

GMSB 231

[00:00:00] **Antony Whitaker:** Welcome to the Grow My Salon Business podcast, where we focus on the business side of hairdressing. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker, and I'll be talking to thought leaders in the hairdressing industry, discussing insightful, provocative, and inspiring ideas that matter. So get ready to learn, get ready to be challenged, get ready to be inspired, and most importantly, get ready to grow your salon business.

[00:00:28] **Antony Whitaker:** Hello and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker, and it's great to have you here with us today. Now, in case you don't already know, video versions of our podcast are now available on our YouTube channel. So if you'd like to put faces to the names, then head on over to grow my salon business on YouTube and like, and subscribe to the channel.

[00:00:51] **Antony Whitaker:** So with that said, on with today's show now with every episode, I try and look for an angle that makes it relatable, informative, and to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Now, the majority of our listeners are salon owners, and many of them are also parents. And with both the roles of parenting and business building, there are inevitably rewards and challenges along the way.

[00:01:18] **Antony Whitaker:** Now, for some people, those challenges are just the normal things that life throws our way. But for other people, the challenges that life presents them are seemingly insurmountable, but somehow they managed to find an inner strength and a depth of love and commitment. And they managed to find a way to keep going because there is no alternative.

[00:01:40] **Antony Whitaker:** And so it is with today's guest, CJ Morello, who along with his wife have two very special children in their life. So in today's podcast, we will discuss the importance of knowing your why and how to deal with the challenges that life throws at you and so much more.

[00:01:59] **Antony Whitaker:** So without further

[00:02:01] **Antony Whitaker:** ado welcome to the show CJ

[00:02:03] **CJ Morello:** Hi, Antony. Thank you so much for having me on the show. It's really exciting to finally be, uh, you know, on the show instead of listening to it like I have for years. So, um, excellent to be here and thank you so much.

[00:02:15] **Antony Whitaker:** My pleasure. It's really good to have you. I'm really looking forward to this conversation today because

[00:02:21] **Antony Whitaker:** you know, we're going to go into some areas that I haven't really talked about with anyone else on the podcast before Um, so that's, that's going to be exciting and it's going to be interesting for a lot of other people as well.

[00:02:32] **Antony Whitaker:** So, um, Let's just start as I start with most people, which is I get them to pretty much introduce themselves by giving us an

[00:02:41] **Antony Whitaker:** overview of you and your background. So, if I could just ask you who

[00:02:45] **Antony Whitaker:** is CJ Morello, give us your sort of two-minute backstory for context of everything else we're going to discuss.

[00:02:52] **CJ Morello:** Yeah, sure. Absolutely. Um, yeah. So obviously my name is CJ. I'm a salon owner here in Sydney, Australia, uh, and two beautiful salons. I'm very, very proud of, uh, one in Rozelle here in Sydney called Emma Dean Salon and the other is in Newtown also in Sydney called AH Salon. Uh, across the two, um, I like to think that they're a good size.

[00:03:13] **CJ Morello:** So Emma Dean, 10 stations, three basins and over in Newtown at AH, uh, 17 stations, six basins over there. I've got a staff of about, um, 30 now across both salons. Um, and yeah, we set foot into the industry maybe six years ago. And obviously over that, that six years, it'd be a pretty interesting time with a lot of things that have happened globally and locally.

[00:03:35] **CJ Morello:** Um, and probably, uh, the biggest tidbit to add to my backstory is that I'm not a hairdresser. And I'm not even sure I'd set foot in a salon before I bought my first salon when I was 37, um, now being 43.

[00:03:47] **CJ Morello:**

[00:03:48] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. All right. Well, um, why hairdressing? At 37, why all of a sudden think I'm going to buy a hairdressing salon? So you bought an existing salon, did you?

[00:03:57] **CJ Morello:** Correct. Yeah. So, I mean, that's a great question. That's really the question that, uh, we, and whenever I say we, um, I'm either talking about my wife and I, or I'm talking about my business partner and I, and in this case, I'm talking about my business partner and I. Um, so I'd always been involved in small businesses.

[00:04:12] **CJ Morello:** I'd always had a history of working with small teams and just, I don't know if I'd call it an entrepreneurial sort of outlook on life, but I was just always drawn to opportunity. Um, and when my best friend of at that time of 25 years, who was very academic and is very academic, you know, PhD in chemistry and was, was raising a family in, in Finland, uh, working at, forgive me, whatever, their version of what we call here the CSIRO, which is basically the government science research body.

