

DEAR MINDFUL CHANGEMAKER,



HOSTED BY
MEICO MARQUETTE WHITLOCK



Dear Mindful Changemaker Podcast

Episode Two – Lynette Aytch 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: Joining me is none other than Lynette Atch. And she is a early childhood professional committed to the healthy development, care, and education of young children. Particularly the most vulnerable children.

And currently she serves as the Director of the Leadership Development Institute at Zero to Three.

Meico: And in that role she leads the Zero to Three Fellowship Program, the Infant and Early Childhood Emerging Leadership Awards, and the Academy of Zero to Three Fellows.

Meico: And, she has degrees from all over. I can't go through the entire list. but I want to tell you about what she actually does outside of her work as a changemaker. She enjoys walking, enjoys biking, the arts, and is particularly fond of contemporary dance and theater. And I know that we have had a chance to actually, go to theater together.

Meico: I think it was an August Wilson show, I think, in, in the D. C. area. I'm excited to... welcome, Lynette, to this conversation. Lynette, welcome to the podcast.

Lynette: Oh, thank you so much, Meico, for having me. I'm excited to be a part of this effort and to celebrate the work that you do and share how it has impacted me and the work that I do.

Meico: Awesome. Well, I'm excited that you are here, and I've shared a little bit with the audience about who you are, giving them the briefs of official, you know, biosketch to talking points, if you will. But I really love to kick off these conversations by having folks tell us in their own words who they are.

Meico: So I'm gonna ask you this question. So who is Lynette, and what do you really want people who are listening to know about you?

Lynette: You know, I love that question. And I have to say that the thing that comes to mind first to me about who I am is really where I come from, my roots. And I want to share this little snippet from, I know many people may have heard of, you know, they're invited to write what's called an I Am Poem, and it's not really a poem, it's a reflection.

Lynette: But these first two little paragraphs, I think really reflect who I am and where I come from. So I want to share that with you, if you don't mind.

Meico: Alright.

Lynette: So it says, I am from deep Southern roots. Sprouting in red clay, dirt. Hot summers with sun drenched thunderstorms, tempered winters

with rare snow. I am the first born of two ambitious recently minted college graduates.

Lynette: One, the youngest of five boys, all college educated, born to a farmer and a domestic worker. The other, the next to the youngest of eight born to a domestic worker and a father unnamed. And the first in her entire family legacy to earn a college degree. I am from a red brick house in the heart of a segregated neighborhood. Felt like a cocoon, so safe and insulated, hardly ever saw a white person.

Lynette: Almost never a police officer. Kids played outside, untethered. Free to play kickball, ride bikes, jump rope, hide and go seek, hang out until the streetlights came on. That to me, captures that part of me that is still very much who I am. Now, I'm also a mom. You know, I'm a grand, a new, relatively new grandma. And, a professional, an early, a person committed to early childhood. But that really shows, that really reflects, I think, who I am at my core.

Meico: Well, awesome. Well, thank you so much for sharing something that is, you know, so intimate, about who you are with us and with the audience. And it's obvious that you have deep roots, you are aware of and connected to those roots. And I'm interested to see how that carries through the rest of our conversation.

Meico: So with that, you talked about where you started from, and, you talked a little bit about your parents and your family of origin. I love to ask people when we talk about how you entered the professional world, people about their first real job ever. So however you define real, whatever that means for you, we can put that in quotation marks, but I'm wondering if you can take us back, if you can remember your first real job ever and what that was.

Lynette: That is, it's kind of funny to me because it is so connected to this introduction because of where I'm from. Because literally about a half a mile from my house, was, a Howard Johnson's hotel and restaurant. So you have to be pretty mature to remember Howard Johnson's. And they were really known, their restaurant was really known as a place for families to come and eat, but it was also known for having like over 20 flavors of ice cream.

Meico: And so that I got I believe in the 11th grade and I worked there, the 11th and 12th grade as a waitress, and I'll never forget I made enough money to buy myself now I just said we had very tepid weathers in

Shreveport, Louisiana, but I went and bought myself a winter coat that was a. Oh gosh, it was like a purple leather

Lynette: coat with fake fur around the wrist and around the neck. And I was so proud of that coat. But that was my first, that was my first real job where I earned enough money to like buy something that I really wanted.

