

## Radical Remedy - Mieko Hester Perez Transcript

Chloe [00:00:00]:

Hey, guys, it's Doctor Chloe, and you're listening to the Radical Remedy podcast. Today, I am so honored to welcome Mieko Hester Perez. Mieko is a fierce advocate for medical cannabis in the autism community. As one of the original warrior moms, Mieko has spent nearly two decades pushing for change in cannabis legislation and healthcare and was inspired by her son Joey's incredible journey with autism and cannabis. Mieko goes into the ins and outs of the legalities of using medical cannabis to support our children with neuro divergent needs. I found this conversation so interesting. I always loved talking to Mikko. She is such an inspiration to me, and I really, really appreciate her wisdom, her advocacy, and her spirit.

Chloe [00:00:44]:

And it's incredible to know her and call her a friend. I know you guys are going to love her as much as I do. Please, like, share and let me know what you think. All right, guys, I am super excited. Today we have an interview with my dear friend Mikko Hester Perez. She is a warrior mom and advocate and just all around total fucking badass. Mieko, thank you so much for joining me. It's really exciting to have you here.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:01:10]:

Thank you so much for having me, Chloe.

Chloe [00:01:13]:

So you have been on some epic journeys with your son Joey, and I would love to hear how your journey with medical cannabis and advocacy in the field started. I'm sure you've told this a million.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:01:26]:

Times, but I don't even know. It almost feels like light years, right? Because I started in 2009, and that was clearly before regulation. Right. Before. However, when my son was diagnosed, I did a lot of research on Bernard Remland, the founder of the Autism Society of America, and he was, like, my hero. And so when my son was having some medical issues, first and foremost, he was on several psychotherapeutic medications, and the side effects of those medications led me to do some pretty interesting book diving.

Chloe [00:02:22]:

Right.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:02:24]:

You know, research by default. I'm a legal secretary, and I have been since 1999. And so my son just basically ended up being, like, one of the biggest cases I've had. Right. I needed to plead to his medical team, you know, on the use of cannabis and why it would be such a. We tried everything else. Why don't we just, you know, we. Let's.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:02:54]:

Let's look here. And so what really gave me kind of the superwoman cape was finding doctor Bernard Remland's paper that he wrote while he was at the Institute of San Diego. Autism. Yeah, Autism Institute of San Diego. And so I used that like it was the holy Grail. And it made sense for his diagnosis, which was diagnosed with anorexia, second to his autism. And so at that point, I just was. I almost felt like everyone was watching me watch my son waste away.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:03:40]:

And so I've never really been a follower. I've always really kind of gone with my own gut feeling. And when you have a child on the spectrum as a parent, that's all we have, as long as it's within reason. And at that time, I don't really think that was within reason.

Chloe [00:04:03]:

Well, it's wild to think about, but, yeah, at that time, nothing was really going on in terms of cannabis for neurological conditions.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:04:12]:

No, nothing at all. But it. Once I started doing research on brain trauma, brain injury for motorcycle riders, they said, we don't know where you got this, how you got this, and you were way ahead. I almost felt like. Now, looking back in 2009, I was like, did I even notice? I felt like I was a way ahead of my time. However, there were other parents that were utilizing cannabis but had not gone public about it. So I knew, being in the legal space, I definitely needed to do something that would empower other families to be able to have the opportunity to utilize cannabis.

Chloe [00:05:04]:

It's amazing. I know. It's been such an incredibly difficult journey. I was just looking up. There's one quote from an article from you that I really, really resonated with. And you said, some people go a lifetime not knowing their purpose. Joey knew his purpose and trained me for mine. And I think that that's something that we both share in our love and visions with our children that they have, you know, come to this world with.

