

DEAR MINDFUL CHANGEMAKER,



HOSTED BY
MEICO MARQUETTE WHITLOCK



Dear Mindful Changemaker Podcast

Episode Three - Jeremy Garcia 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 for what I know is going to be an extraordinary conversation, with someone that I have had the privilege of working with in the space over a number of years and really intersects with a lot of the work that we have and that we do through Mindful Techie.

Meico: He is Jeremy Garcia. He, has served in the U. S. military. Is a former AmeriCorps volunteer and since then has worked in direct service with veterans in communication and marketing efforts for nonprofits and currently works in program management at NTEN, which is a community of nonprofit professionals that are dedicated to using technology to change the world.

Meico: And so NTEN supports nonprofit organizations all across the world, including in the US to increase their tech capacity to be able to more sustainably fulfill their missions. And so when he is not working, he loves to travel, loves to cook, loves salsa dancing. Though I didn't know this, so I love salsa dancing as well, gaming, and the occasional DIY home project, so maybe he can tell us if he's watching.

Meico: HDTV, and hopefully, as he says, not causing thousands of dollars in property damage along the way. So Jeremy, welcome to the podcast.

Jeremy: Thank you. Thank you, Meico. appreciate that intro. And yes, my intent is to try to keep the damage to a minimum here in the housing that I live in. I'm always learning and it's a great learning experience, but, keeps me on my toes.

Meico: Yes. Well, we appreciate you for that. And, maybe we will see you on an HGTV show sometime soon, you know, showing off what you've done.

Jeremy: That's a lot of pressure. I might be the one that's like, Hey, we came to renovate this person and we're doing the, we're undoing the work that they've done to the house.

Jeremy: Well, they have a show for that too. So they have shows for that. So people who break their homes and need help fixing it together. There it is. There it is.

Meico: So in kicking off our conversation, I'm giving people a brief sketch of who you are, but I like to kick off every conversation by asking us to tell us who you are in your own words.

Meico: So I'll ask you, who is Jeremy Garcia and what do you want people to know who are listening to this? What do you want them to know about you?

Jeremy: Yeah. Yeah. it's not a question I get asked much. And so it's always a difficult thing for me to like, go seek within and then espouse what I am. But I'm happy to try to divulge of what that means. And, and the question of who Jeremy Garcia is. So right off the bat, one of the things, one of the cornerstones of what I, you know, what I feel special about my identity is, I am the child of two Guatemalan immigrants.

Jeremy: Born and raised in the northeast of the US, in Rhode Island specifically. So that's where I was born and where, I lived until I joined the military. And, basically, you know, a person that is very invested in their community thriving. And that doesn't only mean like immigrant community or communities that are specific to my identity, whether it be military background, veteran. Really, I'm a person that seeks out

Jeremy: ways in which I can be of assistance. And that is permeated through the work I do. So at times that's meant, volunteering in my community for folks that are English second language workers with kids in the school system here in Rhode Island. Other times that's just been going up to the food banks and, you know, providing what I can.

Jeremy: But yeah, you know, if I had to distill it into to who I am, just a person that's trying to help out and trying to do the best I can in whatever way I can do it if I can do that.

Meico: Awesome. I love that. So what I'm gathering from this the way I would describe and reflect back to what you shared is, you know, son of immigrants and proud of that experience part of that heritage and a servant leader sounds like you have many different ways in which you have been a servant leader and I love what you said at the end, which is doing the best you can, right, which I think that's all that we can do.

Meico: All we can do is offer the best that we can, so I absolutely appreciate you, for that. Let's talk about the start of your journey, right? So you mentioned being the son of immigrants, can you talk to us about your first real job? However you define real, we're that in quotation marks and that you define what real is for you. But,

Meico: can you remember your first real job? And if so, can you share with the audience what that was?

Jeremy: Yeah, so my mind automatically goes to the military. But before that, I'll just kind of preface it with this. So having been raised in an immigrant household, the notion for my parents was always like, you know, they came here, they worked very working class jobs in factories

here in Rhode Island. And so the thing was always like, we need you to succeed.

Jeremy: We need you to put effort in your schooling and stuff. And I'll just be transparent. I really out of the I have two other siblings out of the three of us. I was the one that was really that great academically. So, I always struggled with that. so they were always pushing on me a little bit harder.

Jeremy: It was always like me getting a little bit. but the general gist there, especially from my father was always like, you need to work hard. When you work hard, you can move forward and you can thrive. And this country will allow you to do that. So I always had that as a cornerstone, which is a common thing in the immigrant kind of upbringing.

Jeremy: So yeah, you know, had retail jobs when I was a thing and learned some stuff there, but post, those jobs, my first real job, I would say was definitely the military. That was where I got a taste of independence. Where I got a taste of really what it means to be working, and in the military standpoint, you know, like a very strict kind of schedule and learning the ins and outs of what it means to be developing as a person in the career.

Jeremy: So I was in the military and the Air Force specifically, for four years, I was a, military police in the Air Force. And so I did that for four years. It's very different than the work I do today. And there's a whole backstory to how that came to be. But, just in short, that's what I did.

Jeremy: I did my four years, but I always knew that the military was a stepping stone for me. It was a catalyst for me to move forward into education when I was going to be complete with that. And, you know, so many folks in the military and through backgrounds like mine. I met so many in the military in the similar kind of notion in that you know, there's not a lot of opportunities for working class immigrant children.