[00:04:43] **CJ Morello:** Uh, he was bringing his family back to Sydney and he said to me, bring the family back. I need to create a life for them and a science wage is not going to cut it. I want to get into small business and I want to do it with you. What do you think? Um, and from there, really, it was, it was a snowball of, uh, of research and looking into different industries.

[00:05:04] **CJ Morello:** And we just kept getting pulled back to hairdressing for a few different reasons. Um, the financial side, obviously, um, it's, it's not sexy to lead with, but the financial side really appealed to us. Because we liked that it wasn't, hairdressing wasn't two or three big clients, you know, it wasn't like having, um, you know, a couple of two, 300, 000 a year clients where if you lose one, you know, you're in real hot water.

[00:05:31] **CJ Morello:** What we liked about hairdressing, it's, it's, it's regular drip fed, uh, income that's steady out over a lot of different clients. So that really drew us to it. We like the cashflow aspect. And I love working with small teams. I just love people. Um, and I thought hairdressers would be a lot of fun to be honest with you.

[00:05:50] **CJ Morello:** That's definitely something that turned out to be true over the last six years. Um, but in a nutshell, that's why we sort of ended up on hairdressing, you know, between my personality and, and Craig, my business

partners, sort of numbers acumen on the background, it kind of just made sense. Um, and we were blissfully naive Antony, we were blissfully blissfully naive. I don't know. Yeah.

[00:06:15] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Well, because I'm sure you've had it said to you that you don't understand

[00:06:20] **Antony Whitaker:** you're not a hairdresser. I'm sure you've had that said to you from staff over the, you know, years you've had the business.

[00:06:27] **Antony Whitaker:** Um, and that's interesting that you were drawn to it like that You know, because cashflow is an important component of a successful business. And yeah, hairdressing does have a very good cashflow and it's not reliant on two or three big clients where if you lose one of them, you fall over. Um, and it is very much a people business. So yeah, it's interesting that someone from outside the industry.

[00:06:51] **Antony Whitaker:** Looks at the industry and looks at those positive points because there are plenty of challenges that the salon industry has. And, you know, I'm sure we can touch on some of those as we go. Um, but it's, it's great to hear you, look at it from a business perspective and see that there was opportunity there for you and your partner.

[00:07:10] **Antony Whitaker:** Do either of you work in the business on a daily basis? Like you in there behind the desk or something? Hmm.

[00:07:15] **CJ Morello:** 100 percent every day. When I say every day, both our salons are open six days a week and occasionally on a Sunday, but every day I'm on the floor in both salons. And that's really important to me. Um, obviously not being a hairdresser, I'm not doing clients clearly, but anytime I can clear a station or check someone out at the front desk or take an appointment or fold the towels or talk to the team, I guess, you know, a lot of what I bring to the team, what I, what I, what we've lacked in a technical aspect.

[00:07:45] **CJ Morello:** Mindset has been a really beneficial thing for us to be able to talk to our teams about because Hairdressing is, can be a very frustrating, lonely, um, I think it's a very difficult job, particularly for someone who's in their early twenties who's still trying to, you know, figure out what life's all about.

[00:08:04] **CJ Morello:** And I guess what I try to bring to the team is, you know, how to manage frustration or how to, how to manage people problems. Cause it's, obviously it's such a customer service-based role. You know, some of the best hairdressers that I've seen over the last six years that have worked for us aren't necessarily technically the best hairdressers, if that makes sense.

[00:08:23] **CJ Morello:** I don't have the, you know, it's not the ones that get the best color or the best finish or the, you know, the most precise cuts. A lot of the time, a lot of clients are drawn to, to some of our hairdressers who are just really good at making those connections with people. Um, and that's what I feel like if I have any strengths, I feel like maybe that's one of mine as well.

[00:08:42] **CJ Morello:** So, um, so yeah, that's some of the skill set that I try to. Help the team with each day. And I kind of just love the energy of a cell on the floor. So I find it difficult to stay at home, to be honest. So I really want to go and just be part of that. You know, the music's playing and it just, it's a nice place to be.

[00:08:57] **CJ Morello:** So, you know, why wouldn't I want to be there?

