

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Michelle Barry Franco

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You are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast episode number seven.

Welcome to *Beyond Applause*, a podcast for mission-driven leaders, coaches, and creatives who are ready to share their expertise and stories through public speaking. Here's your host, Michelle Barry Franco.

My lovely speaker friends, I am thrilled to invite you into this conversation that I had with the brilliant Megan Flatt, mama CEO business strategist. I was particular excited to have this conversation with Megan because she takes a powerful stand for her message, and it wasn't easy for her to get there.

So she takes a stand for motherhood being an asset in entrepreneurship and this wasn't easy for her because she's a thoughtful, caring person and so every time she thought about taking this stand for mothers in business, of course, she had in the back of her mind, "But what about all the people I'm leaving out?"

And for a long time, while she's worked with moms for a very long time in her business successfully, when she was actually getting out there and stepping into thought leadership in a much bigger way, she had to go through a real process. So we get to talk about that in this conversation, and I'm excited to have you go through that with us and hear how she went through that process and came out the other side so powerfully.

She's also a fabulous example of someone who did that internal work to get crystal clear on why it matters so much to take her particular stand. That's really kind of the secret - not to give it all away, but that's part of the secret of how you get there. It's in the why, but we talk about that more in this conversation and we also just talk about how taking that stand has helped her build a fabulous, successful business on her terms that fits into her life the way she wants it to as a mama CEO herself.

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

She also shares some of her excellent tools for going from strategy into focused action in this episode. So I can't wait for you to hear it, I hope you enjoy this conversation. I sure did.

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Michelle: Welcome, welcome speaker friends. It's another super fun interview podcast day today. This time I get to be inspired by and learn from Megan Flatt. We all get to. The mama CEO business strategist, brilliant thought leader and lucky for me, a dear friend too. Megan Flatt is a business growth strategist for female entrepreneurs, specifically mom entrepreneurs who want to lead thriving businesses while remaining present for all the other important things in their lives. Megan believes moms make great business owners because we are mothers, not in spite of it. You can almost always find her with a latte in hand, a stack of Post-it notes at the ready - totally relating to that, and a random Lego figure in her pocket. You can learn more about Megan and create your own weekly workflow and a crazy treasure chest of additional resources - I should know, I've accessed them all at meganflatt.com. Megan, I am so grateful to get this time with you and excited to dive in.

Megan: Oh my gosh, Michelle, thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited and I do have a latte and a stack of Post-it notes. I was looking around my desk, I don't have a Lego figurine immediately accessible, I do have a Pez dispenser, so maybe we'll swap that in for the Lego for right now.

Michelle: Don't worry, I'm sure the Legos are right outside your door just ready for you to step on.

Megan: Ready for me to step on, exactly.

Michelle: Okay, awesome. So first of all, let's talk about the core of your message because I know you work with mamas and I know that you didn't come to that decision lightly, and the people who listen to the Beyond

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

Applause podcast are often really sort of tangling with and or just kind of refining their own messages, and you know, it can be, as you know, a bit of a rollercoaster. So if you could just talk about how you decided to work with moms as a business strategist.

Megan: Well yeah, you went through this with me, you know, pulling it out of me, and but what's interesting and I want to differentiate here really quickly is that I have always worked with moms, and actually, coming to that as a business decision was not actually challenging. But when you talk about coming to it as my rooftop message and as my core kind of speaking message, that was where I got really hung up, which I think was really interesting for me and probably really frustrating for you, as my coach and as my mentor around that was that I was having a really hard time and I was kind of jotting down in my notes that it was - even though I had been working with moms and even in kind of previous iterations of my business, I had focused on moms, and even in previous careers I had focused on maternal health and wellness that when it came down to - I mean, honestly, taking a stand, it made me very uncomfortable. And it made me very uncomfortable to put my flag in the stand and really feel like I was saying I believe something. And the very nature of saying I believe something kind of implies that you - not that you don't believe in other things, but just that you're really separating yourself. And that was really hard for me. And so if anyone listening is kind of struggling with that too, that even for someone that has seemingly built a niche business, it was still hard for me to declare that as my message. And I think I tried to backpedal on it a lot. No, maybe I want to talk about Post-it notes, you know? So really taking a stand and being comfortable and confident with this is what I believe is uncomfortable.

