to weave all these things together as we have this conversation. With that being said, let's start with the first part of this quilt, if you will, of your life and your journey.

**Meico:** By talking about the first job that you ever had, the first real job, however you define real. Can you take us back to the first real job that you can recall and tell us what that was and how you got started with that.

**Cherise:** Sure. Meico, I've been working since I was like 15. I started working so early that I actually had to get a worker's permit, doing fast food, retail jobs and things like that. But my first real job was as a reporter for our local newspaper, the Virginia Pilot. I started there right out of college.

**Cherise:** Actually, I had done some writing for the newspaper for the teen section because I had gotten involved as a high school journalist. But I started there as an

editorial assistant and worked my way up to reporter. I was there for 11 years and I covered all kinds of topics, from city government to public education.

**Cherise:** And that's where I really began to learn about the power of storytelling. I knew that I liked to write. You know, how I paired my personal interests with my professional journey in the beginning. Being a reporter, I understood the value and the impact that you can have with telling a story. So that was my first real job.

**Cherise:** That's also what helped me to grow my passion for the community because I got to meet people from all walks of life. Residents and policymakers, educators and business owners, and really got to see my community as more than just a resident living there, but as someone who was a part of it and as a journalist also being an observer.

**Cherise:** So it was a really great job to learn more about myself, more about my skills and passion and more about my community.

**Meico:** So you had to get special permission that you started so early and I can completely relate to that.

**Meico:** In my state, the age was 14. My brother and I had to get special permission to work at that early age. We've been working ever since. And then you end up working for this newspaper, and you realize, that you had this love of writing and storytelling, but you also realize that you've been in this place all your life, but you begin to see a different side of the community and the different parts of it.

**Meico:** What were you covering specifically?

**Cherise:** So I cover a lot of things. I cover city government where I got to see policymakers, we call that our city council, discuss and debate and make rules and laws around things that affected the city. So everything from funding and taxes to how things would get supported to services to how waste management was handled.

**Cherise:** And so that was really eye opening for me that things that I maybe took for granted as a resident or didn't understand became, really, I got a behind the scenes look, if you will, at the processes that made those services possible, that funded them and the decisions. And I also covered schools.

**Cherise:** So I covered public education. I'm very passionate about education. I come from a family of educators. My mom was a teacher for 40 years. I have so many relatives who've been educators of some sort. And so I really enjoy covering education because it was a way to share with parents and families in the community how schools were doing, how their kids were doing, the opportunities.

**Cherise:** And one of the great things about local journalism is that it directly touches the lives who are affected by those decisions that the school leaders and the policy makers making. And I got to tell great stories about kids who were doing amazing

things and teachers are amazing things. And they also got to tell some challenging stories about testing issues and funding issues that affected the quality of education.

**Cherise:** And from understanding the value of a story, I began to understand the impact of a story. I began to tell stories that were complex. Reading a school budget is not just numbers on a page. It's not just a vote by the school board member. It affects a child's life and future. So I wrote about that from a very passionate standpoint, but also one where I really wanted the community to understand what was at

**Cherise:** stake. Why they needed to care, why they needed to pay attention and what could happen if they didn't. And I was, yeah, so I enjoyed that and it was hard at times. And, I covered one of the complicated things about being reporting on a community that you live in and grew up in is that people also see you in a certain light.

**Cherise:** And so I had to navigate being the graduate of a school system and then going to college and coming back home and work for a newspaper and being the reporter covering that school system, the bright spots and the dark spots. And everyone was like, some at times people were really confused by that and I've learned is that it's good to have multi views of an organization or an issue.

**Cherise:** Sometimes we can be so focused on our one perspective, we forget that there's layers, right? And there's levels. And I got that as a reporter, but I cared so much about my community as well as my craft, which is why I was passionate about it. And so I was at the newspaper for 11 years. I was a journalist started as an editorial assistant, which is like a entry level position and work my way up to reporter. So I was there for 11 years, and then I became the communications director at a local school division. And that was great because I got to continue along with my passion for education. At the same time, being in PR, I got to tell specific stories from a specific angle.