[00:08:59] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, exactly. Okay. Well, that, that sort of segues perfectly into what we are really going to talk about here. When we first spoke about you coming on the podcast, you said to me that you would really like to talk about the power. of knowing your why and that intrigued me. Um, and so tell us why that's so important to you.

[00:09:24] **CJ Morello:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I guess what we're talking about there is that the power of someone's why is the reason you get out of bed.

[00:09:30] **CJ Morello:** You know, and I think a lot of people sort of think about that concept a lot of, well, I've got to get out of bed, you know, I've got to go to work and I've got to feed my kids and I get that, but it's, it's a stronger driving force that I think every person really needs to have. It's a purpose for you on, on why you're on earth.

[00:09:48] **CJ Morello:** And for me, I've got an extraordinarily strong why and an extraordinarily strong, um, driving force behind me that through all those difficult times of owning the Salons in the last six years and COVID obviously that we've all sort of gone through in different ways was one of those. Um, in our first 12 months of owning our first salon, we, uh, like you said, that was an

existing salon and we had six staff that we, we took on who were already in the business.

[00:10:16] **CJ Morello:** Uh, five of those six staff were women and in the first 12 months, four of the five got pregnant. So when we took over the business within 12 months of owning it, uh, four of the six staff left from attorney leave and only one came back. So for two guys that had never been in that industry before, man, we had to figure that stuff out quick.

[00:10:37] **CJ Morello:** And we, we got about, uh, you know, a decade's worth of salon management inside of 12 months about rebuilding that team, figuring out what to look for, for a good employee, let alone a good hairdresser. Um, I'm really proud to say that we, we built that team up and today that teams of about 12 in that salon, it's, you know, it's doubled in terms of gross revenue and net profit as well.

[00:11:00] **CJ Morello:** Um, but the only reason I got through some of those tough times because it was my. Why? Which is based around my family. So, um, previously obviously talked about the professional me with the salons and I'm a very proud salon owner. And when I'm not at work, I'm, I'm an equally or even obviously bigger, more proud father of two, just beautiful rays of light, my two, my two children.

[00:11:23] **CJ Morello:** So my eldest son. Um, Maddox, who's six years old and, uh, and my daughter Ada, who will be four, uh, in March, um, two just gorgeous little creatures who, uh, I guess what, uh, what a doctor would probably refer to as who are both profoundly autistic.

[00:11:43] **Antony Whitaker:** So. CJ I'm going to assume that everyone has heard of autism but like many things, you don't always know a lot about something until it impacts on you personally. So can you just explain, just give us a brief overview of what exactly is autism?

[00:11:57] **CJ Morello:** Yeah, and that is an important question. And autism is a spectrum that is extremely broad. So to say what it is, is it's difficult to answer for everybody. So what I might do is maybe just answer for it. It means for my children and our family. So, um, for my 2, 2 little ones, it means it's extremely and highly impacted their ability to communicate first and foremost.

[00:12:23] **CJ Morello:** So. Both of my Children are nonverbal. Um, what we like to say is pre verbal because we we do, um, you know, potentially they will talk at some stage. But at this point, communicating verbally is not something they're able to do. Um and even just general communication you might see from a child, you know, pointing or gesturing for something or using hands and things like that is not something that certainly my six-year-old.

[00:12:49] **CJ Morello:** As virtually never done. So communication is limited to a very small degree. Um, and what it also means for our kids is it means they have a heightened experience when it comes to sensory things. So, um, and that can, that can be a positive and can be a negative. So you might see my children just be in absolute joy from a gust of wind, you know, they might stand outside and feel the wind going through their hair and just feel like this is incredible and just, you know, Antony, think about the most joy you've ever had in your life And it probably doesn't come close to sometimes what my children might experience every day.

[00:13:29] **Antony Whitaker:** Right.

[00:13:29] **CJ Morello:** Unfortunately, those sensory issues um, there is a flip side to that coin and that is That they can find the smallest thing like a, uh gosh, sometimes because of the communication issues, to be frank with you, I don't always know what upsets them, but, you know, it could be anything from one of their toys slightly, you know, being in the wrong space or something not feeling right and that will trigger, uh, an absolute, complete, catatonic loss of their, their control of themselves, you know, it's fear and it's anxiety.

[00:14:04] **CJ Morello:** It's, Um yeah, and that manifests itself into a violent meltdown. Um, and I won't get into that, but, um, yeah, it can be an extraordinarily difficult thing to put it mildly to try and help or try and stop your child physically doing extreme harm to themselves. And that's sort of been a daily life for my wife and I now for, At least four years of my son's life.