Chloe [00:05:33]:

With a purpose. And they've also built us into something different than we were before they came around.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:05:39]:

Yeah. I mean, I thought I was going to law school this whole time. Right. And this way, I was just telling this story the other day. I remember the day I quit my job, and it was because Joey had five appointments that day. And my supervisor was a single woman, no children, no relationship. None. So work was her whole life, and she didn't understand that there were things outside of life, you know, and she didn't understand that I was late or I came in early or I still did my job.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:06:20]:

I still did it. But I remember one day, one of my clients had called me on my lunch break and said, you know, you have a great rapport with this court. We need all of these copies from the court, and we know you're the only person who can get them done on my lunch break at another job. And with, I remember saying, I calculated everything and I said, this one order is more than I make in a month. I walked back into my job and quit and got my purse and all my belongings and left. And the next day I opened my company, CA corporate and attorney services. And it's probably the best decision I ever made. And looking back at all of the steps to get me there, it all makes sense.

Chloe [00:07:20]:

Yeah, I think there's some quote. You can only understand life looking backwards. You'll never understand it looking forwards. And that. Yeah, that definitely is true. I definitely look at my life before Remy as preparation for being Remy's mom and being the best mom for him that I can be. And the advocacy is real. I mean, it's constant.

Chloe [00:07:43]:  
It's never ending.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:07:46]:  
It's like an electric shock. The advocacy is like, wrong. You're it. Because that's how we fail. Like, what do you mean? We got it wrong. And then we get buzzed right? And it's like, okay, well, I'm doing it right and we're waiting for someone to shock us again. There's no day that is alike.

Chloe [00:08:09]:  
Yeah, no, there really isn't. And there's always so many different challenges coming up, no matter what's going on, even when things aren't easy, you know, there's always some sort of pushback when you are special needs mom. And for you to be advocating for so many people now is incredible. It's really impressive. So tell me a little bit about what that looks like for you. Like, what's your day to day? Who are you working with? What does that look like? You're like, good luck.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:08:39]:  
Good luck. I remember I had one journalist spend one day with me when Joey was here, and he says, you just went from corporate compliance to talking to a family to preparing this and talking to another company. And he's like, how did, and I said, I'm an autism mom, an autism parent, rather, because as parents, we, what happens is our children frame us and prepare us. And almost every little thing that we are not good, we think we're not good at, right? We're like, oh, I'm not a good speaker. You're going to be a speaker. I've not everything. And so the challenge of, of being an autism parent, one day I just kind of woke up and said, this is who I am, number one. And I'm not going to apologize for being well versed in all of these spaces.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:09:45]:  
I'm well versed in all of these spaces. So I'm able for a parent to come to me. And I'm like one stop shop, you know, whether it's IEP navigation, whether it's product helping families get products, speaking with medical teams, I can just go on and on and on about, that's how my day is. Every day is very different. And I started with being grateful to be able to do the things that I do. My son gave me a schedule you couldn't make up. And early on, I made a promise to Doctor Lester Greenspoon. I call him Joey's undocumented grandfather, you know, because the conversations that we had, the compassion and empathy he provided me and the research and the knowledge he passed on to me.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:10:50]:  
I made a promise to Joey and Doctor Greenspoon that I would never turn down. A parent that contacted me, my attorney would yell at me all the time, what are you doing? And I said, as long as it's a closed call, it's within confidentiality. As long as I can legally bind the call, I'm going to provide the input. That has been really basically a crash course for, like, you know, 2009. I was very fortunate to work with, you know, some of the greats in this industry, and they taught me a lot. You know, they taught me, but as far as my average day sake, I wake up talking about, you know, wake up doing, you know, apostille and legalizations in foreign countries. By noon, you know, I'm on a call with a law firm or a social worker, you know, 02:00 I'm doing pleadings or preparing, you know, criminal cases for attorneys and that, you know, so if, but if there's a parent who calls me in the middle of the day, I drop everything.

Chloe [00:12:08]:  
Yeah, it's, um, it's definitely a gift to be able to support other parents on the journey and giving them a leg up. I also, I keep going back to things that reminded me of, like, random quotes and stuff, but there is a meme that I always loved that it was like a special needs parent falls into a hole, and then it's like the government's there, and the government's like, what hole? Like

everybody else is like, I see you. I don't know what to do, though. Good luck. And then it's like a special needs mom comes along. All right, I've been in that hole. I'm gonna die.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:12:44]:

Yeah. Come on. Ready to help you back out.