**Cherise:** And working within the school division, I understood the stories a little bit more intimately because every day I would go in schools. I wasn't just covering schools as a reporter. I was in the schools. I was actually spending time with principals and teachers and families and helping them understand the services that schools provide and communicating that and developing marketing around the school system and what it offered.

**Cherise:** Also helping to navigate issues that erupted in the news around funding and budgets and all that stuff. So again, it was married to my passion, but it also was a way to tell specific stories and almost be like, that advocate for that school. I was a spokesperson for that school.

**Cherise:** So I was a voice, one of many.

**Meico:** Yes. Awesome. So let's start there. So you had this long journey in journalism and you talked about how you got your start, and how you ultimately end up working as a communications person at a school division. So take us from there to painting a picture very briefly of where you are now. So where are you right now in your professional journey in terms of how you're making an impact.

**Cherise:** Sure. So after I left the school division, I worked for a charitable foundation and got to tell the story of philanthropy in my hometown of Hampton Roads. And I enjoyed being able to meet people who had used their resources and, and talent to give to others and to make our region better. And I really enjoyed that.

**Cherise:** And at the, at that organization, I really understood how your story is a part of your testimony. And as I mentioned earlier, I'm a woman of faith, so I grew up in a Black church and although my faith has evolved and grown over the years, I still hold so closely to my heart those experiences. And testimony service was like a big thing in a Black church and it is where you talked about some hardship that you were able to overcome through persistence and through faith, and you were sharing that story to encourage other people.

**Cherise:** And so I understood that sharing your testimony is also a form of philanthropy. It's also a charitable act. It's also a way of giving back because you're sharing something that's personal to you. At times, it's something that may have been a painful part of your story to encourage and help and inspire someone else, the same way money would, right?

**Cherise:** The same way another resource would. So I learned that. So where I am now is that I enjoyed my time at the Community Foundation, but I also began to understand the importance of testimony and of making sure that stories and testimonies that weren't always heard had a platform and that people who had some really powerful stories but didn't have or didn't know how to access certain audiences that I provided that access and that provided that link and that I helped to be that bridge.

**Cherise:** So oftentimes I call myself a microphone. It's people's story, right? We all have our own stories, but I'm that microphone and I'm going to hold it up and help you get the word out there.

**Cherise:** Business owners go into business oftentimes to help their communities, to help their families. Small businesses are the lifeblood of communities. That's a story. That's an individual story. That's a community story. Same thing with nonprofits. They're on the front lines, solving many of our community's problems from helping to alleviate poverty, addressing homelessness, working to fill educational gaps, and that's a story, but they're so busy and so focused on the work, which is a good thing,

**Cherise:** they don't always have the time, or the wherewithal to tell that story. That's where I come in. I hold the microphone and say, you got a story. You got a testimony. Tell it and help somebody else.

**Meico:** Awesome. We appreciate you telling the microphone. We appreciate you really getting the testimonies and the stories that are out there. And I love the beautiful connection that you made between the testimony service and Black church and what you're doing right now in PR and how you're amplifying that out in the world.

**Meico:** So with that being said, can you maybe tell us a little bit more specifically about a particular project or initiative that you're proud of as part of your work, maybe now or

even, as any part of your journey, and tell us why that really stands out to you as something that you really want to shine a light on.

**Cherise:** Sure

**Cherise:** in 2019, I became one of the founding members of a charitable giving group called Visionaries for Change. And it was founded by Black business leaders and community leaders who wanted to use their talents, their resources, their money to support charitable causes in the Black community. And that giving group, everyone gave at different levels.

**Cherise:** I think the levels are from \$500 to \$5,000 and gave at different levels and pooled their resources together. And the money is used to give grants to nonprofits. I helped to recruit members to the giving circle. And I did that through storytelling. I explained through story, the need of the Black community, right here in my community of Hampton Roads and how we as African Americans and allies could help be the problem solvers.

**Cherise:** And so there's also a narrative that in our communities, we, especially in communities of color and then the Black community that we somehow are so deficient of resources that we're not able to address those needs. And so that's not true. And so I use my communications and storytelling skills to explain a different narrative that the Black community has been charitable and philanthropic since the beginning of time. And then we've always worked together to pool our resources to help each other and even help others outside of our immediate community. And so that was a powerful story that helped other people's under other people understand what we were trying to accomplish and to join the effort.