Jeremy: They don't have an excess of funds. They don't have an excess of resources to tap into. And so me being the one that struggled through school, you know, it was a tough spot. My sister was ahead of me, so she was already in college. My parents were supporting her as much they could, but she was also working through it.

Jeremy: And for me, I was just like lost. I was like, I don't really know what I'm gonna do, but I know the military can provide me some level of moving forward. So I went into that kind of like, not knowing fully the

scope of what that entailed. But went into it, but I did know that I could get education that way.

Jeremy: So I completed my four years, did my stint there in the military and then came back out of it, ready to go back to school. And that's exactly what I did.

Meico: Awesome. So you started out in retail,

Jeremy: Yeah.

Meico: And you, it sounds like you worked a variety of retail type jobs. And I think that's a very common experience for lots of folks, at least growing up in the U. S. you know, work in a retail job, lots of first time jobs for lots of folks. And then you end up in the military, in the Air Force, as military police.

Meico: I did not know this. And so this is very interesting to sort of juxtapose that with where you are now. So take us forward to, okay, after you left the military, and you're no longer military police, how did you move from that to where you are now? Tell us what you're doing now, how you're making an impact, and how you got there.

Jeremy: Yeah, great question. So when I left the military, like I said, I was a military police in the military. I knew that was also not going to be my path moving forward. It was, you know, where I ended up in the military, but I knew that wasn't the career I wanted to make for myself so I'll be honest with you, going into the military, having the experience I had in high school and all that I was not really knowing where I was going but I went into the military maybe that can provide some structure I did the four years.

Jeremy: It did provide some skills and capabilities and structure to my life, but leaving it. I had a child got married, came out of the military with all that, but knew I wanted to go back to school. And in that exploration of schooling, I just knew that I wanted to go to school, but I really didn't know what I was going to school for.

Jeremy: So I was still a little bit lost. But I knew that was the route. I knew I wanted to get a degree and I knew that would provide an opportunity for me. So went back to school, and just started just taking courses that interest me, obviously courses that you have to take. But was very, luckily

because I was, I had a VA, support for going through school with the GI bill.

Jeremy: I had a level of lax of exploring things. And it's what I did. It's, it was a place where I just started taking courses and started learning and started taking the opportunity, but with a very, you know, with a very adult focus, you know, I had been four years in the military. I had a child, so I wasn't there really to play games.

Jeremy: I was there to make an opportunity for myself. I was in school for about two years doing like, you know, just the gen ed stuff that everyone does, and seeking out courses that were of interest to me. And then halfway through, through that four year experience at college, I got introduced to AmeriCorps.

Jeremy: So as you mentioned in the intro there, something again that was new to me, I wasn't, I didn't, I wasn't raised with the notion of like, community work and volunteering and all that stuff. That was something that was foreign to me. It was something that was presented to me in college and, I was like, wait, I can like be part of this program and they'll get me into the community.

Jeremy: I can do some service there. So I jumped on it and I was, put into a situation where I was helping ESL children in the, city schools around here in Rhode Island. Try trying to help them with some of that because they're often, you know, situations where those kids fall behind, or academically, because of the language barrier.

Jeremy: So I was put there in a school to, to help mitigate some of that, and to help them, you know, just try to succeed academically. And so that really like opened my eyes. I was like, wait, people do this kind of work and people make careers out of this work. And from that, you know, I was linked with a nonprofit in the community.

Jeremy: And, I, you know, I started talking with the staff there and just telling them about my background. And it was just eyeopening to me, like, wait, you work in a career that lets you be of service. That is actually doing some sort of positive impact in the world. And I was like, that's a thing. How do you, like, how do you do that?

Jeremy: And so that was it. Like, I was hooked. I was like, wait, what do I need to do now? And what do I need to study to start heading in that direction? And so from there, I started seeking out, like nonprofit specific courses that my college did offer to some degree, and just started just

trying to find whatever coursework I could piece together to start, following that path.

Meico: I love what you share about your story in part because I think part of what we're socialized in is that like there's this linear path that we follow and we have to have things all figured out and know where we want to go. And from a very young age, at least here in the U. S. I don't know if this is the same for when you grew up in Guatemala, but in here, folks tell us or ask us from a very early age

Meico: like, what do you want to be when you grow up? Right. And like, the expectation is that, like, you have this big lofty thing that you want to be. And there's like this certainty around it. Like, that's what you're going to be. And then you're going to, you're going to follow this prescribed path in order to get there.

Meico: And what I love about what you shared is that, it sounds

Meico: like you just allowed yourself permission to just sort of, you know, try different things. Right. Yeah. And to figure out what made sense for you. So you want to share more about that?

Jeremy: Yeah, no, I love that reflection and I appreciate you sharing it and I just to be transparent. I also want to say this so I did mention that I did have like a level of freedom with the VA support that I was getting, but I also was a father and that support only goes up to a limit. So there were times where I did feel that crunch, like, Oh my gosh, like I really have to like focus in, or I really have to get it together.

Jeremy: Luckily I came across something that really sparked my interest. But yeah, so there was just that notion of like, I have to move forward. I have to make this work. So there was, there were bouts of pressure there, but, luckily it wasn't this extreme pressure and anxiety to do something where, I, you know, ultimately found a path and was able to strive forward in that direction.