Chloe [00:12:46]:

And I feel like that's like, one of the greatest gifts of, like, getting our asses handed to us over and over again for our children is that hopefully we can make the path a little bit easier for the people who. Who are coming behind us.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:13:01]:

And I don't think we're necessarily here to be superstars. And I think that that's probably been. The one thing that's been misunderstood with me is being in the legal space. I understand how much a family can expose themselves to the point to where it's dangerous. Right. I had an attorney, or have an attorney. Joey had an attorney, and then we had another attorney that represented us both. And I started to, early on, started to see a lot of families coming forward, which has been great to share the experience, but they did not know how to navigate in this space.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:13:46]:

Some parents ended up with CPS knocking at their door. Some parents ended up with losing services. And it's because it was new, and I'm definitely not upset. However, it came with a lot of responsibility, and the responsibility and knowing the dynamics of our homes. And so you have two misunderstood communities. You have the cannabis community who's fighting, and then you have the autism community. And I think we constantly stay in finding position. Like, we're like, okay, what are we fighting for today? And it.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:14:27]:

You know, it became very tricky. And I think a lot of people didn't understand why I didn't take any risk. Our risks are catastrophes. If someone at my son's school disagreed on this. This choice, I needed to be able to counter it and counter it with this medical team countering, you know. You know, I had to be able to go. I'm in an educational setting. Educators are not medical professionals, and medical professionals are not educators.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:15:06]:

So I had to learn, you know, when and when not to say things. And it's. It's one thing to be happy that your child is doing well on cannabis therapy. It's another thing when someone is smiling in your face, and then they're actually the person who calls CPS. Right. Because of their lack of understanding the dynamics in our homes. And I started to take a stance. I think I've always been this way.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:15:37]:

You know, your opinions will fall by the wayside with me, because until you've spent 48 hours in my house, in my shoes, you should probably leave your opinions at the front door. Right. I knew the importance of having my attorneys involved and having the medical team have exactly what they needed to defend me and my choice.

Chloe [00:16:02]:

Yeah, it's a scary world out there. I've definitely spent plenty of time concerned about cps being called on me for doing alternative treatments, taking run me down to Ecuador, blah, blah, blah. All of it's totally safe and not against any sort of, you know, I am a doctor. These are all things that are being managed by doctors, but you just never know out there. And it is really

important to sort of COVID your ass, and there's no greater fear or risk than. Than literally losing your child to one of these things because you're not being.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:16:38]:

Cautious enough and really knowing what cautious is. Right. I've speak with parents all over this country, and I'm like, yeah, that's not good. That's not good. You probably don't want to hotbox your kid before he gets on the bus to go to school. Some things. So common sense has also played a huge, you know, and then also, I think knowing that these families, they don't. We are so, like, keen on our kids, and whether it's their diets, it's their ot, it's their speech is, there's teacher, there's this coordinator, it's this agency, and then all of a sudden, someone from the cannabis industry comes in and says, oh, you know, this is a great product, and you can use this, not knowing the dynamics that we have to go through.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:17:35]:

Right. And so it's. I've always remained, you know, this little conservative piece, because if I'm not able to attend court, if I'm not able to talk to a medical team, if I'm not able to do any of these things. Name me one advocate who is.

Chloe [00:17:55]:

Yeah.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:17:55]:

Right now, we, you know, there's a lot of information, but the information typically doesn't apply to our homes. And so when we go to these states and they have autism, on the medical marijuana legislation or the symptoms, we still have a catch 22. And that catch 22 has not changed because state negligence laws haven't caught up to marijuana laws. So it's kind of like the wild, Wild west. We have laws that are in place, but we still have people with opinions. Right. And those opinions become kind of used at whenever they decide they want to use it.

Chloe [00:18:40]:

Yeah, well, everybody's got an opinion, and everybody gets to say, you know, their opinion, especially when it comes to how people are parenting and caring for their child with special needs that they know nothing about. What. What are sort of. What is the legal status right now in terms of using cannabis for autism in most of the states? I know it varies from state to state, but what. Yeah, what does that actually look like for a family that might be interested in trying cannabis and where?