Michelle: Yes, wow, that's a really amazing distinction, and thank you for making it. Because you're right, as I think back on the time when we were talking that through, and really as I think about time with a lot of other clients, it is that taking a stand because you know that inherent in taking a stand is the idea that people - you know, you don't need to take a stand if everybody agrees with you on something, right?

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

Megan: Absolutely.

Michelle: So there will be people who are going - you know, are going to be listening to the stand you're taking in various forms and saying, "Well, that's not right. That's not what I believe. How could she say that?" Or whatever, you know, whatever we make up in our minds, and whatever is also true at times, right?

Megan: And I think there's some - and whether it's a mindset thing or real, I think there's a little differentiating. Like, it's easy for us in business to say, okay, well I do business strategy and I focus on mom entrepreneurs. And if that resonates with you, come work with me and if that doesn't resonate with you, then there's lots of other people. Or you know, for you to say like, I'm a speaking coach, if that's something that you want to - and I work with thought leaders, if that's something that you want to incorporate, come work with me, if that's not on your priority list right now, then that's fine too. So there's something where we're okay with that, we're okay with that delineation but then when it comes to I'm going to stand up, I'm going to stand up and declare something, then that feels different.

Michelle: Yes, absolutely. And as you're saying it, I can think about - I mean, even myself. You know, I went the first five years, I'm like, I'm not a speaking coach. Everybody's like, wait, what? And most of the people I worked with were working on speaking or at least sort of like, the core message of their speaking, but there is that in my domain, well, many people will say to me still like, "Well, you could really help a lot of people whether they want to speak or not. You know, they could write a book..." right? Same with you, right? Well, they don't have to be a mom to need to balance a lot of things.

Megan: Right.

Michelle: Yeah, and yet to take that stand for a certain person or a set of people as a thought leader and share ideas that really will change their lives, we have to be that clear and that specific, right?

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

Megan: Yes.

Michelle: We have to speak to their lives. Yeah. So can you just - I would love it if you just talk a little bit more because I do think this is a place where people struggle and I hadn't even honestly thought about this in this deeper way, then how did you reconcile that issue?

Megan: Well, so we can talk about how I like, literally reconciled it and then also again, from kind of a more mindset issue. When I was working on my signature talk with you, I think you actually helped me kind of insert a line that was a little bit of a disclaimer, you know, that was just a little bit of a just because I'm saying this doesn't mean I think that this other group is less than. So that really just literally, like, logistically, that worked really well for me and it actually gave me - it turned into kind of a jumping off point for some of the research and things that I was bringing into my talk, some of the statistics. Because I was able to say like, my message, it was in my bio, like, this is where - quick tangent. This is where what you do and helping people get so clear on their talk, it permeates so much more. You know, I was able to really rewrite my bio because of the core decisions that I made about my kind of signature talk. So this idea that we are great business owners because we're mothers, not in spite of being mothers, which is what we're kind of told by society. You know, that's really the heart of my message, but by saying that, am I implying that women who choose not to be mothers are less than or that men are less than, or that this or that or the other thing. And so being able to just really acknowledge that okay, I'm just talking about celebrating one asset of our story and that we all get to do that, and I'm choosing to focus on this part. So that was how I reconciled it in my talk, but then that also then helped me reconcile it in my mind that it's okay to say I believe in this and it doesn't mean I don't believe in something else or it doesn't mean - it means this is what we're talking about right now.

Michelle: Yeah. So I'm curious, once you sort of - it's funny how we can hear one thing and just sort of like, open up a whole door into a room that

[**Beyond Applause**](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

we didn't know was available to us or something, right? Like, you were like, oh okay, so maybe it doesn't have to be about me making other things wrong by taking this stand. And yet, I'm wondering, did - all of a sudden, was it easy for you from there or did you have any back and forth? Like, what was it actually like for you from there taking this strong of a stand consistently?