Meico: Okay, so take us forward to where you are now. So you're in program management at NTEN. I think when our paths crossed, you were at NTEN, but you were doing something different. Like, your work has evolved or expanded over time. So why don't we start with one? Why don't you tell us about NTEN first, and then maybe we can talk about how your work has evolved in working with NTEN

Jeremy: Yeah. So what I'll do is I'm just going to push it back a little bit. I get NTEN before my paths cross with NTEN because there was a little bit of how I like it wasn't just like I graduated college and then went into nonprofit work. There was a little bit of like seeking out some stuff there.

Meico: So what happened when I left college, I graduated from the University of Rhode Island moved to the West Coast out to Portland, Oregon area. So I lived on the other side in Washington State, but right in Portland, Oregon area. That's where NTEN pre COVID that's where NTEN was in Portland yes.

Jeremy: Yep. Yep. So that's where they're headquartered. When I got to that area, didn't know much about it was new to the area, was taken there just through life circumstances with, with my partner and my daughter.

Jeremy: And so ended up there was very adamant like I want to do and I knew Portland, at least I had researched it before and knew that it was a big city that provides a lot of resources. There's a lot of nonprofits, that are thriving there. So I knew that and I jumped into the scene and the most natural kind of instinct when I started, to, to the intro's point of doing client services was tapping into like my veteran background.

Jeremy: The AmeriCorps experience was kind of tied to that. So I sought out, the ways that I could get involved with the community of a community that I already knew. So that was a veteran and through discovering that, you know, in Portland, like the, notion of like homelessness amongst veterans is big.

Jeremy: And so I, I got involved with a program there, doing direct service with homeless vets. Trying to get them back into housing, getting them off the streets and back into housing. And so I did that for two years, wasn't my thing. Like I knew I, that was also not going to be my thing, but I also wanted to stay attached to community work.

Jeremy: So took a number of different jobs, between different nonprofits in Portland and so jumped a few places, learned some things. Got involved with some great people continue to grow my network. And then a couple years after being there, I intersected with NTEN and so I can speak to that. So in 2018,

Jeremy: I found out about NTEN just through a job listing. I was at a nonprofit. So but I, you know, it was just a not enough to support myself and my family and where we were going. So I was trying to find another

opportunity that could just pay a little more, but still maintain myself within the nonprofit sphere.

Jeremy: In Portland, there's a great resource, that's called MaxList. That's really like community driven. There's a lot of like nonprofit jobs that get posted there. And so I found NTEN there. I read over what, you know, what the work that they were doing and then what the position entailed. And I was like, wait, I have a skill set that matches this.

Jeremy: So I applied, got to meet with the folks over at NTEN and hit it off. I wasn't sure I was going to get the job, but I hit it off with them. And luckily I did get that position. And, to your point, when we met, so when I first joined NTEN I was, mostly in charge of, like, hosting courses, doing more community based work with the NTEN community.

Jeremy: But really at the forefront of, like, working with faculty and helping host, the courses that NTEN puts on. That's where I started, and it was something new to me, and I'm, I love challenges. Like, I love learning. I love putting myself in positions where it's like, you're gonna have to figure this out.

Jeremy: Like, you have some skills that intersect with this, but you're gonna have to figure this out. So that was very much the thing at NTEN. You know, I had never hosted stuff like at that point specifically as well. Like this is 2018. So this is pre pandemic, like, you know, Zoom and the, we used an Adobe platform at that time was a

Meico: I remember that Adobe

Jeremy: it was definitely a thing, but it wasn't like what it is today. And so with that, you know, I had no kind of experience with like hosting virtual events or doing any kind of like virtual hosting. So I jumped into that and I learned a lot through that, but I mean, where it ended up and where we're at now, like I, we could have none of us on the team could have envisioned like what that reality would be.

Jeremy: But yeah, so I started there. And through that work like got to meet folks like you and other folks that were working with NTEN on the program side of things. Putting on courses for them just again, in line with that notion, bringing in topics that are being of assistance to folks in nonprofits, like those folks that are trying to find their way through the work they're doing, whether it involves tech, whether it involves mindfulness, whether it involves data, you know, so many facets of what makes up a nonprofit professional.

Jeremy: Yeah, so that's where we intersected. But the work I started doing at NTEN

Meico: And can you share more about what you're doing? Are you still focusing on course development and management? Or are there other things that are also part of your portfolio?

Jeremy: Yeah, great question. So since, joining NTEN I have moved up, positions, yeah, through that process. So I started hosting the courses was starting there and then just due to like, you know, staff moving on transitioning to other things, moved up and now I'm a senior program manager.

Jeremy: So where I started was first hosting those courses, working with faculty, where I'm at now is more so like supporting the person that now hosts the courses, now works with faculty. So overseeing some of that. And then I also oversee a program called NTR nonprofit tech readiness is what it stands for. And that is a six month cohort program that NTEN puts on in partnerships with foundations across the country.

Jeremy: And we support, you know, individuals, nonprofit professionals through that cohort to build up their tech capacity skills as they move through it. So they're getting introduced to a variety of topics and they come from a variety of backgrounds as well. They can start, you know, they could be folks that are program coordinators, just starting their nonprofit career all the way to like CEOs, like overseeing an organization and working at that C suite level.

Jeremy: So that's, those are the two kind of facets that I oversee now at NTEN.