[00:14:30] **CJ Morello:** So, um, so yeah, for us, um yeah that's, that's what's autism means to us in our household anyhow, but it is different for everybody.

[00:14:39] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. and is that something? that communication side of it, is that something

[00:14:46] **Antony Whitaker:** that could change? So like they could eventually learn to speak that that, that you just don't know, it's like, it could be like that forever or they could change Is that

[00:14:55] **CJ Morello:** Yeah Yeah. I mean essentially, we're you know, we're working really hard and we've got the kids in a kind of incredible, uh, autism specific school that helps them in a range of different levels. And one of those is communication. Um we don't tend to necessarily focus on verbal communication as a goal. And I know some of your listeners might think that's really odd, but our Children, you know, will develop it in a, in a way that's unique to them.

[00:15:20] **CJ Morello:** Um and communication takes a lot of different forms So whether that communication takes place with the

[00:15:25] **CJ Morello:** aid of some sort of tablet or, you know, some sort of assistance in that sense, um, you know, we don't necessarily have an end goal that our children would speak. If they do Yeah, fantastic

[00:15:37] **CJ Morello:** But um same way I guess I heard an analogy recently of you know if someone's hearing impaired for example the goal necessarily isn't for that person to hear at some point.

[00:15:46] **CJ Morello:** It's for them to be able to live a life.

[00:15:49] **CJ Morello:** That's, uh, it's full and rich and just find other ways of experiencing that, that, that life. Um, that's the way we sort of look at it for our kids.

[00:15:58] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Okay. So that's really what you mean when to talk about your why, and that's your

[00:16:08] **Antony Whitaker:** why that you've got these two little people that you've been blessed with. And you have such a huge

[00:16:17] **Antony Whitaker:** responsibility. As, as A dad to, um, you know, navigate their life through your life as they grow older as well. Because when they're, I forget how old you said, I know you said that Maddox was

[00:16:31] **CJ Morello:** Six and Ada is, uh, is four in March So uh yeah, still very little. Okay. But yeah, but to your point I mean I need to yeah I need to have the thought of my children might work for NASA someday. Or, potentially, they may never hold down a regular job for their entirety of their lives. And as their dad, I feel like it's my job to plan for the worst.

[00:16:55] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. And so I want to pick up on something that you'd said to me earlier, where you said, so my why I'm going to paraphrase your words here. So please correct me if I get it wrong You said my why is that I need to develop 100 year plan to make sure that my kids are okay, whether I'm here or not here and I sort of jokingly said to you, I have a problem planning to get to the end of the week. Um, Yeah And so when you say to me that that's your hundred, you know, that you are happy and you're serious. You're not, that's not a flippant comment. You're really serious about that. Talk to us about that. What does that even sort of look like? That is your why you've got these two beautiful little kids. Who are severely challenged and you don't know what their future holds and as their father, parent, guardian, you recognize that the government or no one else is going to have the vested interest in them, um, that you have and you and your wife. so therefore you're sort of developing 100 year plan.

[00:18:04] **Antony Whitaker:** Just talk to us through that. That's incredible.

[00:18:07] **CJ Morello:** Yeah. So I mean when I first came up with that, and that's after about 12 months of, uh, you know, after we first realized that our children's sort of situation and you know I went through a 12 months period of grief, I guess is what you'd call that. When we first started to realize that our lives were going to be just Radically different than the lives we sort of thought we were going to live. Um, and we realized that, uh, potentially, you know, potentially we'd be looking after our children for the rest of our lives. Um so I went through a period, a very dark period of my life for about a year, Antony, where I, um, you know to be really frankly, you know, crying in my car at five o'clock in the morning and, and, uh, you know, it was going through all those typical, why why me?

[00:18:50] **CJ Morello:** And, you know, I'm not strong enough to do this. And, you know, some of that negative inner speak that really. Put me in a place that was dangerous to be honest, you know, I don't want to get too dark in your show, but you know, it put me in a very difficult situation but after about 12 months, you know, fast forward after I got over myself, to be frank, after I got

past that, I, uh, I started to think, okay, so I've got to find a way to look after these two, two beautiful little children, not just for the rest of my life, which is probably hopefully another 40, 45, 50 years.