Meico: And it sounds like you are very fashionable too.

Lynette: I would not want to see that fashion today, but it was fashionable in the moment and not many kids had a leather coat.

Meico: Okay. So first real job as a waitress in a serving capacity and made enough to be really fashionable for the time. Okay, so we have an anchor in terms of starting point. You've given us where you grew up and you've given us a little bit of a milestone in terms of your first job. I want to fast forward as to where you are now, and I want to ask you about what you're doing now. But I want to ask it this way.

Meico: So I want to ask you how are you currently making an impact in the world professionally right now? How would you describe the impact?

Lynette: Well, you know, I'm going to take a little bit of a left turn and bring us to that because I, well, you know, Howard Johnson's was my first job. The why of why I do the early childhood work is my youngest sister, Nico. So Nico was born when I was 13. And I will just say my parents always treated me like a little grown up like my mom in particular and so I was just totally enthralled with this baby from the very beginning. And at two years old, my, the image in my mind, because I did spend a lot of time with her, is that she would be, she loved to be outside and run around and play, and it was my job to watch her.

Lynette: And I noticed that she occasionally like stop for what looked like kind of freeze. And then start to run again, start to play again. Well, what we ultimately learned that was the beginning of a seizure disorder. It was what's called petite mal seizures. That's how it showed up and eventually evolved to a very serious seizure disorder, which had significant implications from the pruning codes cognitive development,

Lynette: which she also had multiple very complex medical issues, and it was the beginning of a really challenging and difficult journey for my family. And as a little Black girl born in the, in Shreveport in the South in, you know, the, early 70s, it was so hard to find support services for her,

good medical care. She kept getting kicked out of preschool like nursery school because of the developmental and behavioral implications of a severe seizure disorder.

Lynette: The impact had on my family was, it's was significant. I do believe that was the beginning of my commitment and care, thinking about the importance of early childhood development, what it, what families need. And, interestingly, the little quick story is in the 12th grade, I had an English teacher who invited us to write ourselves a letter that he would mail to us in four years.

Lynette: And I recall vividly that I wrote in that letter that I wanted to go to college. I was going to major in psychology or social work. And I wanted to work with children and with children with special needs, and their families. And so it was already in my head and in my heart as a high school senior, and I did go to college and I majored in psychology, and my degree is in school psychology with the focus on young children, really kind of birth to three.

Lynette: And so yeah, that's how I came to do this work.

Meico: So let me ask you, I have two questions. So I just want to, in terms of anchoring this, do you remember around what age, was it Nico received the diagnosis where you were able to actually be, you all actually knew what, what was happening?

Lynette: I would say probably another around three or four, maybe I know that I have a clear recollection that she went to a little church based preschool program because both my parents were teachers. And both work, and she got kicked out of preschool, multiple times, and was once it was time for her to go to like elementary school I think that's when a diagnosis, probably happens because the seizure disorder.

Lynette: First of all, they were not controlled and there's a whole lineage of stories around over medicated, you know, not getting good medical care, being misdiagnosed, never really having the appropriate support services, both for her and the family. But I would say certainly by the time she was in elementary school early, there was a diagnosis that she was a child with special needs and that her seizures were very, they were not managed well.

Lynette: So that was also a real challenge in the school setting.

Meico: I appreciate you sharing that. And, you know, one of the things that I talk about in the work with changemakers is that we all have a, we all have something that brings us to the work that we do, right? We all have a why. And for some of us, that why is actually rooted in some type of trauma, right?

Meico: Whether it's primary or secondary trauma that actually brings us to the work and inspires us to do the work. And so with that, I'm curious, can you say more about your day to day work that you're doing right now with Zero to Three? I know that we talked about sort of the titles that you wear and the programs you head but can you tell us a little bit about, what you do and what's the connection between that work and why you started doing this work?

Meico: You know, your sister?

Lynette: Yeah, well, I will just say that Nico is the inspiration of all that I do and she is ever present in my heart and mind. What I do now, though, takes me a little bit away from my initial motivation to do this work, which is inspired by my own family's struggles and

Lynette: challenges in providing for Nico was my work as a school psychologist.