Meico: Excellent. So that's just a lot. So something you have your hands full with a lot of things that you all are doing to support the nonprofits that are part of the community. So let me ask you this. So you've done a lot of things. It sounds like, over the course of your career. So from retail to serving in the military, to being an AmeriCorps volunteer and the work that you did with the folks with, you know, ESL in the schools, just serving veterans, the work that you're doing now, and the work that you did even before you got the NTEN. Is there one particular experience or project that stands out to you that you are particularly proud of that you can share with the audience?

Jeremy: Yeah, I mean, there's a lot. There's so many. Yeah, when you ask that question, like two things come to mind and this is not to negate any

of the other organizations that I work for because each one of them I was intentional about each one, each organization that I sought out was always with intention.

Jeremy: It was always with the notion of like, I love the work they're doing and that's what I want to align myself with. So just two of that come to mind. I'll speak about NTEN cause I'm here currently, but going back to my days in Portland. There was a, furniture bank, community furniture bank. I got introduced to them based on the work I was doing with veterans and their whole mission was focused around

Jeremy: providing resources for those folks transitioning from homelessness back into housing. You know, a lot of those folks struggle to pay for furniture, just have basic necessities that they need as themselves or their families need to get started. You know, in their housing, you know, it's like, great you get housing and a lot of these programs provide housing but they don't provide silverware and plates and

Jeremy: if, you know, if there's a child in, in, in that situation, things like beds and frames and all, there's so many things that are needed. And this organization, I got to know through the work I was doing with vets, but eventually sought out a position there because I was, I loved what they were about, met the team there and it was great.

Jeremy: But there was so I jumped on their team on their communications team as a social media manager, but also, you know, this is a very small nonprofit at the time. So a little bit of everything.

Meico: We know everything. Yeah.

Jeremy: Yeah, exactly. That is the theme of nonprofit, right? So I was mostly focused on communications, but at times

Jeremy: was helping with client services, you know, helping folks pick out stuff as they get situated to envision, you know, their new housing. The work I did there was fantastic. You know, I was spreading the word through social media and on their communication channels, but I loved also that not only could I do that, but I could jump into an appointment with the person and help out there and, you know, help folks kind of envision a new reality as they transition from homelessness back into housing.

Jeremy: Or I could jump on the truck and we could go to a place where some local business or some local community member is donating furniture and we bring it back to the warehouse and load it. And, you know, quick turnarounds in those situations there's so many folks in need so you see like, you know, this great kind of furniture set and stuff you bring it back to the warehouse.

Jeremy: Then you see like a little kid and their mother and family like smiling as they know that's their new furniture and they're going to be bringing it home, and it's going to be theirs. So that was, that's a project that I love and is still with me to this day. And then at NTEN. I mean, doing the work at NTEN with where I started with the faculty and doing the program side and doing the virtual kind of hosting events and stuff.

Jeremy: Open my eyes to this reality of like the need in a different, you know, so much of the focus that I had was really community driven, like being in the community, but I didn't realize how much of a need from a tech perspective, like what the need is for folks in their organizations when it involves like, you know, because there's such a lack of resources sometimes that nonprofits, they can't just like upgrade their systems, they can't just, you know, tap into some, you know, maybe CTO or someone at their staff that is allowing them, you know, the mechanisms to like upgrade their systems, like get access to data in the correct way.

Jeremy: And so that, you know, that has effects in other places of the work that gets done. Through that work I learned from faculty members and being exposed to that to those courses, like, oh my gosh, like the questions that folks would ask is like, wait, I thought this was about community work.

Jeremy: Like I thought this was there's like these systems that need to operate at a bigger scale for nonprofits that make them function properly and allow them to do better work. And I had no idea like, you know, so much of my focus was on that. And so it opened my eyes to that. And so, eventually moving up in different positions that NTEN to where I'm at now, like I get to work alongside folks that are in those cohorts that are being exposed.

Jeremy: Sometimes, you know, I'll take the position of like someone that's kind of newer to the nonprofit space. And they're in charge of like maybe revamping systems or get put in charge of. I know there's a term in the tech nonprofit space that. It's used a lot as the accidental techie and, and I was unfamiliar with that term before NTEN but I'm very familiar with it

now in the sense that sometimes, you know, due to staff turnover due to changing focus or whatever,

Jeremy: someone gets in a position where they're like, Hey, you're now in charge of, Hey, you're good with computers. Now you're in charge of data. Now you're in charge of like mitigating our software and all that stuff. And so being able to see someone's trajectory when they come in and they're like, Listen, I am barely holding on.

Jeremy: I am trying to do the best that I can, but I just don't have the resources. And then we can come in and say, Hey, we're going to hook you up with these courses that give you kind of like a general understanding of things that you can do for the work you're doing. Then we're going to hook you up with advisors and we're going to hook you up with the conference.

Jeremy: So our annual conference that NTEN puts on, we're going to get you plugged into that. So you get access to a variety of speakers and sessions that, all in line with this focus in this work. It's again, another project that comes to mind is like something that is transformative in nature. Like I've seen it happen where folks start at a beginning point,

Jeremy: and they're, you know, just deer in the headlights, trying to figure it out. And leave this thing like empowered and ready to move on and implementing systems or just moving ahead in their work in a way that they couldn't even fathom when they first started.

Meico: Absolutely, and one of the things that I love about both of those examples is you described how you were very intentional about each of the organizations that you sought out. And so for folks that are listening that might be in a place where they're trying to figure out, what's next? Sometimes it's not always a clear linear thing, or it's not like a, there's like an edict from on high that comes and you get clarity, but sometimes this is about what's the next intentional step that I can take and taking that next step.