Mieko Hester Perez [00:19:11]:

So, obviously, myself, Paige, figgy, we, you know, there's a few others that I can't remember at the moment. There's Jaden's hope there's, you know, what we have done is, although we have opened the door to this particular treatment option, it doesn't go without challenges. Chicago's you have to have, I believe it's two physicians sign on. They have autism. A part of their legislation specifically. So in the states that haven't specifically, they do have, you know, the basic guidelines, state guidelines. Right. But then I noticed the other states have a symptom.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:20:01]:

Right. Here's where it starts getting really interesting. Even though it is. We have a lot of federal funding in our home, right? So my default to everything is until further federal laws are passed, we still are up for scrutiny simply because marijuana laws have not caught up to state laws. So under negligence, child negligence laws, CPS can still intervene. You can still go through a divorce, and it is a variable, and it's a huge one.

Chloe [00:20:37]:  
Money.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:20:37]:  
Right. And so I'm not putting any parents down that consume or not consume. It's just a variable.

Chloe [00:20:46]:  
Right.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:20:46]:  
And so when you go to rec states, then it starts getting really tricky. You have a rec state that has marijuana loss and have autism or autism symptoms, and it's still not ironclad. I believe even in Colorado and in California, you can provide cannabis to your child at school. None of this is well thought out. Is it a. Is it. Am I okay? Am I happy? Yeah, I'm happy that we are pushing forward any way we can. Right.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:21:24]:  
However, doctors are still obligated by law to report cannabis. And if you have a minor and you go into ER and they have cannabis in their system, here is where the navigating starts. You really. And so what I do is try to at least prepare families to understand how to navigate, how to protect themselves, how to build a paper trail of docs, to be able to support, and then also be able to, you know, to really understand that discretion is everything until further federal laws are passed. And that's simply because we have all of this federal and state funding in our home. I mean, I was all over the tv for. For years on years, but you never heard me say cannabis in an IEP meeting. Yeah, it's great.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:22:23]:  
He's making great progress, and whatever we're doing collectively is working. However, you would never hear me say cannabis at a meeting, an IEP meeting, or anywhere else. And really, it was based off of when Joey was five years old, and I was in an IEP meeting, and I had a kindergarten teacher tell me about psychotropic medications. I never questioned her medical degree, so. And here I am, you know, four years later, embarking on this. This treatment option and really questioning myself, like, why did I listen to an educator on medication?

Chloe [00:23:10]:  
It's so hard, though. I mean, you know, like, I feel like for me, even. Even as a practitioner, you know, when our kids are in the fire, when we're scared of them dying or of them having, you know, like, Remy, as I was telling you before, we've had, you know, toxic mold in our house for the past year. He's been hysterically crying for hours on end, screaming, scratching my face, pinching me, throwing shit, and, like, I'm. Like, I'm just trying to keep my sanity, you know, like, you know, so a lot of times for us parents, like, we're ahead. We're at our brink, and somebody comes to us with authority, acting like they know what's best, and they've seen this with other kids and blah, blah, blah. And so you just sort of are like, okay, is it gonna help? Like, yeah, I'm just, like a breath right now.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:23:58]:  
So I used to blame myself. Yeah, I used to blame myself every day, why I made that decision. And I know it happens to a lot of parents. And so, you know, typically, if a family contacts me, I go right back to that place. I don't think I'll ever lose that place where I had no answers. And I blamed myself. I blamed myself for what I didn't know. I blamed myself for what I did know.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:24:29]:

And I really needed to get out of that. So typically, when parents contact me, I let them know, well done, because we don't say that a lot. And that was the first, I think, ten pages of my book. It's letting you know you're all right. Whatever decision you made, you made it right. And it's not right or wrong, because there is. We can't walk into a bookstore or get an ebook that says, this is specific to your child. There should be more books available because we all have these little individuals, you know? And some symptoms are the same, some symptoms aren't whatever.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:25:16]:

But it's. What I try to do is just really try to empower the parents, because we do go through so much grief. I would love to tell you, since Joey passed away, I don't wake up every day and. And miss him every day. I wake up and I'm waiting to hear him say, mom. However, I've transitioned into. He's in college now, and so it helps me to, like, he must be giving somebody else a piece of work, you know, being a piece of work for someone else. But I thanked autism, the diagnosis and my book, because without it, I wouldn't be the person I am today.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:26:00]:

Where I didn't accept anything. I didn't accept when they said, oh, you know, the way, you know, your son weighs, you know, 72 pounds. He's nine years old. And I said, no. So we're all, he's got, like, six more months to live on these medications. And the medical team agreed. And I said, not on my watch. So it was, you know, and I, knowing how impactful that decision was, I knew that I could not do it without making sure that other families could do it as well.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:26:35]:

And so, you know, and with that responsibility, I think that's how that was. Like, the first ales misunderstood in the cannabis industry. They were like, we don't get her because it's never been about money. It's been about being the person I needed the day I uncovered this information and said to his medical team, if we don't do this, I'm going to lose Joey a lot sooner. And so I have such a tremendous respect for the cannabis group that embraced me, and doctor Bernard Rimlin Washington. I told him, I said, I'm a legal secretary. He was like, use my degree. I got you.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:27:27]:

And I remember I was working with two individuals that own buds and roses here in California, and it's Aaron and Tyler. And they came in and said, we got you. It was DNA, genetics. Don and Aaron, I mean, and I know the industry has grown so much, I could never repay them for what they've done. I mean, every. I mean, I know the industry has evolved, but there are some individuals that played such a key role without social equity that came in and said, Mieko, we got you. And, you know, whether it was Jorge Cervantes, whether it was even Ed Rosenthal, and it was, you know, this pocket of cultivators out of Mendocino county here and out of Humboldt and Jinx and Portland and genetics. And I.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:28:36]:

These guys came and just put themselves around me and said, we got you. And so it's an un. I will never, and I don't think anyone will ever understand how much I owe them for just being Joey's uncles. They were brothers. They were the brothers that I needed. And so that's the group I started with, and it lends such a tremendous value to how I do things today.

Chloe [00:29:15]:

That's amazing. It's great that you got that support. I think, just on a note, in terms of Joey, I know that our kids give back tenfold what they get. So I feel like just having the blessing of being around him and getting to learn from him and to support him and to experience life

through his eyes and this wild world probably meant just as much to them as their support meant to you, I have no doubt. Plus, getting to work with you, I'm sure, was quite a treat.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:29:54]:

I don't know if it was a treat, but even, I mean, the funny thing is, those guys knew I knew nothing. They knew I was just like, I knew nothing. I said, but this isn't something I can't figure out. And this is. I mean, I have all the time in the world. Let's, you know, it was, but they helped me, and it was like a crash course from some of the coolest guys on earth, right? Because I just remember during that time that everyone was like, oh, my God, you're talking to Don and Aaron and you're talking to Cushman and you're talking to, those are like the top, you know? And they would go. And I'd go like, wow, okay. And I would give them a hard time.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:30:39]:

I'd be like, I don't do all of these other names. Just don't tell me your cannabis name. Tell me your real name. Like, I was just so, you know, like, you guys, you guys get it, right? You know, like, I can't. I need to understand, so I need to bring you back. And, and I also understood that my willingness to want to at least help with moving forward in this space, and I come with no motive other than to help the autism community and the community because we needed something. And so my anecdotal input, um, you know, has really recently, I mean, it's, it's matched the, the white papers that are today. And, and I go, and I go, how did I know that that long time ago? Like, how did 2009, like, what was I.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:31:42]:

But I was so focused.

Chloe [00:31:44]:

Well, I think it's, um. I mean, I think as moms, as parents, we have an incredible connection to our kids and then, and intuitive ability to know what they need. And for me, as an herbalist, I always just think, let's try herbs first. They're a lot safer. You know, it's really infuriating dealing with the hoops, even just in the hemp industry, as we've talked about before. So I can imagine with cannabis, it's a lot harder, and it's something that I definitely will likely looking to for Remy at some point. Luckily, his seizures are under control right now, and he, since the stem cells, has been better since this mold last year. But we'll still be working on a bunch of stuff.