Megan: No, I think there's always some back and forth, and I think even as we get more confident in it and even as it feels more comfortable and feels more part of our message or kind of our, you know, inner workings, you know, like it really feels like it's part of us, then I think there's always this point and it is especially hard for me to be really honest and be really vulnerable. It's really hard for me when women come to me and they didn't - it wasn't their choice to not be a mother. Those are the ones that still - it still hits me. You know, because obviously choosing to be a mother or choosing not to be a mother is like, a wonderful choice and you can make that choice and I support both of those. But the women that come to me and I've had women come to me and say that my message is uncomfortable for them because becoming a mother was something that they did want and it didn't happen for whatever reason. So of course, that still kind of hits me, but I do think that if I try to stay focused on the people that I do want to help, and if we think of the global, the collective of if I take a stand in my message, then I can inspire someone else to take a stand in their message that maybe their message is just because you're not a mom, you're amazing for these other reasons. So someone else gets to have that platform.

Michelle: Yeah, and possibly even, hey, not having kids is awesome for this reason. Like, taking a stand for that choice in life.

Megan: Exactly. And that's the thing I love. One of my own business mentors talks about - she says when we're talking about selling, she says it's not selling, it's sorting, and I love that concept. I love that concept because sometimes selling can feel kind of a little bit uncomfortable and

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

stuff like that. But if we think about it that way, like, we're just sorting. We're just sorting our people. Like, these are the people that fit over here in this pile, and these are the people that fit over here in this pile, and I'm going to talk to this pile over here. And someone else is going to do an amazing job talking to these people over here.

Michelle: Right, and having that powerful clarity and sort of like, commitment to your stand, it seems like as I'm sort of feeling into what you're saying, allows us really to have so much more openness and compassion during that sorting process with people who are going through a bit of struggle as they bump up against us or our message, right?

Megan: Exactly.

Michelle: If it's not consistent with their life or they wouldn't fit into it and they wished they did or whatever because they haven't maybe found their right place yet that will help them rise up and you know, say all the things they want to say. I'm sort of broadening what you're saying just to the whole idea of thought leadership if that was on their list of things.

Megan: Exactly, and it's why it's so important for all of us to take a stand because someone else needs to hear that message.

Michelle: Hallelujah. Yeah, that's really beautiful, thank you so much. And I know that that little conversation we got to have will - because I know having worked with so many people at this point that this is such a tangle. It may not look exactly like this, right? It might not be that they're struggling with wanting to take a stand for mamas, but they're struggling with wanting to take a stand for something and there's always, as we said in the beginning, the other side of that stand, right? And it's uncomfortable and scary. So it's just good to know because I know you're out there taking that stand powerfully. We're going to talk more about that here coming up. Just good to know that yes, you can struggle through it and it still comes up at times and still keeps serving in the way that you have, which is super inspiring. So if you had a rooftop, let's get like, your stand clear for those

[**Beyond Applause**](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

listening - and remember, this can be totally raw, right? Because it's raw. You know the scene, right? You're out on the streets, everybody's struggling. In your case, there's a bunch of mamas on those streets, and they're struggling, and you know you can help them. So you climb up that ladder over there up to the top of that rooftop and cup your hands around your mouth and say, listen to me beautiful people, what would you say?

Megan: I would say, society has dealt us as mothers and as entrepreneurs, society has dealt us a deck that is stacked against us. And that we are constantly told that motherhood is a liability and my belief is that motherhood is actually the strongest asset we have when it comes to being an entrepreneur. And like I said before, that we are actually great business owners because we are mothers, not in spite of being mothers.

Michelle: Get it. Oh, I love it so much. I mean, that is so powerful because you're - that's interesting. I would like all of us to note, including myself, that sort of start of - I think people resist bringing up the hard stuff first, right? And having been also mentored by you and listened to your content in your - in crafting your talk, I know what's behind that stacked deck. I mean, you've got all kinds of research that you've found that I didn't even know was out there about how we are perceived as mothers in the workplace.