**Cherise:** And so now there are, I think, over 80 members, the endowment, which is at the local community foundation started with just a couple hundred thousand dollars with lots of people pitching in, we got some matching funds and now it's close to 1 million and because it's an endowment, it'll last forever and always benefit charitable causes.

**Cherise:** And I'm so grateful to work with a team of like minded community centric advocates who wanted to use their talents and resources and time to get back.

**Meico:** I'm excited for you for that. And, how amazing. And one of the things I love about this is that you are from the Hampton Roads community. That's where you live, right? And you have worked with folks in your community to make an impact. And you all started small and it snowballed, right?

**Meico:** And it's so snowballed in part because you were able to use the power of storytelling to excite people and to get other people to get engaged and let people know about what was happening. So I think that is so amazing. So for folks that are wondering about the power of communications and marketing, about the power of PR, and, what journalists are doing, I think you just gave us a really beautiful example of what that can look like and what the impact can be.

**Meico:** So with that being said, we're talking about some important milestones in your journey, and we're talking about the shiny things and the beautiful things, right? But we know that it's not always a smooth journey. There's there, there are bumps in the road. And so I'm wondering, how do you stay inspired and how do you stay motivated, especially when you encounter those bumps in the road, things don't always go the way that you go.

**Meico:** Maybe you're pitching a story or you're putting a story out there and people aren't responding the way that you would like them to respond. You know, is there a particular practice or strategy that's really working for you in terms of how you stay inspired and motivated.

**Cherise:** Sure. So you're right, Meico, that it's not always sunshine and roses, right? The weather is not always sunshine. There's going to be rainy days, and that's true professionally. That's true personally. And some of my professional rainy days involved burnout. They involved the pushback from working to shift the narratives in my community that people didn't always embrace.

**Cherise:** And a couple of things I have done to help navigate that include being connected to my community. When you are listening to people and learning from people and in touch with people, then you stay grounded. Staying grounded is so important to me. We can get caught up in the business of work. I got to post this social media and I got to do this blog, and I got to update the website, that we become hamsters on a wheel, just pushing out content without necessarily staying connected to the people behind those stories.

**Cherise:** So I would carve out time in my schedule to talk to the elders in the community, to talk to people who've seen changes, to talk to young people, and to make sure I was always connected because that kept me grounded. So it wouldn't just be the words Cherise wanted to use, but I was listening to and understanding the story of the community.

**Cherise:** One of the other things that helped me in being so busy again working in school divisions and working in journalism and work even in nonprofits, oftentimes you're doing a lot of great work with limited resources. And so there's a tendency to overwork and to burn out.

**Cherise:** And you can't pour from an empty cup. We hear that all the time. And so I've also, with your help and your guidance and inspiration, have learned some practices that helped me to reset.

**Cherise:** And so I'll go outside, and primarily working from home. can be a little bit isolated. And I am a social person by nature. So I go out. So sometimes I'll just go to the zoo. We have the Virginia zoo is based in Norfolk where I live. And so I'll just go and I will observe nature.

**Cherise:** I'll walk around and I'll just. Breathe and take deep breaths. That is so refreshing. Just changing up my scenery. It helps me to keep a good pace. I'll work a

little bit in the morning, take a break in the afternoon. So taking breaks, connecting with nature and staying grounded all help me.

**Meico:** Awesome. I love that.

## 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](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/books). That's [mindfulchangemaker.org/books](https://mindfulchangemaker.org/books).



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

## Part Two

**Meico:** Is there anything more you want to say specifically about that as it relates to work life balance? So you talked specifically with the work in non profit, for example, it can be all consuming and you're doing things often with limited resources and that can lead to burnout or overwork.

**Meico:** And is there anything more you want to say about that specifically about how you find the balance between the work that you're doing. Yes, it's good work that you're doing and you're making an impact in the community, Yes, absolutely. But you, as you mentioned, that's also you, that's also your family.

**Meico:** You mentioned that you have a husband, you have three sons, so that, that's a lot, right? So how are you balancing all those things?