Lynette: So that's my training. And initially, early on in my career, I worked as a school psychologist in Camden City, New Jersey, with children really from three to six, five or six. New Jersey was one of the few states that had early intervention programs for young children. And so that was where I started this work. Was then a break in my professional career because my own daughter or his daughter has some medical conditions, which includes a seizure disorder.

Lynette: But when I went back to, so I was out of the workforce for a while, came back and really did a postdoc fellowship program that got me back and really kind of more the academic sphere of early childhood, the professional development sphere of early childhood, and with Zero to Three, the leadership development

Lynette: sphere of early childhood. So what is so beautiful about, well, what I do now, while I'm not in direct service, I get to really work with early and mid career professionals from across the country and around the world, our fellowship is international, who themselves are committed to the health and well being of infants, young children, and families.

Lynette: And are doing a broad diversity of work across this country and abroad, and really striving. The best way to succinctly articulate it is to make the world a better place for young children, and those who love and care for them.

Meico: I love that. And, you know, this is a podcast for changemakers, so everyone who's listening has some connection to this, commitment to making the world a better place. And I love that you are focused on our young people. So let me ask you this, so you have, over the course of your career, it sounds like you've worked on different aspects of this particular issue.

Meico: I'm including in your personal life, up close and personal, and is there one particular aspect of your work that really stands out to you in terms of something that you're really proud of, that you could share with the audience?

Lynette: Well, the thing that comes to mind for me, kind of first is I think what we have been able to accomplish over the arc of my time at Zero to Three in particular. As it is in that work that I, my scope of work was specifically focused on the, kind of both recruitment and engagement of a class. of early and mid career professionals.

Lynette: And when I say early career, that means people who have been in the field for, you know, no less than five years, but no more than 10. And then mid career is considered to be 10 to like 15 years in the field. When I came to Zero to Three, the fellowship program was actually a legacy program.

Lynette: It had been going on since the early 1980s. But it had been a very select and very, how would I describe, a very select audience that, so forth, that really lacked the diversity of the field. It was

Lynette: created really as a mentorship program for those who were primarily Board Members or leading or, leaders in, In the infant and early childhood development and mental health field.

Lynette: A lot of those people were PhDs and MDs. And they were predominantly male and predominantly white. That was really in the field. And over the arc of time when I came on, there, I will say, after two years in, because I had come from a prior position, a position where, in an organization where issues of diversity and equity and inclusion were a significant part

Lynette: of an overall scope of work. And I just felt that, you know, look, psychiatrists, psychologists, pediatricians are great and important, but there is a broad, diverse community of professionals out there working in service to young children and families. And

Meico: Can you give us an example of what you mean by that?

Lynette: So there are people who are by no means just with terminal degrees and just in academic settings, or even medical settings.

Lynette: There are people who are doing direct services and providing their social workers and psychologists who work directly with children and families in community based clinics and schools and other programs and services and supports. There are people who are working, particularly in communities that have been historically underserved and marginalized in some way, in terms of having access to high quality services and support.

Lynette: And there are people, whom, for whom there, I talk about this idea that leadership is about leading from where you are. You do not have to be in senior and executive positions to be identified as, or as a leader. You can lead in whatever, what I call, whatever is your sphere of influence. And if you're not, if that is

Lynette: the person who is working in a direct service context like a child care center, for example, or child care program. And you can be a teacher, you don't have to be the director. Two things that and I am will acknowledge and appreciate the fact that Zero to Three was actually willing to stop and pause the fellowship for a year.

Lynette: And we engaged a really broad, broad diversity of people both inside and external to the organization to really rethink, reconceptualize this, fellowship program in a way that was much more inclusive in how it articulated and defined this idea of leadership. And one of the things that I am most proud of in this work,

Lynette: is that over the arc of time we stopped and took a year off, I think in 19 and oh my 2013, re started in 2014. And since then, each class is more diverse as broadly defined as it has ever been in the history of the program. So the absolute commitment to ensuring that we identify and select a broad diversity of people,

Lynette: to be fellows in this program is something that I am most proud of. And the organization recognizes the importance of that and how it just

enriches not only the experience for fellows. But it enriches and expands the network of connections of the organization.