Megan: Yes. Well, and that - going back to what you were saying - what we were talking about earlier about how did I reconcile making a claim that was going to separate out people or was going to alienate people and so for me, actually leading with the why, leading with the like, hey, here's what's happening, that is what, A, one of the ways that then I can justify making that statement because I feel like I'm not just coming in and being like, "We're amazing and anyone else is awful." Like, I'm not saying that. I'm saying hey, here's the reality. Here's what's happening, and so here's what I actually believe is different. And not that we need to go into my entire talk, but just the other piece that was really helpful for me in being able to take that stand, maybe it's the nerdy schoolgirl in me that like, doing the research. So being able to bring some stats to the table, which

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

obviously you had me do, but like, knowing that we all know there's a gender pay gap between men and women, but the research that I found was that the largest pay gap is actually between fathers and mothers. That men actually get - men start earning more money when they become fathers because they're seen as more reliable, they're seen as being providers, as being the breadwinner, and women when they have children, actually start making less money than their female counterparts who don't have children. So when I found that statistic, that not only is there a gender pay gap but that men and women without children actually fall in the middle of the pay scale, that that just made it all the more like, see, I can talk about what I'm talking about because there's some stats that back up why I need to be talking about this.

Michelle: Yes. Yeah, that is such a good point. We do the - I talk about the magic mix of content, and you know, this whole yes, tell stories, yes, give examples, but also pull in that research so our audience's brains have that full range of kind of back up and support. But really, from what you're speaking to, which is so powerful is when we go gather all of that for our talks, we gather it for ourselves, and we build the case for ourselves.

Megan: And it made me want - I was really resistant too. And of course, I can fall back on all the excuses like, oh, I've got to do this thing first, or I've got to do - you know, but once I was armed with all this research and once I started sharing it with people and people were surprised by it, I was like, I've got to tell more people. Like, this research is out here and there's a ton more that I found too, just on how women are perceived in the workplace and you know, all sorts of other stuff. And I've since found even a little bit more, that that then re-inspired me to share that message.

Michelle: Yeah, well, that makes me think of when you hosted the gathering at The Ivory and you were sharing a lot of this information from your talk for the first time with many of us and our jaws were like, dropping, and we're all I think women who are often in the world of women working and building businesses and so I think I consider myself someone who's at

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

least somewhat familiar with the challenge, and even some of the research. But I had no idea and I could see it on the faces of the other women in the room. So I can just imagine how those - as you've gone out speaking and sharing this message, how it almost just keeps reinforcing itself.

Megan: Exactly, yeah, exactly.

Michelle: So let's talk more about that. Perfect segway into - if you just talk a little bit about how you use speaking and I mean that in the broader sense, all the ways that you sharing your message through your voice, and even beyond that, just talk about that.

Megan: Yeah, so I think when we start thinking about like, oh, I want to do more speaking, and maybe - I was going to say everyone feels this way, but obviously everyone doesn't. But for me, I really thought, okay, I want to start booking speaking gigs. Like, I want to start being on the stage, I want to be talking to an audience of people. And while that is still important to me and I have done some of that, what I realize is what you were kind of saying about how your business could be broader than being a "speaking coach," I realize that by getting so clear on my message, that that really then served as a platform for - in some ways for me to create different assets in my business for me to - the way I conduct sales calls for my programs, the way I write about what I do and who I talk to and that kind of that elevator pitch idea that I'm so much more comfortable when someone says, "Oh, what do you do?" And I feel like I can explain myself so much more clearly because of the kind of the background work that I did for my talk. But the literal - the real ways it's shown up for me is I do a lot of Facebook lives for my community. And I think the combination of the tools - the messaging, like I said, which has kind of permeated a lot of things, the messaging, the tools on how to put together a talk, and then just some of the speaking points and the confidence, and those pieces. It's allowed me - a Facebook live, if I'm doing a five-minute Facebook live or a 15-minute Facebook live, it really becomes this mini signature talk. And knowing that I can keep coming back to the skills that I learned, and it's been a really

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

great tool for me. It's a really great place for me to show up for my audience and for me to connect with my audience and to have - I think Facebook lives are great because they're casual, so people don't expect a perfectly polished, perfectly memorized - I'll often in the middle of it say, "Wait, let me check my notes, have I said everything I wanted to say?" You know, I can have a little more casualness to it. But I can still really share my message and then it's there for people to come back to and rewatch or watch a couple of days later. So that has been one way, and then the second way has been this, getting to be a guest on a lot of different podcasts, which is a great medium for me as far as marketing my business and spreading my message and reaching new audiences. So again, when I pitch myself to be on a podcast or when someone asks me, "Will you be on my podcast?" I'm so much more clear on - well, here's what I'll talk about. Even if I'm talking to an audience that isn't all moms, I know that I can still kind of twist and tweak my messaging or what's important to me and I'm just much more confident in that.