**Cherise:** The thing about being in the nonprofit world or being a community advocate is that you're so passionate that you don't always slow down to reflect on how you need to refuel your passion. And that comes with being more intentional and as you said, Meico, being more mindful. And so a couple of strategies that have helped me that I learned through your classes, involve time blocking. Having specific times to get specific tasks done.

**Cherise:** So there are certain days that I work on my volunteer work and I schedule that out. Now that might spill over a little bit because it's not always easy, but what I'm saying is I'm intentional about carving out time to do certain tasks. And I also have learned to use calendars more to schedule that time and color code even my calendars so I can look at it broadly. So it's a very practical step. Some of the things that you teach as well because when you look at your schedule broadly, not just for where you're supposed to be and when you're supposed to be there, but you look at it and reflect and you ask yourself,

**Cherise:** am I putting my time and effort in the places that matter most that are the most meaningful and intentionally reflecting on whether or not the commitments I've made aligned with my values and with my purpose and even my business goals. And by doing that, more consistently, I have learned and I say I'm learning because it's a process.

**Cherise:** I cannot tell you that I've gotten an A plus yet in time blocking or an A plus yet in mindfulness, but it's a lifelong practice, right? And, your classes help, your classes, and resources have helped me to strengthen those muscles of being more intentional, reflecting, carving time out, checking email and intervals. Meico, I will never forget when you gave me that technique, I was like, yes, I know we live in a society that wants us to have notifications every moment of the day.

**Cherise:** But it's okay to check your email in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening, the world won't stop. And here's the other thing, Meico, that you said, if it's

truly emergency, the person will call you. We have all great technology, and sometimes we forget that we have these traditional methods of communication that are also effective, and that if it's something that's truly an emergency, because life does happen, that people will call us, they'll get in touch with us.

**Cherise:** The emails, you can schedule those out in terms of when you do them.

**Meico:** Awesome. I'm excited for you that you're figuring out a set of things that actually work for you, and I'm wondering if you could say more about, if there's more you want to say about the classes, or the courses or other ways that you've been impacted. And, do you want to maybe say a little bit about which classes you, you've taken, and is there anything more you want to share about the specific impact that it's had on your life and your work?

**Cherise:** Sure. So I've taken two of your classes and I've downloaded your resources as well. And I follow you on social media. The two classes that stick out for me are Balancing the Art of Work Life Balance, and How to be a Mindful Leader and Social Change Agent in Trying Times. So Meico, I met you before the pandemic.

**Cherise:** That's when I took your first class and I learned a lot of those practical skills of meditation, breathing, and the email checking, and pacing myself. And then I took another one of your classes at the height of the pandemic. When I know for me, it was a challenging time. It was confusing because I was trying to navigate how to work, how to be a mom, how to be a wife, how to make a difference, all while a pandemic is going on.

**Cherise:** And you really helped me to pause, reflect, and pace myself. Your strategies helped me to realize that you can make a difference by doing one thing at a time. You don't have to do 10 million things at a time, or you can plan and schedule so that you can do multiple things, but at a good pace where I didn't burn out.

**Cherise:** And that really helped me because in the pandemic we were all just trying to survive and make it through, but our routines and our patterns change and for changemakers, as you described, who are so used to being on the go and so used to being plugged into the community and so used to being at events, it can be hard when you come to an abrupt stop.

**Cherise:** And so you're trying to figure out what do I next. You had some really good journaling techniques. And so I started journaling, at the height of the pandemic, thanks to some of the resources that you shared, and how to be a mindful change maker, even during trying times. And those lessons last, relevant, even beyond the pandemic, when we are experiencing hardships in life, maybe the loss of a loved one, maybe changes in our status, maybe changes in our health, that you can still have a difference by being mindful, by being intentional, by focusing and using those reflection strategies that you've given us to still make a difference for yourself and your community.

**Meico:** Awesome. I'm so excited for you that you, that we were able to connect. And first of all, just to connect this energetically, I feel like there's just like good vibes all

around us. I really appreciate that, your energy, your smile. But more than that, I'm excited that there's something that I shared through the course of the work that we've done together that's really had a lasting impact on how you're showing up for your life and for your work.

**Meico:** And it sounds like it's actually having a long lasting impact in terms of how you actually serve the community. And I love the perspective that we are on a journey, right? Informal mindfulness, we talk about it being a practice because it's something that, as the word implies, it's exactly that.