Meico: Yes, and I absolutely love that. And, you know, in my work, working with the fellows, one of the things that always struck me was how international the group is. Can you talk very briefly about that? And has that always been the case? And if not, how did that come to be that you have folks, not just from the US, but you have folks from all over the world, literally, who are part of this program?

Lynette: That is, that's a good question and I don't want to say for sure that it wasn't international before we stopped and did the reconceptualization of the program. But if it was very limited. in terms of the number I, as I'm thinking back, I think there were actually a few, fellows who had, who were international before we did the reconceptualization. However, since, 2014, the number of international applicants has just expanded significantly.

Lynette: I think in this. 2022 24 class, which is our newest current, fellowship class. I believe we had applicants from 22 countries. That is certainly the highest number since I have been in this role. And I think there are two reasons why. I think around the world, this commitment and the importance of early intervention of supporting children and families early, because our focus infants, toddlers, and young children up to five some aspects of our work but we're at predominantly focused around infants and toddlers is that there's a growing recognition of the importance

Lynette: of the earliest years. It is really in the earliest years that we have the most brain development. That it lays the foundation for our, for children's, development and success as they grow and mature. These are critically important, period of time, not only for just development. But for the relationships that are established between an infant and those and their parents and those who love and care for them. So it's a critically important issue that is becoming even that people are more and more aware of internationally, as well as across this country.

Lynette: And I believe there are lots of places. Where this is still very much, it's very early in its development and so Zero to Three is really the only fellowship program that I'm aware of, both here in the country and around the world that is specifically focused on those earliest years. And, with a focus on engaging and supporting the growth and development of early and mid career professionals.

Meico: Okay, so I have one more question for you on this and then I want to shift gears a bit and talk about how you are taking care of yourself in the midst of all of this, but so can you talk to us a little bit very briefly about how you all ensure that there's equitable access to this type of resource. So for example, is this something where a person who applies has to pay for this?

Meico: Is it funded through an external source? How do you ensure that to your point about diversity, that as many diverse folks as possible have access to this wonderful opportunity that you all are making available?

Lynette: That's a great question. And I will tell you, so there's two parts to that and to my answer. So the first part that I believe has made the biggest impact is we explicitly in all of our communications state our absolute commitment to a broad diversity of fellows and applicants as an absolute, importance and core value of this program.

Lynette: So we repeatedly, throughout the outreach process and the application process and the interview process, we explicitly express our commitment to engaging a broad class that is broadly diverse, in, in every aspect of a person. Both their identity, their, area of expertise, their professional, development into their degree.

Lynette: We are not, by any means, if you got a bachelor's degree and you got two PhDs, you're still going to be evaluated we want to use the you're going to be reviewed and the same kind of way. We want this broad diversity. So we have explicitly said that in all of our communications. And I absolutely believe that has been very impactful.

Meico: Yes.

Lynette: People will say to me still I never imagined I could be a fellow, and they are. The other part of that is your other part of your question. Is that the fellowship is offered at no cost to all of our US based fellows. So we are funded by foundational funding, and the organization also supports the fellowship.

Lynette: And those fellows from the United States do not have to pay any expense. There are no costs to them. Zero to Three covers all of the fellowship expenses. However, because we don't have unlimited funding, we, ask that international fellows be willing to cover their travel from their country of origin to the least expensive destination in the US.

Lynette: So for example,

Meico: Okay.

Lynette: we have had and have a fellow from Perth, Australia. We've had last class we had a fellow from Ghana. So we asked them to fly to the US. And then we cover all of their expenses once they have hit the US. That's only because at the moment we have limited resources to support international travel.

Lynette: However, we have a fellow from a country in this fellowship class, who is from a country that is really struggling. Struggling has a lot of political turmoil is very, low income country, and we have been able to identify some sources of support to help that fellow actually cover the travel from their country to the US.

Lynette: So we're always trying to think about how can we make this opportunity more equitable. And part of it is, especially for the international part, that is helping the travel because those who can cover their travel from an international destination tend to have access to more resources than those who can't.

Lynette: So we're always thinking now if we're really committed to this idea of equitable opportunity that we have to think about, we are now thinking about when there is a real need for someone who is international and they don't have the resources, but yet they have been selected, then what should we do?

Lynette: Because we select without, you don't have to say I have resources to be selected. Do you know what I'm saying? To make the application process fair, we have to accept you based on all of the review and credential and then figure out the other part.