Meico: And so I love that approach and how that led you to being able to serve in two awesome roles, but also in doing work that it sounds like animates you, even still today. So I think that is so wonderful. And I think it's a great segue into my next question, which is really about how you balance all this with life outside of work and your professional identity.

Meico: You know, often when we do conversations like this and people are posting on their personal social media, people are posting and talking

about the highlights, right? But we know that life isn't just about the highlights, that there's stuff in between. that happens, right? And not every day is, quote unquote, a good day.

Meico: And I'm curious, for you, you know, is there a practice or a set of practices that you engage in to stay inspired, to stay motivated, especially when, you know, you have some days that, you know, it's not necessarily the best day, right? And how, you know, how do you take care of yourself when those days happen?

Jeremy: Yeah. Yeah. No, it's that's a fantastic question. I think that's a question that gets overlooked in a lot of work places. A lot of work environments in the nonprofit space. I think it's a it's becoming more popular now, but it's still a place that is overlooked. And I believe it's very important. So it's kind of changed.

Jeremy: Yeah, for myself. I'll just answer this for myself and that it's changed over time. And so when I first started my trajectory in the nonprofit space. One of the things that really grounded me was not only being intentional about my work, but being intentional about the things I do outside of work. And tapping into those personal joys.

Jeremy: At the time, my daughter was, she's a teenager now, but she was much younger back then. And tapping into the things, her interest, exploring a new place that was the Pacific Northwest to me, to my daughter, to my partner. These things were, you know, things that, allowed us to be inspired, but also like to continue, like, you know, on those days that where you just had a rough day, like I remember working with veterans and someone was in, in crisis and you would get those phone calls and, you know, it kind of derails your day and you're like, oh my gosh, like it puts a whole bunch of weight of anxiety and stress on you.

Jeremy: And it's like, how do you detach from that? And everyone has their own particular way of handling it. But for me, it was always finding solace in my family and doing the things that, that I find of interest. So those are things like, like you mentioned at the top of the show, traveling, exploring, being with my child, cooking, dancing, all of those things, tapping into my personal hobbies and really making them as important as the work I was doing.

Jeremy: I think that's, you know, in American culture, I'll just say to this, because I grew up here as well, in the sense that there is such an emphasis on just doing the work. Getting to do good work and making

sure you're but not as much focus is put on like what makes you a person and the personal things that bring you to life.

Jeremy: And so for me it was always like keeping that balance with those things as well never like letting them go by the wayside, even though work is so much of your time so much of your day. So that was one thing. And you know, as I've aged and as I've gotten older and my child has gotten older,

Jeremy: those things have shifted. So now for me, for what was once like, Hey, I can go play, you know, with my kid's toys and we can make up a story and let's, those things are not so viable. My, my teenager's interested in other things these days. And so for me, like one way that I decompress now is like going to the gym.

Jeremy: We have access to a sauna there. So having that time, like specifying some time in the week between my partner and all the things that make up a busy, you know, working parents life. Making that time again to be intentional, but like, Hey, I'm going to go here. This is going to be a me time for like an hour and being very deliberate with that time.

Jeremy: And so that is another way, like just one of the facets that I use now, where I go to the gym, zone out, put my music on. Sometimes I'm thinking about like dancing. Other times, I'm thinking about like, Hey, this is just me in the moment right now. I need to like, let go of what happened at work today.

Jeremy: And then when I go on that sauna as well, like another time, and I actually do like meditation as well. So in the sauna, I meditate and that's like a solid 10 to 15 minutes of just time to not think about anything if I can. Even in those practices, things come in, they pop into your head and being okay with that, letting it happen, letting it flow through you and then, and just kind of working through it.

Jeremy: So that, that's kind of how it should take shape for me for now.

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 That's 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.

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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 That's mindfulchangemaker.org/books

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

Part Two

Meico: I think it's so important for people to hear from what I describe as everyday changemakers and you know, not just like the talking point or like the highlight, but like how you're actually doing it and like what the

nitty gritty looks like. And so there are two things that really stand out to me in terms of, what you shared.

Meico: Like you talked about. you know, finding those personal joys and, talking about how that has evolved based on the season of life that you find yourself in. Right. And so I think one of the most important things I can share with folks that are listening is that, what worked for you or what's working for you now, can change and that's okay.

Meico: Right? So sometimes you come back to it. Sometimes you modify, but it depends on where you are in life and that can change. And so I think that's so important and something else that really stood out to me in terms of how you describe. how you prioritize the self care aspect of it is you said that you make it just as important as the work. Right? And so I think a lot of us struggle with that, especially in the changemaking space. So I'm wondering if you can share, particularly because you say that, you know, there's a particular challenge as a working parent and making this happen. One of the most frequent retorts that I hear is that, well, I just have so many things going on, like I have a kid, I have an aging parent that I'm taking care of, and so on and so forth, like I just don't have time to do X, Y, and Z to take care of myself.

Meico: What do you say to those folks that find themselves in that kind of situation?

Jeremy: Yeah, it's, you know, it's, I wish I could come on here and advocate that it's a one size fits all. I know that through my experience, I'm very aware now that what works for me may not work for others, but all I can do is espouse my truth and espouse like what has worked for me and hopefully that can glean some information and some gems for someone else.