**Meico:** It's a practice. It's something that we get to do put into practice over and over again. It's not a one time thing where you flip the switch and you're like, okay, I'm good. I got this figured out. No, it's ongoing thing is ever evolving. So I love that you have that perspective. And it sounds like you are adapting things based on the season of life and work that you find yourself in.

**Meico:** So let me ask you this, as we begin to wrap up here, you shared a little bit about your practices, you shared a little bit about the impact that our work together has had on you. Can you maybe talk to our listeners, for those folks that are listening and wondering, okay, what advice might someone like Charisse, who's on this mindful changemaker journey, have for me, what comes top of mind for you?

**Meico:** What would you share or what would you say to folks who are listening who are wondering, okay, what advice do you have for me in terms of how I can make an impact in a more mindful, intentional, sustainable way?

**Cherise:** It's a great question, Meico. A couple of pieces of advice that I would share with people who are listening and watching is to align with like minded people who are trying to be just as mindful and intentional as you are. Meico, one of the reasons I've learned so much from you is because I saw in you something that I wanted, which was a better balance.

**Cherise:** And I thank you for sharing your story of how you overcame stress and burnout through these intentional techniques. So in aligning with you, and taking your classes, and downloading your resources, and following you on social media, I could learn from you. And I thank you for that. I thank you all the time, but I really mean that I thank you because, sometimes as change makers, we are tasked with so much that we have to accomplish that we don't realize that we really shouldn't be doing this alone.

**Cherise:** We should connect with people. Working together in community with like minded people, and even people who may be, even different people who come from all walks of life, but who are all striving for similar goals in life. And that is one of the pieces of advice that has worked for me and I would give to others, is that to align yourself with the Meicos of the world, literally with Meico, but also, Meicos in your community, there are likely Meicos in your workplace and look for those people.

**Cherise:** And align. And reflection, a big part of mindfulness is reflection. And when you're taking those breaks, as I've learned from you, Meico, what you do in that time is

important. So when I'm taking breaks and I'm going to the zoo for a walk, I'm not thinking about work. I'm reflecting and having that intentional time is so important, especially as a PR person and communicator.

**Cherise:** It is so hard to turn my mind off of work. As a mom, that is also very hard. And so I've had to, to set boundaries with my family and myself to say for this hour, I am going to do this.

**Cherise:** And I noticed that once I've done that, I'm a better and more refreshed Cherise. And then I have all the energy I need to not only get work done, but to be there for my family and my community.

**Meico:** Awesome. So I want to ask you maybe one last question before we actually, I have a few more questions because you just touched on something that I think is really important. So we have a lot of parents that listen to the podcast, a lot of, I work with a lot of parents. Actually, most of I work with are working parents.

**Meico:** And where both parents in the household are working for most of the folks that I work with. But they're doing change making work. Many of the folks are like you, where they are in high level positions, where they're managing a team or a division in their organization, maybe they're the executive director.

**Meico:** So can you talk specifically about how you find that balance with nurturing your marriage, but also, being there for your sons and for context, can you tell us like, what is the age range for the son that you have?

**Cherise:** I have three sons right now. They're ages five, seven and eleven. So I've got two elementary school kids, one in middle school. My husband and I have been married for 15 years. He also is very involved in the community, involved in ministry and a working professional. He's a draftsman. And he has to balance work, I have to balance work. We're both parents and we both are community advocates. And so as family, it can be challenging to juggle.. I would say all of those things, but they're all critical to who we are. I didn't want to give up work. I didn't want to give up my community involvement, with parenthood. And we all make choices, and I encourage people to do what works for them.

**Cherise:** But if you're one of those people who enjoys your professional side, and you also enjoy your community side, but you love your family to pieces. Yes, you can find that balance. The way I do it is by having priorities. So my family does come first. That doesn't mean that they're the only thing in my life.

**Cherise:** They just come first. So I'm going to be that loving, responsible parent and spouse where I am attentive to their needs. So for example, in the mornings, I don't I shouldn't say ever, but usually I don't schedule any early morning meetings because I know that's the time I like to spend with my sons and because they're young, it's so important.