Chloe [00:32:29]:

But what in terms of kids on the spectrum, as you mentioned, it is a wide spectrum. Every child is different. What are some of the things that you've seen kiddos respond to? And how have you seen cannabis help some of the kids and adults who are on the spectrum? Because I feel like that's so important for some families to hear because it is really powerful and again, really, really safe. There are so many ways to modulate it even so that there are less psychotropic effects now while still getting a lot of the therapeutic benefits.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:33:03]:

It's really interesting because when parents come to me, I always tell them finding a product is a piece of cake. It's the navigation after that, and it's knowing that every three months you're going to increase, decrease puberty. There's all, you know, new teacher. There's so many things that most advocates are going to say like, oh, buy this and it's going to work. However, our children go through so much change that affects their day to day. It's not as easy as it appears. Right. And so usually, I mean, I have experience in working with 18 months to 52 years old with persons on the autism spectrum, with cannabis therapies.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:33:56]:

And so I have some families who have stayed with me for ten years plus, because our children have such a. I'm not going to say they're predictable. However, if your child's been going to



school for two weeks and the bus is late, they have a substitute. They don't like the aid, they have itchy socks. It's like all of these things are definitely things that affect them during the day, right? How much they ate before the cannabis, after the cannabis, what activities they did while they were on cannabis, prior to the cannabis, they have to go to the dentist. So they need. There's so many of those different scenarios that an average advocate does not have any inkling. They are just like, hey, here's the best thing to buy.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:34:51]:

Well, you're missing the whole plan. You're missing the goals. What is our goal? Okay, let's build a plan according to that. So every family that contacts me, it isn't the same consultation. It is a consultation that is specific to your child and your child's goals. And I think that isn't a one shoe fits all. You can't go to your doctor and say, well, my son runs all over the place. He does this and he does this and he does this and they go, oh, we got one pill for that.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:35:28]:

Kenneth is used to assist in a well defined plan or goal. If not, then you're never going to be able to see progress. And that's really, you know, huge. And I think a lot of people miss when they are consulting for persons on the autism spectrum. We are conditioned from three years old to build a plan and a goal. When did we just decide we're going to give cannabis because they, we need, you know, so really I try to, like, when I talk to the parents and we, I really try to provide realistic outcomes, and without realistic outcomes, I can't. I'm unable to say, yeah, CBD will work. You'll never hear me say, like, something in general, yeah, not, our children are not in general.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:36:23]:

And as long as they have an IEP, all of their information is confidential. So when I tell you cannabis, and then I have, like, this crazy rule of thumb about who, who needs THC and who needs CBD and who needs one to one. And, you know, all, the only ratio, when I talk to families, the only ratio you need is, is it CBD or is it THC or is it 50 50? Any ratio outside of that I think is extremely confusing. And my whole thing is, when I do these consults, I include their medical team. So I include the medical team because, number one, they may be on other psychotropic medications which may not work well, or they may, you know, have, we have to decide, are we taking it in the day or are we taking it in the night? Like, there's so many other things that are being taken into consideration. And so usually, you know, I have my medical, my consultation book, and I'll have doctors say, well, let me take a look at your book. And they're like, oh, crap. She writes like us because I'm already computing like, oh, we need to take this in a day.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:37:50]:

This is where we need to start. And, and the huge, the biggest misconception or how to gauge is start low. I'm having such a problem with that because parents are starting low. If the dispensary only carries a product that is 30 milligrams, that's the lowest in that dispensary, you may be able to divvy it up. You may be able to like, go, okay, I'm going to give them 0.75. And it's just like, okay, wait a minute. So I find myself walking into dispensaries and finding products that are the most appropriate starting point.