Meico: Yes. And I appreciate you sharing and providing an additional context. So I know that lots of folks are listening to this, a part of organizations where they're trying to figure out what does equity, and inclusion, diversity, what does that look like in that particular context. And so I think it's always important people share how they're approaching it from their lens.

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.

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 That's mindfulchangemaker.org/books

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

Part Two

Lynette: So daughter of Shreveport, Louisiana. Started out as a waitress at Howard Johnson. Yes.

Meico: Making an international impact in early childhood development. Let me ask you this, typically when we hear or have these kinds of conversations, or even on social media, people are putting forward sort of the best and brightest highlights of their life and of their career

Meico: but we know that for many of us, it's not a straight line. It's not an upward trajectory, that there are ups and downs, there are peaks and valleys. And so I'm curious if you could share with us, a practice, or two, that you are actively engaged in that keeps you inspired and motivated, particularly when you have those challenges that are inevitable, on this type of journey.

Lynette: You know that's a challenging question because at this moment in time, I feel like I don't

Meico: have a good practice and I really need one. I will say when I felt like I did better, you know, I literally, I'm, I love being outside. So I'm a walker and I love getting out and just walking and being in nature.

Lynette: I loved riding my bike and, I loved, you know, I don't, I shouldn't be saying love. I love riding my bike. I love another, and I don't know if people would describe this as a practice, but I have always been, I've always found true value in what I call the circle of women. So I've always had a circle of women friends who I just enjoy going out for a drink, you know, for wine.

Lynette: And going to plays and going to movies. And so those are, practices. Those are things that I enjoy. I've been really inconsistent with things like yoga and meditation. I care about those things a lot. And my commitment to them and I think they're really valuable and there have been times in my life that I've been more consistent and my commitment to them.

Meico: Yes.

Lynette: But I will just acknowledge, Meico, I mean, I'm not doing good with these practices right now. I still, I personally feel that I am continuing even though the pandemic may be technically over, the impact of the pandemic on both my life and on professionally especially has just, is challenging and I'm still struggling.

Lynette: I will just It's still hard for me.

Meico: I appreciate that acknowledgement. You know, one of the things that I share with folks. But first of all, I appreciate the acknowledgment because one of the reasons we're having these conversations, I want people to hear from everyday changemakers, right? And, you know, I don't want people to give me a polished answer or give me the talking points that people feel like they want me to hear or they want the audience to hear, so I appreciate that.

Meico: And I think in doing that, in showing your authentic self and sort of showing the messiness, if you will, of where you are. I think that is healing for people who are listening, like, that's me. I identify with that. And in the work that I do with changemakers, one of the things I share with folks is that when we talk about this idea of taking care of yourself, we're talking about this idea of taking care, finding balance, whatever that looks like for you.

Meico: It's not a one size fits all approach, right? It's not a one time flip of the switch. And it's gonna change and evolve based on the season of life that you find yourself in, right? And If I'm hearing you, it sounds like you're in a particular season of life and you're trying to figure out what's going to work for you in this season.

Meico: And, you know, the things that you've used in the previous season might not necessarily be what's for you right now.

Lynette: Yeah, you know what I think, so what comes to mind for me is that, yes, I am definitely in a, in an evolving season of my life in a couple of ways. Stands out for me most is that, so I'm in Raleigh, North Carolina. So I'm, which is, home for me now. You know, my, I left Louisiana a long time ago and moved to North Carolina, was married, had kids, you know, my family's here.

Lynette: But when I started working with Zero to Three, I actually moved to Washington, D. C. That's how I met you and built a social community there. And I will tell you, I loved it. I really loved being in Washington D. C.

and I say I probably am one of the few people in D. C. who loved the metro. I loved riding the metro.

Lynette: And because every single day I had to leave my house, walk to the metro. I had to sit on the metro and just watch people. I'm an absolute people watcher. I love to watch people. Sometimes people look at me, would look at me like, what you looking at? And so I'd have to be, and then I'd get off the metro and walk to my office.

Lynette: And it was just every day, that was my day. So part of my practice, when walking, being with people, you know, every single day was just so energized.