Michelle: Yeah, that makes sense. And how - I have so many different things I want to go down, the video route, you know, because there are so many people who I work with and I know are listening who struggle with the abyss of sort of like, speaking into video and then I also - so I just want to say these out loud so we don't forget. I want to talk about that but I also want to talk about how has speaking in these various forms impacted your business?

Megan: Okay, so just like we're talking about with the talk. So I am a perpetual student, like I love to learn new things and I often have to reel in my own like, learning sometimes. But I think the thing with video - although I have always been pretty comfortable speaking and I did theatre when I was younger, so I've always been pretty confident, but I think any time you're trying something new, I think part of the fear is just not knowing how to do it. Just not knowing even the technical aspect of how to do it. So I spent some time working on that. I spent some time figuring out what's the best height to put my computer at so I look the most flattering on camera.

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

You know, it seems silly and I know you have a great lighting set up in your office as well, but making sure - and I did all the research for free, you know, looking - searching YouTube tutorials and different people that were sharing information on how to look best on camera or how to position your camera or how to set up audio, or you know, if you've seen any of my videos, I have a backdrop and people always comment on the backdrop and you know, it's a fake plywood wall that I wanted there to be a clean backdrop. And one of my clients has this really cool - it looks like she's standing in front of a white brick wall and it's actually fabric that she has kind of hung on an almost like a clothes line basically. Like a PVC pipe. So even just kind of figuring out some things like that, figuring out some of the logistical things that if I face the window in my office and I have the natural light on me, that that's going to be the most flattering. So once I knew just a few video techniques, then it didn't feel quite as scary. And then because when you're dealing with doing a Facebook live or doing video, you're dealing with the tech side of it. Then you're also dealing with what am I going to say with my talk, you know? So the more of those that you can just eliminate, you can just learn - like, I know I bought a shelf divider from Container Store, like a little folding shelf that you would put in your kitchen cabinet to prop - and I know you use like a stack of books, right? It's the same thing. So I have that just right next to my desk and so when I go to do a Facebook live, I can just pop my laptop up onto that and it raises it to the right height. You know, so just like, dealing with some of those little things then I don't have to worry about that piece. So I think that's one of the things of getting - and then just like anything, it's just practice. And that's why I think Facebook lives are so great because honestly, if you wanted to, you can delete it after the fact. And so just doing them and I think our audiences know that Facebook live is going to be a little more casual, it is going to be a little more unscripted or you're going to be - like I said, you're going to be looking down at your notes or you're going to be checking in with something. But so that was one of the ways that just kind of committing to doing one a week definitely then helped me. It's like, okay, what am going to talk about today? What am I going to say? How am I going to do this?

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

Michelle: So get it all set up, you know, you did all this research, and then once you have it set up, you've got that set up, you have your system, and then it's just practice getting familiar with the platform. I think about before Facebook live, which is so recent, I mean, years ago. This is maybe like six years ago. I've been doing videos since 2009 or something. So literally, I'm not joking. I would probably do 50 takes, it might even be more. And so Facebook live feels to me like this tremendous gift. Because when you're shooting video and you can reshoot it and nobody saw it anyway, you know, there, in my mind, there was this expectation that any little thing should be fixed. Why wouldn't you fix it, right?

Megan: Exactly. Yeah, and just even the whole, you know, we can go back even further because my - the first part of my career was in fitness business consulting, and one of the things that the consulting company that I worked for, one of the things we did was help people film fitness videos. And so this is back in the day that you had to - I mean, it would cost you a minimum of \$10,000.

Michelle: Wow, yeah.