[00:19:21] **CJ Morello:** I'm going to look after them for the rest of their lives. Uh, and I started to really, as I, I'm, I'm, I'm, I think as a, as a person, I'm a really even mix of, I'm a very emotional guy, but I'm also, I've got another, the other half of me is very pragmatic. So once I got past that emotional side after 12 months.

[00:19:38] **CJ Morello:** I started to put the plan in place, and I started to think about that. And uh, the more I thought about it, I realized, um, that my wife and I, uh, my, the females in my background, in my lineage, and the females in my wife's lineage, her grand grandmother, her great grandmother, and my grandmother. There hasn't been a woman in maybe four or five generations that's died under the age of 98.

[00:20:03] **CJ Morello:** So I needed to get real that my children may very well live to be 100. And that's where the 100-year plan was born because long after I'm gone, there's going to be an excess of about 40 or so years where I need to make sure my children aren't homeless. I need to make sure my children aren't thrown out, you know, on the street hungry or taken advantage of in a way I don't want to really.

[00:20:27] **CJ Morello:** Think about too hard. So, um, I came up with what is, yeah, my 100-year plan. So, yeah, I've never really had a lot of money or anything like that, but I needed to devise a financial structure that's going to look after them and I don't know if you want to get into that per se, but, you know, it involves unencumbered property investing and generating enough cash flow through business to be able to invest in property Um, so that they have a regular passive income because again, I've got to presume that they can't do this for themselves that they're going to live a modest, happy, but you know modest life until their time on this earth is up.

[00:21:07] **CJ Morello:** Um, and

[00:21:07] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, that

[00:21:08] **Antony Whitaker:** that, yeah, there's, there's two, there's two sort of different directions here that, that I'm not sure which we should explore or

should we explore both. And, and one of them is, one of them is the and that hairdressing. the vehicle to do that, that through this these two hairdressing businesses and potentially maybe more, um, and the money that they spin off, um, as a, as a business owner, that you will use that to invest in other things to generate a passive income. And you're doing that for very, you know, Pragmatic, very practical, very heartfelt, genuine, whatever the superlative is, we can attach to it. You're doing that for the most incredible reason, like your why is so incredibly strong. Um, and that just blows me away. But at the same time, it's the other part of this is sort of saying to Salon owner, as they're listening to this.

[00:22:11] **Antony Whitaker:** You think you've got problems. You don't have any problems. You need to get a strong why. and um, you know, CJ's why is a really strong why it gets him up every morning And it gets him thinking and planning and navigating a road, you know : a path to build a great business. It's going to. Spinoff money that's gonna be profitable. That's going to allow him to invest in other things. There's like so many angles we could talk about here. So you take it in the direction that you feel most comfortable taking that conversation because I really get the power of your why it's massive

[00:22:52] **CJ Morello:** yeah absolutely And I almost to a degree, I almost feel sorry for people, despite our situation And then people look at my wife And I sometimes I can see. you know, empathy or pity or whatever it is in their eyes And I sort of think that. Don't feel sorry for us. I feel sorry for people that are just floating through life who don't have a purpose and don't have a reason and I see so much potential in people every day, um, obviously, you know in our salons but anywhere that's just almost certainly going to go unrealized because they don't have that. Why? Um, and you've tapped into something there a little bit you know when you've said that some people might be listening and they might feel like they don't have problems in comparison to mine and And that's actually a challenge for me as a salon owner. And if you're a salon owner listening to this, you know

[00:23:37] **CJ Morello:** sometimes the staffs will come to you with something in their personal lives or something on the salon floor that they feel like is an enormous problem, you know, something that's rattled them completely and as owners or maybe because we're a little bit older or whatever that is.

[00:23:51] **CJ Morello:** We'll see that, you know, we think that maybe, you know, you're overreacting or maybe that's not a

[00:23:56] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah,

[00:23:57] **CJ Morello:** I could

[00:23:57] **Antony Whitaker:** someone stole my lunch, like, you know, that used to be one of the big problems that people would have in my salon, in the staff room, they'd say, I left my lunch here and someone has eaten it, it's like, honey, if that's the biggest problem you got in life, I know someone you need to talk to.

[00:24:15] **CJ Morello:** hundred percent, a hundred percent But the problem with that though is I mean that's, that's that's not fair for me to take that attitude into work. that's not fair for me to take that attitude to someone because stress is relative. Everyone's living their own lives and if for me to say, Oh, you know, I didn't sleep last night and I have those nights where I don't go to bed.