**Cherise:** They do need help getting dressed. They do need help making their breakfast. So that's important time. And what I found with clients, explaining, you don't

always have to explain, but explaining the availability that you have and why can help people understand what your goals and motives and values are, and it can attract people to you who have similar values.

**Cherise:** So when you say, between the hours of, 7 and 9 am, I am unavailable for meetings, because that's the time that I get my kids ready for school, mindful people will respect that and honor that. And of course, life happens. You're in business. So there are times where there's a bit juggling, but it won't be that your whole family's thrown off because you're working or because something's always coming up. At the same time, I'm also very intentional in sharing, especially with my husband, what my work schedule is, right? So kids don't always get that. My husband, I'll share on this day, I have this meeting, so I can't pick up the kids today. And so that means, okay, you're on your, you're up and he'll say the same thing. Like I'm working on a project this week, I won't be able to get the kids from school. And I know that I'm up and we'll adjust my schedule accordingly. I think it's important for families, especially women who often bear a lot of the emotional labor in their households to be vocal about their needs and not feel like it's a bad thing. Mommy guilt is real.

**Cherise:** And then in the workplace, sometimes you try to overcompensate because you want to prove that you can have it all. You can, but it's hard and it's okay. So acknowledge that, some days are going to be good days. Other days are going to be hard days and you've got to find that balance.

**Cherise:** It's okay to advocate for yourself. It's okay to take time off work to spend with your family. It's okay to take time off work to spend with yourself. Communicate with your, spouses, life partners, that it's really important that you all are working together. And again, as you share your values and as you align with people who have your values, I think you'll find a better balance.

**Meico:** I think that's awesome and I and I just want to reflect back to you a couple of things that really struck me in terms of how you beautifully described how you're finding balance for yourself. And I want to share for listeners that are listening. I love that you put this out there to find what works for you,

**Meico:** that Cherise, you're sharing what works for you, and so I don't want folks to think that you have to do it the way that Cherise is doing, but what you've outlined is a template, right? And this is how it's working for you, right? And there's some principles that I think people can apply to make this work for them in whatever the situation is.

**Meico:** The first thing I heard you say was that your family comes first, and your family is your priority, but it doesn't mean that's the only thing that I'm focused on, right? It just means that my family comes first. That is so important. So you can have many things. That you're focused on, but when you're prioritizing, you're talking about what comes first, not that you're excluding other things.

**Meico:** You're just saying, okay, this comes first on the list, right? So I love that. So that's getting clear about whatever your priorities are. In your case, it's your family's number one. Everything else comes later on the list. So I love that. The second thing that, that

really is, I think is important and a critical principle is you mentioned simply communicating, right?

**Meico:** Communicating to, I heard you say two things, so communicating to, in your case, clients or colleagues, right? Hey, here's my situation. Let's work this out, right? Here's what's happening for me. Here's why I'm not available. Can we work together to find a time that works better for us?

**Meico:** And then on the other end of that, you're also communicating with your husband, say, Hey, here's my work schedule, right? Here's what's happening. And let's figure out how we can tag team and work together to support one another based on the various things that are coming up. So I love that. I think that's very beautiful.

**Meico:** And the other part of that, which I think is unspoken, it sounds like there's some flexibility there, right? So it sounds like part of it means being flexible, right? Because not every day is going to work out magically as you planned out. And so you have to be, you want to say more about that?

**Cherise:** I do. And I would add to being flexible is to give yourself grace. Give yourself grace because there will be days, there are days that things work well and days that they do not work well. And when you go to your journaling and your mindfulness practices, you can reflect on those and see if there's anything you can change.

**Cherise:** And sometimes Meico, you can't. Sometimes, a kid is going to have a tantrum and it's going to throw off the day and, it's just going to be a hard day and you have to give yourself grace on those days to say, you know what, I'm off, my family's off, and we'll get back on it. The other thing, along with that grace,

**Cherise:** is to, how do I want to say it? I want to say pick and choose your battles, but give yourself grace that you don't have to be perfect. So it's a give and take. And I will share in full transparency that as a mom who works and who is a wife who's involved in the community, there are concessions that I make and everybody's concession is different, but I will tell you mine if you promise not to laugh.