Meico: I'm a people person. I love being in office. I love my colleagues. I love chats in the, you know, in the break room. I loved sometimes getting together with folks to go out for a glass of wine after work or going to the theater.

Lynette: I loved it because I'm very much a social person.

Meico: And for a hot minute, when COVID happened. I thought, okay, all righty. I get to stay at home and work from home. Meico, what three years in now? I feel isolated. I feel alone. I feel there's no boundaries between my professional life and my personal life, because my professional life is up here at upstairs in the loft of my house.

Lynette: I cannot seem to mentally separate from work, and I can't physically separate from work, and I miss my colleagues, I miss my friends, I miss all of the social things, I don't, too often, I literally get up, get dressed, and come upstairs. I don't even take a walk. This has been really hard for me, and I still grapple with

Lynette: how do I just keep doing this? Or how do I do better at finding some boundaries between my work and life? And because it doesn't feel like it's well balanced right now. So I think your work is particularly important. and I hear from other people that they are struggling

Meico: Yes.

Lynette: We are permanently remote, we will not, our organization is permanently remote, we will not go back in person.

Lynette: And we have our first in person convening in December. It was, you know, go to California travel, it's not, it's nice to get to be with people, but that is not working in relationship with people in the workplace. It is anyway. Yeah.

Meico: Yeah. So lots of folks are struggling as you shared and lots of organizations are trying to figure this out. And in the work that I do with teams and organizations right now in this, I guess, quote unquote, post pandemic workplace that we find ourselves in, one of the things that I talk about as a matter of sort of framing and principle is be open to the idea that two things are ever changing and evolving, right?

Meico: And there is no one size fits all solution, right? So I what I can do for you is I can help facilitate a process of discussion, and we can together figure out what makes sense for the moment. But we need to have a growth or agile mindset, so that we can move with the changes, because one of the things that we are experiencing that I described for folks is that we're in what I think Thomas Friedman calls the age of acceleration.

Meico: Some people call it the age of hyper complexity. And for many of us, it feels like life has sped up. It's become more complex, we're using more tools and we were connected to our screens. And it appears that is not slowing down anytime soon. So the question I pose is, how do you acknowledge that?

Meico: And then how do you figure out how to take care of yourself in the midst of that? Because I think it's a fool's errand for us to try to keep up with this pace of change and evolution. And so we have to identify what truly is important, right? What truly is meaningful, what truly is impactful, and make space for that and be okay with leaving the rest, right?

Lynette: I think that is, I think, conceptually, that is really important, and I think the challenge for me anyway, is how do I really make that a reality? Like, I know, excuse me, that this, intersection, this, I don't know the word that I want to use, of my professional life impacting my personal life.

Lynette: I know that's not healthy. I know that's not ideal. I know from our work together and your work with the fellows that there should be the importance of boundaries, the importance of practice, the importance of the, of striving to have some real, boundaries between work and life because they're both important.

Lynette: Life is a little more important. Anyway. but I cannot really, I, it's hard to explain why at this moment it is, it's feeling particularly challenging. And it seems to get kind of more challenging. Like, I felt like at the beginning of the COVID, I was doing better than I'm actually doing now. And I'm not sure why.

Lynette: And I think it's because I haven't been as committed to practicing those self care things, those parts of me that were so important that I was, you know, going regularly to a meditation class. I was going to yoga. Now, sometimes just leaving my house feels like a task. And then when I leave, and even go downstairs.

Lynette: I'm like, Oh, I better run back up and check my computer. I bet there's something that I have to respond to because everything is communicate. Everything is electronic. It's not like we can have a chat about this, you know, in the hallway or walk around to your office. Every communication is via this screen.

Lynette: And I'm struggling with the relationship with my screen.

Meico: And I think part of that, if I'm just pulling together pieces based on what you've shared is it seems like you connect to the world differently, right? You connect like the people connect people to people in person connection is very important in terms of how you're energized and how you thrive. So that's one aspect of it.

Meico: It sounds like. The other is I would offer to you to give yourself permission to have your routine be right size for whatever makes sense for the moment. Right? And so one of the examples that I give is on days like this, for example, where I have a full schedule, I might not have the opportunity to do a full workout. Right? And so a full workout for me might be 25, 30 minutes. And so I have a routine where like, okay, well, let me do the five minute version of this. Okay. And the five minute version counts as a win, I can check off just as much as when I do the 25 to 30 minute workout, right? And so I would offer that to you, you know, what are the ways that you can find those small pockets of joy or of your routine, whether it's 30 seconds, a minute, two minutes, five minutes, whatever that right sizing is, and to give yourself, an opportunity to celebrate that.