Jeremy: So I will tap back into just the notion like early on in my career, having access to folks that were, you know, so my background is not in social work or client services or any of that, but I, in doing the work I did had access to folks that were, you know, clinical social workers or licensed social workers, mental health experts, therapists, in that trajectory also got aware of mindfulness and meditation and these tactics.

Jeremy: And so for me, it was like being, you know, that same intention that I'm talking about also being intentional because I realized very early on, like, this is the type of work, and I'm sure other folks will resonate with this that are listening to this in the nonprofit space. It'll take all of you, and it can take all of you if you let it.

Jeremy: And that does that doesn't provide for an effective person on the other side. You know, for folks that are interested in doing, meaningful work that's making a positive contribution in the world. It is also taxing. It's hard. And so tapping into those folks that I had by my side, either working directly or had access to listening to things that they would convey to me.

Jeremy: Hey, you may want to seek out services and X regard. Hey, you may want to do these mindful mindfulness things. and so being very open to things like that, was super beneficial. And then to the notion of just like, I'm sure people are saying like the resonance of like working parents right to your point.

Jeremy: There are so many things happening you're taking your kids shuffling them through here you got to pick them up drop them off. I got to make dinner I got to, you know, all these things are true for myself as well. But I'll just harp back to what I was mentioning before with like the different things that I've done throughout my career in my life with,

Jeremy: finding those balances is like just really being intentional about carving out that space because again, similar to the work, right? Folks will come for you for needs that are that need to happen at the work and the work that needs to happen at the organization. And let's just if we've put an analogy kind of like to, work working week in a team structure where it's like, Hey, you can't be available for like eight hours of your day to everyone else because then you'll never get work done.

Jeremy: Right. So for me, like one intentional notion is like carving out space on your calendar just to block like, Hey, for this hour, I'm going to go walk or for this hour, I'm not taking any meetings or for this chunk of time in my week, I'm not going to do X and X. I need me time. And so in that similar notion, like in my personal life, it's also that being very intentional with my partner and with my children and saying, Hey, dad's gonna go do this for like an hour, and this is what I'm going to do.

Jeremy: And how can we make sure that's happening and vice versa. So for my partner same thing for my child same thing like making sure we are all having those opportunities to, you know, be intentional about our time and so for me, that is one way that I facilitate that like, I know I don't have a lot of time.

Jeremy: But I know I can at least like, and it can start small sometimes. It's like, I know I can carve out at least one hour in a seven day week where I can just have some me time. And that might be a Saturday morning at 7am, or that might be a Thursday evening after a dinner at like 7pm. But

I'm going to make that time and I'm going to go step out and have that moment to go to the gym or go have that moment to go to the sauna, or, I mean, before, during pandemic times and stuff like it kind of

Jeremy: created a flux, but like salsa dancing was one of those things for me. It was a release that was it was so joyful, so fun. And so that was one of those things where it's like, listen, most working parents are not going to tell you, Hey, I'm out tango dancing or I'm out salsa dancing, but it was one of those things that I love in my own personal life.

Jeremy: I love culturally from where I come from. And so that was one thing that I was like, I'm going to make space to do this. And I will, even if it's just for one hour in my week, I'm going to, I'm going to really be deliberate about bringing this in. so yeah, just intention again.

Meico: Yes, I love that. So that there's so many powerful things in what you shared. So I'm just gonna reflect back what I'm hearing, which is, part of it is, you know, this intentionality or just being deliberate and saying, like, I'm identifying this need, and I'm going to make space for this. And what I also heard you say is with the network of folks that have these different types of expertise, it sounds like you have a community that you are forming or that you've tapped into, right?

Meico: And you're asking for help, right? So like you, you're being intentional, but then you're saying, Hey, I need help. And you're seeking out community to get that help. And then you're taking the small moments, however they come. And then it sounds like, cause you gave the example of your wife, which is that, you know, you all take turns, right?

Meico: So it sounds like not only are you asking for support, but you're also giving support to someone else to be able to help them be able to do that. So for folks that are listening, I hope that you're taking away these nuggets because I think it's very powerful and very doable for many of us. And the final thing I'll say is that you mentioned starting small and you talked about how the one hour a week is something that is something that can really work for you.

Meico: And that's your definition of small right? For folks that are listening, I imagine some folks might be thinking, you know, one hour sounds like a lot, right? So what if you broke that up and what if you're like, okay, let me start with two minutes or five minutes of joy, whatever it looks like for you in that day.

Meico: And I'm going to give the example that on days like this, where I have full days, I'm not able to do a full workout always, right? And so I have learned to find, you know, okay, what is the five minute version or the 10 minute version that is going to be good enough? Right that I can check off and that five or ten minute workout in my mind.

Meico: It's just as good and it's an accomplishment worth celebrating just like when I'm able to do A workout that's 25 or 30 minutes or even more, right? And so I appreciate you sharing. Is there anything else you want to share in terms of personal practice for taking care of yourself and making space?

Jeremy: Yeah, you just sparked something with me with the time notion of what you're mentioning. I'll just harp on to when I started with like meditation stuff. I remember like when someone advocated like, Hey, you may want to try this out. And I knew what it was, but I had never done it before. And so I was like Googling and YouTubing like meditation.