**Cherise:** So I have learned to embrace my laundry chair. The laundry chair is a thing, and what that means is, especially with three kids, two of whom can't really do their own laundry yet, that we have loads and loads of laundry, like every day. But you know what, Meico? I don't fold it every day. My husband doesn't fold it every day.

**Cherise:** Sometimes, laundry is in a laundry basket in a chair. And we we don't get to it that day.

**Cherise:** People

**Meico:** Are digging into the basket to get clean socks and

**Cherise:** That is so us. And I used to feel so embarrassed and ashamed by this. And I was joking with a friend. I was just like, yeah, I need to get to my laundry chair. She was

like, you have a laundry chair. I have a laundry chair too. And I was like, So sometimes that, again, that transparency, that being in community, that aligning with people, you recognize that you're not alone and you can gain strength and inspiration.

**Cherise:** And so that's the concession that I make. It's not always like that. There are, yes, we do fold clothes and put them away, but there are some days that laundry is going to be in the laundry basket, in the laundry chair until the next day. When one of us can get to it, that is the concession that we make.

**Cherise:** Some people may not work that way. They may say, I got to put my laundry as soon as it gets out of the dryer, please help me. Cause that's not always me. So give yourself grace. My family, my world doesn't stop because there are clean socks in a basket that we have to pick out for the day. It'll keep going and actually letting it go, not worrying about it for one day will be okay.

**Cherise:** And we'll fold it. the next day So I've made a piece with my laundry chair.. And if you have one, make peace with yours.

**Meico:** Yes. And so I want folks that are listening, I want you to think about what is your laundry chair. So maybe it's a literal laundry chair, like what Cherise was talking about, or maybe you have a different laundry chair, but I love that's the way that you're making space. And I love that you're talking about grace, because this is something that I've been talking about a lot, especially in a pandemic where, number one, simply acknowledging that you might not be okay.

**Meico:** And guess what? That is okay. You can give yourself a little bit of grace to say, you know what? Today, I am not okay. I'm doing the best I can. And that is all that I can give you right now. And that's okay, right? And so sometimes we just need to give ourselves permission to say, okay, you know what?

**Meico:** Today is not unfolding the way that I intended. My kids are not showing up the way that I want them to show up today. But you know what? We're going to start again tomorrow and it's going to be okay.

**Cherise:** Yes. Thank you for saying that.

**Meico:** Yeah. and thank you for putting it out there. So I want to ask you. As we wrap up, what is next for you? What is next for Cherise? So we know that you've talked about this journey in PR and marketing communications, your work on the foundation side, your work in the community and your philanthropy in the community to the work you're doing right now.

**Meico:** What is next for you?

**Cherise:** I want to make sure that people whose stories have not been told, oftentimes those are people from marginalized, historically marginalized communities, people of color, I want to make sure that I'm helping to tell their stories.

**Cherise:** And I want to be able to use my gifts to share them. And as we're being mindful, then we look around and we see who's missing or in my world, I say, what story is missing? What story haven't, haven't I told or haven't I shared? And I want to continue serving my community to whom much is given, much is required, and we are blessed to be a blessing.

**Cherise:** And it doesn't take a lot. We can volunteer. I choose to volunteer, and it might be an hour or two of my time. out of a month to serve on a board. It could be, helping pass out food, with a food bank. It could be tutoring children after school. It could be going to, senior homes and nursing homes and assisted living facilities to sing songs and spread cheer.

**Cherise:** There are many different ways we can get involved and give back. And for me, that's what's next. I'm going to continue to do that and make sure that it aligns with my purpose and my mission in life, which is to be of service to others and put people first.

**Meico:** Awesome. So thank you so much for that. And I love the beautiful story that you showed and shared and your energy.

**Meico:** So where can listeners go to learn more about you and stay connected?

**Cherise:** Absolutely. I am really active on LinkedIn. I'm on all the social media channels, but I am very active on LinkedIn, so you can find me there.

**Meico:** Awesome. Thank you so much for joining us today, for sharing your story. And I know that you're inspiring so many of the mindful change makers that are part of our community, and we look forward to having you back to learn more about where you have gone in your journey since this conversation.

**Meico:** Thank you again.

## 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.

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**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.