Megan: To film a video because you had to rent the studio, you had to hire the cameraman, you had to buy your fitness DVDs outright. You had to buy them and then try to sell them. And you know, and so I think the whole game has been changed with the internet. I was just talking with a client this morning and she basically said, if you live in a developed country and you have access to the internet, you can literally do anything, and I think that's kind of true. So we're in this amazing time where we've got Facebook live, we've got - you can have a YouTube channel. So yes, do we still want to book the on the stage talks? Do we still want to strive to maybe do a TED talk one day? Yes, absolutely. And then we also have all of these other ways that we can get our message out there.

Michelle: And really to test it and refine it and try out different elements of it, that's the fun thing about things like Facebook live video and even webinars and things. I mean, you know, a webinar I see as it has a variety

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

of wonderful qualities or possibilities. One of them being trying out a message over all, just to see how it's landing for people. Of course, you can also sell from a webinar and you know, fill a program, and people do all those things. I still in my own experience have never had anything be as successful and feel as engaging, and I think this is personal. Like, I think we all have different angles on this or preferences on this as live. I just - there's an energy about it that's amazing and it has been the most successful place for me. But I know that's not true for everybody. It's just not. Like, I know people who have had amazing online experiences of speaking.

Megan: Well, and even just think about - I don't quite mean scalability, what's the word I'm looking for? Even if you are - well, maybe not a top, top speaker because obviously they're getting booked a ton. But even if speaking really is a huge part of your strategy, and even let's say you're doing a talk once a month even, that's still 12 times a year and then so having even if that is a big piece of your strategy, having these other alternatives, like you said, where hey I'm doing a talk in six weeks and I want to - it's kind of like we hear about like, stand-up comedians that will go and do kind of - they want to test out their jokes. We kind of get to do the same thing. We can be like, okay, well I'm booked to give this talk in six weeks or I'm doing this thing and it's going to be on a big stage and it's going to be a lot of people, but I want to try out a few new concepts, or I want to try out a few new audience prompts or things like that. Great, we can do a Facebook live. We can do something for our private community. We can do a webinar. You have these opportunities to reach more people, refine your message, all of those things.

Michelle: So you mentioned your private community a few times, let's make sure we say what it is so that - because you have a free Facebook group.

Megan: I do have a free Facebook group. It's the Mama CEO Club. So you can just search - you can search on Facebook for the Mama CEO Club, or you can go to meganflatt.com/club and that will redirect you to the

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

Facebook group. And it's just a great place for - everyone in there is mom entrepreneurs, and so we're talking about things in business but also the struggles that come up. My kids just started - your kids are already out of school, is that true?

Michelle: Nope, this is the week. All the graduations. All the parties.

Megan: Oh my gosh, that's where we are. That's where we're at too. I sent my kids - like, yeah, sent my kids off for their - they have their last week of school this week so you know, so we're talking about stuff like that. How are you planning for your summer? How are you balancing your business and different childcare needs? So we talk about all of that stuff in there too.

Michelle: Yeah, we'll make sure it's in the show notes as well. But let's talk about - so yes, to all of that balancing and you have amazing tools for this. So I would love - you know, you are also - we are mutual mentors to each other at different times and you have been an amazing gift to my own business strategy. And I would love to share some of that with our audience because I know these tools are really powerful when you're trying to juggle a lot of things as you are when you're running a business and a family, and if you don't have a family and you're running your also thought leadership - family or not, whatever.

Megan: We all have other things that take up our time, or we find that we're working all the time, that's the pro and the con of being an entrepreneur is that you can work 24/7. So some things we want to restructure that a little bit.

Michelle: Yes, which makes me think of your workflow plan. But so many other things too. So what I would love as we sort of get toward the end is given that there is this great juggle, when we want to do many things in our business and beyond, what are some of your favorite tools to share with people to help them stay on strategy, stay on plan but also enjoy their life?