[00:24:33] **CJ Morello:** Right. I'm up with my son all night and I'm still going to work because of that hundred-year plan. I've never missed a day of work and I absolutely never will. But for me to look at a young stylist and say, your problems don't matter because they're not as big as mine is not what leadership is. And that's not going to help the business. Same way in our autism community. There are families doing it far harder than my wife and I. So if I'm in their company, are they going to look at me and say, I, I, you know, I can't, I can't say anything. That's not fair to me. So it's taught me a lot of things that why

[00:25:06] **CJ Morello:** in my situation at home. And one of them is to try, you know, if you're an owner, sometimes it is an owner of a salon It is difficult, you know, at times when you hear a complaint or, you know, you hear a stress point from the employee, but you got to remember that they're living a life too And if you want to help them, then you've got to listen to them

[00:25:26] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. There's something else that you said to me and I'm sort of jumping about a bit and I'm intrigued by this is that you said to me that your salons are growing. And that you have a wait list of potential stuff, and that's unusual to put it mildly. A lot of people I'll talk to whether they're in the UK or the US or Australia or whatever, I'll say the biggest

[00:25:47] **Antony Whitaker:** problem I've got is attracting and keeping staff.

[00:25:49] **Antony Whitaker:** And then here I talk to you and you say your salons are growing and you've got a wait list of potential stuff. So things are good. Is there a connection here between your why and the sort of business that you're building? Or is there no connection between those two things?

[00:26:06] **CJ Morello:** Yeah. Yeah Wow Um I think there's absolutely a connection. I mean, if the question is, why do we have stylists continually knocking on our doors, hoping to work with us? I mean, that's for a few reasons

[00:26:19] **CJ Morello:** Firstly, they're beautiful spaces and beautiful salons and gorgeous clients who are, you know, we're in a certain part of town that's friendly and you know, it's a nice place to work.

[00:26:29] **CJ Morello:** That's definitely a part of it. Um, and another part of it is because we're not headdresses, our ethos from day one was The hairdressers are gold in our business, you know, they, they are doing things obviously that technically I can't do So my business partner and I from day one, we're just determined to try and make our, our salons the best place to work both in how they get paid.

[00:26:53] **CJ Morello:** You know, we, we pay our staff very well and we try to reward them wherever we can, um, through various ways, some of them fun, some of them extra financial. Um, whatever we can. Um, so we make, you know, the old, uh, Richard Branson thing about to look after your staff and your staff will look after your clients is definitely how we take things on board.

[00:27:12] **CJ Morello:** Um, but to answer your question directly about has my why impacted my business? I mean, I'm never not working Antony. I'm never not working. I actually mean that in an

[00:27:21] **CJ Morello:** extremely positive way. I'm always You know, on Instagram networking, I'm always got my ears open. I'm listening to podcasts like your incredible show all the time because of my why I never I never want to stop learning or speaking to someone or having a conversation And just because of that, my network has just grown where I just know so many more stylists or they just know about our our salons through that effort that I'm putting in. Um so I guess in an indirect way I think absolutely My wife

[00:27:52] **CJ Morello:** has dug us out of some, some holes in the business. It's, it's helped us grow Um, and it's, yeah it's put us on a road map to do some really exciting things. I think

[00:28:01] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, I want to ask you, well, I'm going to ask you, um. How does having two, you know, profoundly autistic children, um, impact on your life and your partner's life? You know, what is it, what

[00:28:14] **Antony Whitaker:** is a day in your life look like? But to put that into context, I just want to say to the listeners that when I was organizing a time to talk to you, you're in Sydney, I'm in London, we're just outside of London, and.

[00:28:30] **Antony Whitaker:** I said to you, well, you know, I'm gonna have to talk to you at seven o'clock at night for you, or maybe eight o'clock at night for you, and you said, oh, no, that's too early. I, I, I won't be able to talk to you till you said 11 o'clock at night. the reason why is that you said I've got to put Maddox to bed, and he.

[00:28:48] **Antony Whitaker:** I have to, and I've done it every single day of his life. And sometimes he doesn't go to sleep until 10 or

[00:28:55] **Antony Whitaker:** 10 30 or whatever. So that's why we're talking at this time of night So it's like this impacts every area of your life. So, so talk to us about how, what that looks like. What's a normal day in your life, your wife's life, you know, like, you know, to deal with this

[00:29:14] **Antony Whitaker:** Uh,

[00:29:15] **CJ Morello:** it it it there isn't an area of our lives that hasn't been impacted by it, to be honest So you know, our children, with their autism, what helps them is structure and what helps them is routine. Um, and to touch on that point, you know, bedtime is a really good example of that.