Chloe [00:38:38]:

Yeah, I've been pretty disappointed with a lot of the products at the dispensaries. So I'm hoping one day to play, play in that space.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:38:49]:

You will, because I'll be there to help you. And it's because I've worked with quite a few companies, and the one thing that I really had a disconnect with is them understanding our community is not for sale. We. And it. The reason why it's an easy sell for me is because I'm in

it. The reason why it's an easy sell for me is because I understand the dynamics in our home. The reason why is. And I said, and I don't even.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:39:24]:

It's not a sale to me, period. Right? I don't. So you have a lot of people who say, oh, well, you know, we want Michael to do this because she has the autism community. You don't know what it took to number one. There's a whole lot that goes into that. Number one is trust. Right? And so if a company is asking me to help them, they have to understand, you gotta follow my steps, because if you don't follow my steps, I'm the first one to call you out. I'm the first one to say, oh, you're just trying to get into my community.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:40:04]:

You're not really here to invest in knowing why. You just want. And so, you know, that's. I think that's where I've really stumbled in the cannabis community, because, number one, I don't want to be, you know, I want to be known as an advocate. That doesn't just help you with this treatment. I want to help you navigate for success. My job isn't to send you to a dispensary to buy ten products. My job is to find the most appropriate product.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:40:40]:

So when you go back to your medical team, we're all, you know, everyone is all on the same team. That's it. And recently, it's been pretty interesting because it's been more of families coming to me for cannabis. And then nine times out of ten, it's really because they don't understand the composite of special education laws, which I am quite familiar with, and also knowing how to utilize those laws to empower us as parents.

Chloe [00:41:20]:

So I think the laws are so daunting, and I think it is interesting to think of how unique our kids are. I often get, you know, I mainly advocate around epilepsy and rare genetic disorders. Right? So, like, I get parents who call me all the time also, and they're like, well, should I just give my kid Remy's revenge? I'm like, that might be correct. Like, you're gonna have to kind of, like, phone call, but get on the phone with me and let me at least know a little bit more, because maybe you just need magnesium, or maybe I'm not going to sell you something just because I can sell you something because it works for my kid. But one last question for you, because I know you have a hard stop, and I could talk to you about this all day. I was just personally curious. What is the thing that you miss doing most with Joey? Because I think about him a lot and how special and unique our bonds are with our boys. So I'm just.

Chloe [00:42:21]:

I'd be curious to hear what sort of trouble he would get into that makes you laugh still a lot. Or what if there's any sort of random memory that brings a smile to your face? If you would like to share, I would love to hear it.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:42:36]:

Wow. He kept me. I think he was probably my biggest cheerleader. I remember being on the doctor show, the Good Morning America. I remember all of these things, and I remember coming home, and I would be so happy, and this kid would sign juice box like he had no. Like, it did not matter. I'd be like, oh, my God.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:43:10]:

Miss him keeping me in a place of, you're not done. Even now? The last couple of months, I've transitioned, and it's so crazy. It was one day I was doing consulting for cannabis products, and then the next day, I had a family law case. And then I haven't stopped, and I'm thinking to myself, I know this is Joey. I know he's what he's doing. He's forcing me to stay in this space

because I'm not done yet. And he's reminding me, mom, you need to stay here. We need to finish what we started.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:43:54]:

It's the one thing that I've always taken very, very seriously. And as more families have contacted me recently, I know they're sent by Joey. So, you know, really, most of all, I miss him because I would always have to if I was upset, and I didn't realize how much this would affect me, but when I was upset, Joey would have me running around the house. I literally had to learn a poker face because I knew if I was crying or depressed or worried or anything, he allowed for me to forget about it. He allowed for me to go, oh, crap. I got to make sure Joey has his medical stuff. I got to go to the medical store. I got to do this.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:44:42]:

He didn't allow for me to process any grief or doubt myself. It's been about six years since he passed away, and I still feel a little lost. I wake up every day and I'm like, okay, here we go. And so he. I think recently, because when I really start to miss him, all of a sudden, the universe starts sending me not only families, but sending me things and to make me busy. So all these years, I thought I was protecting him. I had no idea that he was protecting me. Yeah.

Chloe [00:45:31]:

These kids. These fucking kids, they're so incredible.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:45:35]:

Yeah. Yeah.

Chloe [00:45:36]:

Thank you so much for sharing. He sounds like he was just such an incredible force. And he chose the right mama.

Mieko Hester Perez [00:45:46]:

They usually do. They choose us. I'm pretty sure they absolutely do.