Jeremy: And if you go on YouTube and Google meditation, you could see things for like, an hour, six hour meditation. I'm like, wait, I'm not, I can't do all that. And it's like, you're supposed to sit with yourself for that amount of time. And that just didn't resonate with me. And so I was, it was to your point, one of those things that I broke down and I was like, I found a resource where it was like, Hey, if you can just do this for a minute, 30 seconds of your time, just keying into yourself,

Jeremy: being mindful for this amount of, it can reverberate and have impact in your life. And I didn't want to believe it at first. I was like, I'm not so sure about that. And I remember the first one I ever did was 30 seconds. It was like for 30 seconds, just be calm, quiet, breathe in, breathe out. And it was the breathing exercise that really got me because I sat there and listened.

Jeremy: It was an audio meditation. I sat there, found a space where I could just be alone for 30 seconds, did the breathing exercise. And I literally felt the visceral feeling of like, Oh my gosh, like I do. I feel a sense of calm. And so that I was like, wait, you could do that in 30 seconds. And so it pushed me to like, seek it out a little more.

Jeremy: Okay, let me try a minute. Let me try two minutes. And so now like my standard practice is kind of like 10 to 15 minutes in the sauna. I'll just sit there and it didn't start that way, but I found that 30 seconds that I could have the same impact that I have at 15 minutes and to the point you raised again, it's like, I don't have those 15 minutes every day.

Jeremy: So I know, even at my most resourceful if I have to just do it for 30 seconds, I can step outside my into my backyard and say, just going to sit here for 30 seconds and just breathe in, breathe out and that's going to be it for the day that's going to, that's all I have. And that is sufficient for this day because not every day is going to look the same.

Jeremy: Yes, and all of those 30 seconds actually add up right in terms of time. Yes, in terms of like they add up in terms of time and in terms of a finite measurable metric. Right. But they also add up in terms of impact.

Jeremy: Yeah.

Meico: And so I appreciate you sharing it. So for folks, whatever your practices, whether it's meditation or, you know, sitting with your dog or your cat or spending time with your kids, whatever that is, Find out what the smallest version of that is for you.

Meico: If you're having a hard time getting started committing, and to your point, being intentional about it and being, deliberate about it. So

Jeremy: Yeah.

Meico: appreciate you sharing that. So I want to shift gears a little bit and talk a little bit about the work that we've done together. You mentioned, when you first started at NTEN, like you were really, sort of,

Meico: deep into the course management and development and managing the faculty. I think that is where our paths intersected. I think I've, done a few courses. So primarily on work life, the theme of work life balance. And on mindful leadership or what I'm now calling mindful changemaking, done presentations at the annual conference the NTC Non Profit Tech Conference and also been a member of the Board as well.

Meico: I'm curious. if you could just maybe speak to because you sat in on the courses you and I communicated in terms of setting things up and going back and forth about getting materials and that kind of thing. Can you speak to the impact of the, you know, the courses that we've done through Mindful Techie with NTEN for you and also for the folks that are participating in those courses.

Jeremy: Yeah, no, absolutely. When I came on board back in 2018 again, I think I mentioned it earlier and we were hinting at it earlier where it was this notion that mindfulness and work life balance these were terms are

starting to come up in like popular media and the news like. People starting to get a grasp, like, Hey, there are so many folks that are just stressed out overworking, not taking PTO.

Jeremy: Like, what is the answer for these things? What, how do we come to some sort of like answers for this? And in that notion, you know, things around meditation and movement and work life balance started to become popular. So I, right around that time when I joined, I remember not soon after, I don't know how the process started, but you were brought on board to speak specifically to work life balance.

Jeremy: And to me, I was getting acquainted with that world around mindfulness and work life balance, but was still learning myself. And so to me when I when I learned about your background and who you were in the topic that you would be instructing on. I personally got excited. I was like, listen, this is this to me is like a topic that is criminally not talked about enough.

Jeremy: And it needs its spotlight. It needs its space alongside all of the other things that are important in nonprofit work. And so when you've hosted that course, like I mentioned, it was focused around work life balance and you providing tips, resources, mechanisms for folks to really seek it out and practice it.

Jeremy: So that was right up my alley and just on the notion of like the impact that had is like for folks in the NTEN community. You know, it's common for folks to really get attached to the more tangible things that makes sense, right? Like data management, systems change, CRMs, like talking all this kind of like tech talk.

Jeremy: Those are common places. But when you say work life balance, mindfulness, meditation, they're like, I don't know about all that. Like, I don't need that. But to me, it's like, no, speaking about, you know, being deliberate intention is like those things all require your attention. They are require people to be deliberate to be active in how you're managing all that.

Jeremy: And equally around all those things that we do for work in the systems that we navigate and you are also a part of that. And, you know, folks don't look at that as part of the function. And to me, like, I'm just a big fan of it. So I remember and when we started working together in that capacity, like seeing folks be hesitant, like in our community was very kind of like hesitant for folks to join in on that kind of stuff.

Jeremy: But a few folks would and they would come into the course. And while I didn't see them face to face or person to person, I was seeing them through virtual engagement. I was seeing the responses that they were providing through the homework submissions that you would provide or through the live event that you would put on and folks would be like.

Jeremy: Oh, my gosh, like I feel a sense of relief. I never even thought of that. Like, I never thought of like, Hey, maybe I should be looking into some tactics around mindfulness or like detaching from my work and doing practices around that. And so to me, I was like, Okay, this does this does hit a chord like this is important.

Jeremy: And then eventually you brought on another course. And, you know, aimed in the same thing around mindfulness, but for folks that are maybe more senior level at the organization. And again, seeing the same thing, folks coming into the course and they may come in with a level of hesitation or just like, I don't know.