Meico: Thank you. As well, like you did your five minute yoga. Maybe you can only do one downward dog and that's all you got time for. Yeah.

Lynette: You know, it's so that's beautiful what you shared and to be honest, you know, is that I have really taken to heart, the work that you do and what you've shared you've been doing. I was looking back at my notes and you've been doing these sessions for the fellowship since 2016. So I've been, yes. Yes, you did the first one for our class for our 2016 18 class, so you've been doing it since 2016.

Meico: When I first started full

Lynette: That's when I believe, if you don't mind me sharing with the audience, that I was actually one of, and maybe one of the first contracts that you had. And so this work is, I'm, I am increasingly familiar with your work. I have certainly believe that it is a tremendous value to integrate this, these ideas, these strategies, these ideas, these techniques into your life.

Lynette: And in many ways, Meico, I feel like this idea of particularly mindfulness, intentionality, having a practice of self care and self commitment and an honoring of the time and commitment to family and friends. You know, I'm pretty good with other than the screens that I live in front of. I'm pretty good with not being overwhelmed by social media.

Lynette: I just social media just seems more toxic to me personally than other than anything else, but it is for whatever reason at this particular moment, I feel like I'm having more challenges integrating this approach, this Mindful Techie conceptualization into my life. Not that I don't know it. And I, I wonder if others are just, you know, are struggling with actually bringing these ideas to life, making them,

Lynette: doing them.

Lynette: Do you know what I'm saying? And that seems to be part of, I will tell you, I believe that's my work to do is not that I don't know, is that I need to do better and actually doing, and it's a practice, and it's a commitment. And it is I need, because I'm not right now.

Meico: So there is work that we need to do, but there are also externalities that we have to acknowledge. And so part of the work that I do is help people to acknowledge externalities that are really beyond you, right? Like we have a system. And let's take the 40 hour work week for example, that is not designed for today,

Meico: right?

Meico: It makes lots of assumptions about what a family looks like and what support looks like, right? in your personal life. And that is not something that works very well for many folks today. And it leaves many of us feeling like we're a failure for not being able to do it all right? And it's not you.

Meico: Right? And so I think it's so important that you share that. I think that there's power. It's simply that acknowledgement. Yes. So as we wrap up here, I do want, you mentioned Mindful Techie. I'm curious if we can maybe dive a little bit into that conversation a little bit. Can you share a little bit more about, the, what's been the impact of our work together for you personally and also professionally in terms of the impact on the fellows?

Meico: And I'll start this by recounting one of my, one of my memories. I think I, if I recall that even before I started working with Zero to Three you participated in and supported workshops that I were doing at our spiritual community, where we connect and where we met for the first time. So I don't know if you can remember back to that, but I feel like that was sort of the,

Lynette: Yeah.

Meico: one of the things that said, Hey, can you come do this for, you know, the fellows?

Meico: Can you talk about that?

Lynette: Oh, my goodness, because that's when I was living a very balanced life. Going to all kinds of things with our spiritual community. I was doing all kinds of social things. I will share that. I am divorced and when I moved to, DC, I also met, the man who has now become my husband and, I just had this really balanced life when I reflect back on it.

Lynette: And I think that is, what this, your work aligned with what I believed were important values. I've always been animated and love my work because it is deeply connected to my why.

Meico: Yes.

Lynette: And so a why. It's not all of the, you know, it's not the how and the what, it's the why, it's the thing that, that animates me, that touches

my heart, that gets me, you know, that keeps me so passionate about this work.

Lynette: And I am still very passionate about the work with the fellows. These are early and mid career people who really are striving to make the world a better place, and they are open to learning and growth.

Meico: Yes.

Lynette: And they're also, because they're early career, they're just getting started and the mid-career people are trying to, you know, make it up the ladder.

Lynette: It is important that they, at this point in their own professional development, that they appreciate the importance of a balanced life. Because without that, an over focus on work ultimately can't take you very far. And it just, throws everything out of equilibrium because we need equilibrium in our lives.