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

Megan: Absolutely. So you mentioned my weekly workflow, and this is one of the things and this is what I want to share with your audience and then talk about here is so I have - it's not my system. I mean, it's time blocking and we're all kind of heard of it. But this idea of setting up our calendars so that we have dedicated time to do the different things, not just in our business, but in our life that are important. And so my very first tip that I give all entrepreneurs, but again, especially my clients who are also parents is this idea of setting up some work hours. So setting some boundaries that this - my work day starts at this time and it ends at this time. Because the problem is when we have this mindset or we have this idea that I'm an entrepreneur, I can work any time I want, it's always meant with the best of intentions. It's like, great, I'm going to work from the beach. But in reality, it ends at being the cane that we whip ourselves with that it's like, at any point of the day or night, I could be/should be working.

Michelle: Yeah, I'm laughing because it's so true. It's so true.

Megan: My kids are seven and 10 so they've gotten to this point where they're much more independent. And there was a day last weekend when they were playing outside, they'd invented this whole game and they were drawing a bank and a dog walking business, and they're drawing all this stuff in chalk on the back patio and all of a sudden, I found myself with this like, free time. Like, oh my gosh, what do I - and instantly my brain was like, you better work. So even for me, that's where coming back to like, no, I've set these boundaries, these are my work hours. And yes, I can choose to work outside of those, especially if I'm in the middle of a big launch or something like that, but I think it's so important that we're in control of our schedule, not our schedule being in control of us, so that you can say, you know what, my kids are occupied and I'm going to read a book. Or like, my kids are super occupied so I am going to go work on that email that I wanted to send out. But that you're making that choice, that it's not this I got to do my work, I got to do my work, I got to do my work. So the setting up your work hours is super important. And then as we're talking about probably one of the things that you hear with your own clients too is just

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

when you're busy and when you're running a successful business, the idea of yes, I want to speak, or yes, I want to write a book, or yes, I want to create a new program, but I'm already busy, I'm already running my business, I'm already seeing my clients, and then I've got to go pick up my kids or I've got to walk the dog or I've got to be there for my elderly parents. You know, none of us, I guarantee that no one who is listening to this podcast is like, sitting around twiddling their thumbs for hours a day, you know? So back to this workflow, one of the things that I do and as part of creating this weekly workflow is I set aside different chunks of time throughout the week to do my client work, to create my content, to do the things that I do on a repeating basis, but I also set aside time - what I call special project time. And I specifically named it special project time - sometimes I refer to it as buffer time, but I really like calling it special project time because I have already built in to my schedule time that I can work on those new ideas, that I can work on - you know what, I want to do a signature talk. I already have time built into my schedule to work on that. And if I'm not doing something like that, then it becomes buffer time, it becomes the overflow time or it becomes time if I'm maybe in the middle of launching something, but again, I've got this time. I have time set aside to do my client work. I have time set aside to communicate with my team. I have time set aside to spend time in my Facebook groups or in my paid communities. And then I have other time that's set aside that's - I don't even want to call it open time but it's time that is blocked out for working on these other projects that come up for us. So that's my other advice is even if it's half an hour, even if it's an hour a week, carving out some time and then you get used to it. You get used to having that open time on Thursday afternoons or whenever it is. Then when it comes time to write your signature talk or it comes time to join your program or it comes time to write the book or it comes time to do whatever, it's like, okay great, I already have time carved out to put this in.

Michelle: Yeah. Yeah, I love that workflow planning. I did that when you and I were working together, and sometimes I don't always have it up in front of me, right? I mean, I try to schedule along it, schedule with those

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

guidelines, but what I notice is that every once in a while, I'll kind of feel myself getting a little too loose because I have it as a separate calendar within Google calendar. I can go like, click it on and it just - oh yeah, this was my intention. But I always have it in my mind, you know? And I can always kind of come back to it and go yes, that's right, I remember in a sane moment I put together this plan, and it is a plan I like. I may have forgotten temporarily recently, so it's really helpful.

Megan: And I think also - I love that you said like, I put this together in a sane moment because I often have these like - a little bit like the angel devil on my shoulders here, but it's more like Megan the CEO and someone - one of my clients just used this analogy and I'm going to use it all the time. Like, the Muppet running with their arms flailing, and you can picture that, right? Like, so I feel like I've got these two people on my shoulder. I've got like, Megan the super pulled together CEO on one shoulder, and I've got Megan the Muppet with flailing arms on the other shoulder.