Jeremy: And they come in, they hear you speak, they hear about that some of the resources you provide and the tactics you provide. And I remember on like homework assignments, like folks being real deliberate about like, I think there's a question you ask around like. Hey, what is your, what is some time you're going to put aside to, to focus in on just you or something along that line.

Jeremy: And folks really like honing in and I say, I never even like explored this. I never even thought to do this. and you just being a catalyst or those tactics, just being a catalyst for someone to also think about themselves and also, you know, just keep mindfulness and awareness of oneself, as a priority as well.

Jeremy: Really like. Every time one of your courses comes up, I'm always keen to see what folks's responses are. And I've seen it time and time again, like those same level of just someone not coming in and understanding this and then leaving and like, Hey, now I have like an action plan. Now I have like some tactics that I can use,

Jeremy: to facilitate in my own work, and I'm gonna try to do it. And unfortunately, like I don't get to see the six months down the line if they're still doing it, but just the notion of it being a topic for them to explore and a topic to be brought to their attention, I think is vital and very important.

Meico: And I appreciate you sharing that. I do want to wrap us up for this in this last segment. But is there anything else you want to share about

the courses of the work that we've done together? That, that you want to share with the folks that are listening?

Jeremy: Yeah, I would just say if you have not checked out one of Meico's courses, go to the NTEN course catalog, sign yourself up if this is a topic of interest or maybe a topic that you're not, haven't explored. Sign up for it. Let us know, like, please provide your feedback after, because I think you'll learn some great resources coming out of those courses.

Meico: Well, awesome. I appreciate that. And I would welcome anyone that wants to take one of the courses. And also NTEN has a whole range of courses that complement the work that we're doing. Obviously, we're talking about, mindful leadership and, work life balance, but there's a whole range of courses for folks in the nonprofit space, especially when it comes to the tech piece, for folks that are interested, and to your point, what I love about the work that NTEN is doing is that no matter where you are in your organization, right, so you don't have to be a techie, quote unquote, right? But if you have a desire and a willingness, to learn, there's opportunities there, there, there are tons of scholarships and other things. And I love also that you all tried to make sure that the barrier to entry is as low as possible for folks that want to participate.

Meico: Like, I feel like if you want to be a part of the community, if you want to take a course, if you want to participate in one of the programs, the team is going to work with you to figure out how to make that happen, no matter where you're in terms of resources. So I appreciate that. So in terms of how you're making an impact in the world and how you have any impact in the world, like you've done a wide range of things and you've been intentional about how you've done that for folks that are listening and they are asking themselves the questions, you know, how can I make an impact or how can I show up in the same way professionally or do something similar for my career path?

Meico: What advice do you have for folks that are listening?

Jeremy: Yeah, that's a great question. And I've seen it manifest in many different ways, but for myself, I guess I would say, which has been a theme kind of for this call is intention and being deliberate and doing that with yourself. Right. So the, you know, seeking within and, you know, just discovering the things that bring you alive, the things that bring your interest.

Jeremy: What are those things? There may be themes there. So for myself, one thing that was key to me, in my education post military was

being of service. And I didn't know opportunities. I didn't know the way to get to that. Eventually, I found it. And I stuck with it because it was something that rings true to who I am. And giving myself that time to, to really like seek that out and being deliberate in that notion allowed me to take the opportunities that I have allowed me to connect with the folks that are in my community and my network, and have allowed me to do the work that I do.

Jeremy: And so for me, like, you know, we, we get so wrapped up in finding the right career path, making sure we're, you know, doing the right things but don't forget yourself in that equation. Tap in wherever and however you can to those things that bring you most alive. And I know for a lot of my folks in the nonprofit space like these themes are not foreign.

Jeremy: And that's what brings you to this work but really like. space to, to seek within and making sure that the same effort you're giving to your work, to your family, to, to all other places in the world, make sure you're giving that same attention to yourself. And you'd be surprised where that can take you.

Jeremy: It's taken me to places I never could have thought of and I continue to do it. So that would be it.

Meico: Awesome. Well, thank you for that. So you heard it directly from Jeremy. Making space to reflect on what, you know, animates you, what brings you alive and being intentional about following whatever that is and making time for yourself just as important as the time that you spend on your work. Such a beautiful way to describe this journey and hopefully it resonates with folks that are listening today.

Meico: For folks that are interested in learning more about you and staying connected, where can they go to do that?

Jeremy: Yeah. So for my work, NTEN. org, you can find more about the work that I do there at NTEN and the multiple folks that work alongside me, to do that work. LinkedIn would probably be the best place. So if you just search Jeremy Garcia NTEN, on LinkedIn, you can connect with me there. you know, try to be as active as I can with connecting with folks there and, yeah, and just maintaining a network there with, seeking out other folks and, in the world of folks that are compassionate and seeking out meaningful careers and in the space of the nonprofit world.

Jeremy: Feel free to connect with me there as well.

Meico: Awesome. well, Jeremy, thank you so much for an amazing conversation. And for the folks that are listening, we look forward to having you on the next episode.

Jeremy: Awesome. Thank you so much, everyone.

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 Again, that's mindfulchangemaker.org/retreat 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.

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Outro

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Meico: It's 100 percent free when you join at mindfulchangemaker.org/join Again, that's mindfulchangemaker.org/join

Until next time, I'm Meico Marquette Whitlock. Take it one intentional moment at a time.