Lynette: And so it aligned, your work aligns with, what I believe is important for fellows to understand in their professional journey. And it aligns with my belief, and I believe that I know the fellowship is that we are not just our roles, and our titles. We are all of the things that make us who we are. We are partners or spouses or siblings or kids are you know what I'm saying.

Lynette: And those things make us who we are in the completeness of who we are. And in our fellowship, one of the things we say at Zero to Three is how you are is as important as what you do. So I'm not interested in a person to show up who is just, you know, academic or technical or transactional. I want to see how you are in relationship with others.

Lynette: And for us to show up as our best selves and who we truly are, we need to do that at the intersection of our person and our profession. And I believe that's what your work advocates. That's what it supports. Our professional skills and expertise and knowledge is important, but who we are as people, because we are the ones to engage others to share our skills and expertise.

Lynette: That matters how we show up. So because that is a value of the fellowship, I believe your work is so aligned with affirming that value of the importance of self and the importance of profession

Meico: Awesome. Well, I appreciate that reflection and, I want to wrap us up with the last question. But before we do that, is there anything else you want to share about anything that we've talked about so far? Anything you want to add that's come up for you before we close out?

Lynette: Well, I just, first of all, I appreciate the invitation. It's like, really want to talk to me. And, but it, really is. I will, as I shared, we have worked together for a while. I will continue to work with you because I continue to see people still grappling with how do I really work in a mindful, intentional way with a balance of profession and personal so that I really do live a fulfilled

Lynette: and joyful, and balanced life. I think that the contribution, certainly that you are making, not to just us, but around the world, is important. And I appreciate that we get a chance to kind of be a part of the work that you do.

Meico: And I'm honored that I get to work with you all and, and to really support the important work that you're all doing for folks. all around the world. Like I, I can, you know, in my time working with the fellowship, I think I've alluded to this before, but I've been really intrigued by the international, diversity and, what that means in terms of the range of different perspectives that people bring, in terms of cultural background and so on.

Meico: So I, I appreciate that, and being able to touch, international audience through, through Zero to Three. Yeah. With that being said, as we close out, let me ask you this. So what is next, for you and what is next for the work that you're doing at Zero to Three? Is there anything you can share with us?

Lynette: That is so important. You know, I have to tell, you know, you just gave me a heads up on I have, this is really an open question. You

Meico: Okay.

Lynette: don't know for sure. I will tell you, it is, it's something that I'm really deeply reflecting on now. I, My career I love the work that I do as I shared again and again that this is deeply a part of who I am and it's my heart's work and I feel very blessed to be able to do something to have a career focused on why that still animates me today, but I'm also at the point where I'm starting to think about what's next.

Lynette: And moving from full time work to really, focusing on family and, the things that I enjoy. So I shared briefly, I have a little granddaughter who is just like 18 months old and she's the first, and I am totally, as all grandparents are, just enthralled with her. And so I want to get to just watch her evolution and her growth and.

Lynette: She just is amazing to me. I want to travel and see the world. I want to, along with, David, who loves to travel and spent a career traveling, but now too wants to travel for just learning and pleasure and, you know, meeting people. And I want to continue to serve in some way. I don't know yet what that looks like,

Lynette: but I don't really foresee a life of which I am not in service in some way to the health and well being and joy and happiness.

Lynette: And, fulfilling everyone has a divine intention and importance in the universe from our spiritual sublimity. And I want to be a part of that in some way, continuing to go forward in service to young children and babies.

Meico: Well, what a beautiful way to close us out and really to come full circle because you told us at the beginning that you started out as a server. Right?

Lynette: I did!

Meico: and you,

Lynette: Serving food and ice cream!

Meico: Exactly, and you want to bring it full circle by continuing to be of service as you figure out what's next. So I think that is a beautiful way to close out our conversation.

Meico: Lynette, it's been an absolute pleasure to chat with you today and thank you for being on the podcast.

Lynette: Well, thank you so much for the invitation, Meico. I was a little nervous in the beginning, but I just so enjoyed this conversation. So thank you so much.

Meico: Awesome. Well, thank you all for listening, and I look forward to connecting with you again on the next episode.

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Outro

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