Michelle: It's the chef from The Muppets, right?

Megan: Yeah, I found it as a gift. It's like, with the mouth open and the arms flailing, I think that's how some of us feel when we're running the day-to-day of our business. So again, you can like - if you can be the CEO of your business and in those moments you can say, I don't work after my kids go to bed, the Megan the CEO can say, I don't schedule client calls for Monday. Like, you know, the CEO can say, I'm not going to take that client. Like, I'm going to say no to that client because then the flailing arm Muppet Megan, you know, like some of those decisions are already made because flailing arm Muppet Megan would be like, I've got to write another email, I've got to do more, I've got to take all the clients, I've got to do all the things. So I think taking those moments and again, I've got research to back it up that every one minute that you spend planning, you save 10 minutes on execution.

Michelle: That adds up.

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

Megan: Right? If you spent four hours - if you set aside four hours a month and block out where you're just going to plan out, you're going to plan things out in your business, you're going to plan out your week, you save 40 hours. You save an entire work week of execution.

Michelle: Yeah, that's crazy.

Megan: That's crazy.

Michelle: Yeah.

Megan: So then when I think like, I'm going to put my CEO hat on for those four hours so that I'm not the flailing Muppet for 40 hours.

Michelle: Yeah, I mean it's so interesting to me. As someone who doesn't - while I love organizing and planning tools and things, you know, I once had a professional organizer, Brena, I adore her. But she - when she came to my house and helped me organize my stuff, she's like, you are not allowed to buy any additional organizing items. Like, you know, like I love all these. I love the concepts and the idea of being organized and having it look cute and pretty and all of that. I don't know how to naturally think like that. It's not the way I think, which is why I - you have been such a gift in my life and I'm so glad that I get to have this conversation with you and that we have all the links that we'll have in the show notes to your workflow and all of the other things. I mean, I could name like, 10 different tools that - I know it's not all about the tools. Like, we have to have the mindset and the thinking behind it and this concept of CEO and flailing Muppet arms as a really good description, but those kind of well thought out tools that help us live into the CEO version of ourselves more often are so powerful.

Megan: Well, I think this circles all the way back to what we were saying about why it's so important for each of us to stand in our own message because we're not supposed to be good at everything. I think maybe social media, maybe it's whatever, like, gives us this sense of like, oh, I'm supposed to - and again, we could talk about the patriarchy, we could talk

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco

Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

about oppression of women, but how we're told we're supposed to do it, we're supposed to do it all and we're supposed to do it all well. And that's not the case, you know? And so that's why it's so important for each of us to stand in our own message and share our gifts and share our beliefs because someone else doesn't have that angle and they need to hear. They need to hear, oh, if I just - because something I think, oh, my stuff is so basic, everyone's heard it before, it's like, but it's like, no, sometimes you just need to hear it in a certain way from a certain person or you need to be reminded of it. You need to - like, even what you just said, like, oh yeah, I created my workflow and I need to come back to it. Or you know, for me, oh yeah, we created the signature talk and I said I was going to do this, that, and the other thing with it, now I need to do that. So sometimes we just have to be reminded and that's what's so important for all of us to share our messages.

Michelle: Perfect. What a perfect circle around for our conversation. Perfect wrap up. So yes to all that, sing it from the rooftops. So thank you so much, Megan, for all you've done to help organize my life and also just for being such an inspiration, you know, for taking the stand that felt scary but you found your way to taking it really powerfully and you know, I can see and feel the impact that you're making and I know you know the impact you're making in lots of mamas lives, and it really matters. And beyond, by being such a stand. So thank you so much and thanks for being here with us.

Megan: Absolutely. Well, thank you for helping me get there and I really appreciate you having me on today.

Megan shared so many useful tools in this episode, which I can't recommend highly enough. I have and used pretty much all of them, and if you're coveting the clarity of her rooftop message and want to get on that rooftop yourself, you can access the guided Claim Your Rooftop Process at michellebarryfranco.com/rooftop. Thanks for being here, my friend, I already can't wait for us to connect again next week. Meantime, make your difference. You were made for this.

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Ep #7: Taking a Stand for Motherhood with Megan Flatt

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