[00:29:31] **CJ Morello:** Um, you know, we have a shower or bath time at a certain time and then we're in bed and bedtime for us goes for about four hours

[00:29:38] **CJ Morello:** so I will take my son to bed at seven and I, and, uh you know, I stay in there with him. We co sleep because he can't get to sleep

without me physically being there and, you know that might take three or four hours for him because his mind never stops and his body never stops.

[00:29:52] **CJ Morello:** for him to eventually calm down. Yeah. Maybe it's 11 o'clock at night. Um, and that process cannot be interrupted. And and in terms of when I say it cannot be interrupted, the, the, the consequence of that happening. Is, you know, I referenced it a little bit before is, um, you know, the worst case is a violent physical meltdown and for those who are listening who might be in a similar situation or whoever have ever witnessed their child trying to, you know, put a hole through the wall using their forehead repeatedly, you know, that's, I'm on duty I'm on

[00:30:27] **CJ Morello:** duty and I'm there to stop that and I cannot allow my children to be in that sort of situation. Um, so yeah I've done bedtime with my son since my daughter was born and she's going to turn four in a couple of weeks and I did the math on it the other night, so I think it's it's consecutive nights. It's almost 1450 consecutive nights where my wife and I have not been outside the house after dark.

[00:30:49] **CJ Morello:** So if you're talking about, you know, how does it impact your relationship? You know, how does it impact your social life? We've had, we've lost friends, 100%. I think a lot of times in the autism community, unfortunately, I think the rate of divorce is, is incredibly high. Um, but back to the, you know, the power of why my wife and I are on a very similar path.

[00:31:12] **CJ Morello:** And whatever happens, whatever stress that we get put under. we've made a conscious decision to, you know, look to each other, you know, not elsewhere, you know, whatever hardship we go through in business or whatever, it doesn't matter. We're choosing it to make it, make ourselves stronger, not the other way around.

[00:31:28] **CJ Morello:** Um, but yeah, like a day in life for me is, you know, I've got to wake up my son. I can't let him sleep too long. I know that sounds ridiculous, but I've got to wake him up. Otherwise he'll be up even later in the evening. So I've got to wake him up at 7 o'clock. Um and get him ready now for school, which is really exciting. So, uh, he goes to an incredible school called Giant Steps here in Sydney. That's autism specific, but we get him ready, get off to school and he enjoys his day. And then I go straight to the salons and I'm fitting in as much as I can in my day before I've got to head home Um, and this is much better now that they're going to school which is incredible Previously,

my wife was at home trying to manage both of them by herself because we, we unfortunately, we weren't in a situation where we had family help and we couldn't find the right help outside of family either So I've got very clear visions, Antony, of rushing home at maybe 1. 30, a very short day, around 1.30 in the afternoon, um, when my son was demanding to go on walks at that time of day Um, and I'm rushing home and, and finding my wife somewhere around the streets of our house, uh, walking our son, pushing a pram sometimes for two hours, um and trying to relieve her out of that. Uh, and one of the, one of the curly aspects, I laugh now, it certainly wasn't funny at the time.

[00:32:41] **CJ Morello:** Those walks that had to happen. Um, my son wanted to go on the walk, had to go on the walk, but refused to walk. So my wife had to carry him on her shoulders. So if you can imagine at that point he's four he's probably 18 kilos by now And that walk had to go for for for an hour and a half two hours Um there is no one tougher in the world than my wife And that walk was happening rain, hail or shine And I clearly remember coming home in pouring rain, seeing a pram covered in plastic so that Ada wouldn't get wet and my son in his raincoat sitting on my wife's shoulders

[00:33:18] **CJ Morello:** just ruining her back and her shoulders as they walked for 60, 90 minutes. And I jump out of the car and I grab Maddox and I put him on my shoulders instead and my wife and I just look at each other and go, okay, let's just get through it. You know, this is what we're doing and then, you know, we just got to find a way to get through this.

[00:33:35] **Antony Whitaker:** how do you get through that? I mean, that must, what are the, what are some of the coping mechanisms that you come up with to get through that that can be applied in other areas of your life I suppose

[00:33:47] **CJ Morello:** Yeah, great question. there's, there's two, right So again it just I won't dwell on it, but the power of why is that there is no giving up, you know, I can't, I feel like there's a lot of business owners or there's a lot of, um, hairdressers or, you know, in any area of life that when things get hard, they're almost looking for a reason to stop, you know, they sort of think, oh, you know, this isn't the life I wanted or, you know, whenever There's a speed bump, they give up.

[00:34:10] **CJ Morello:** There are no speed bumps for us. Like we expect every day to be extraordinarily difficult and we embrace it. So the power of why it gets me through any situation, but in terms of, you know, if there's another

strategy that I could tell you listeners about to get you through anything, it, the power of positive inner speak will change who you are as a person.

[00:34:30] **CJ Morello:** You know, I grew up in a sort of, in a sort of environment where a negative : internal, um, dialogue, uh, is something that I took into my adulthood. So frequently when I was faced with a challenge through my twenties. I would be talking to myself

[00:34:46] **CJ Morello:** in my head, things like you're not gonna, you're not gonna get it right. You should be giving this task to someone else. You know, you're gonna screw it up. These sort of things, really negative in the speaking. Anytime I was under pressure, I'd crumble. Antony, I'd crumble. I'm not, I am not, by definition, a strong person. It's just not who, who I was. It's not

[00:35:05] **CJ Morello:** you know, by default, it wasn't who I was. But when my children came along, and my power and the why the 100-year plan became a thing They had to turn that inner dialogue. In the positive speak, no, I don't care what happens in my day now. I don't care. And when I say I don't care, please take that the right way, but no matter what situation my children are in, no matter what situation the business is in, man, there is nothing going through my head that isn't we're fixing this.

[00:35:34] **CJ Morello:** Yep. This might be bad now, but you know what? It's probably: a positive in it. What's the positive? What's the lesson we learned from that over and over and over Because just telling yourself the positive that you're saying in front of You And that just comes out It just radiates out of you. It attracts positivity in the people around you and it forces you to find a solution, forces you that in a positive in a speak. I cannot you know, other than

[00:35:59] **CJ Morello:** the power of why that would probably be the other thing that if someone was finding life a bit difficult in business, in your relationship, what you tell yourself, you know, between you and just in your minds, just you alone, what you feed yourself with your own thoughts. You can choose what they are 100%.

[00:36:19] **Antony Whitaker:** And, and so I'm right in saying that it was having to profoundly autistic children that has made you find that in yourself

[00:36:29] **CJ Morello:** Oh my God. Yes, I do I was not Yeah I would I would I would describe myself almost as, you know at times a mental weakling and you

know, an emotional weakling, maybe that's more accurate. Definitely an emotional weakling. If someone said something to me about. My appearance or my abilities. I would

[00:36:45] **CJ Morello:** crumble now I just sort of think like, Oh, okay, well, I don't think that's true. So it's probably not.

[00:36:51] **Antony Whitaker:** I was going to say to you, what, what have you learned about yourself? But I suppose you've just been answering that

[00:36:56] **CJ Morello:** Yeah. No, but yeah no, that, that, yeah. You learn a lot, Antony. So, um, yeah, we've referenced bedtimes a little bit and there was definitely a period that went for a long time. Um, where through the middle of the night, these meltdowns would be happening and there was no sleep and you know, when you're, when you're sleep deprived to the point where you're having almost out of body experiences, you know, when you haven't slept in what virtually is months, um, and you're faced with scenarios like when I'm in that bedroom and I need to look after my son, there's no one coming to help me.

[00:37:27] **CJ Morello:** There is no help on the way. And in some, some ways, I've actually said this to my team before. this is this is a dramatic leap. But hairdressing is also can be very singular when you're standing at the chair and you're faced with something that you're on display. Firstly, everyone on the salon floor can see you, but you're going to come up with a solution yourself because when that client is there, you can't just crumble.

[00:37:50] **CJ Morello:** You can't just yell out. Oh, I need help. You need to find that solution on your own. And when I was when I'm in that bedroom, I know no one's coming through there to help me in this like this dire scenario. The most emotional Situation of, of, of, you know, not being able to sleep for so long and your son is going through a situation in that moment, Antony, you find out exactly who you are and I'll be honest, it's not always the person you thought you were, you know, when you're under extreme pressure, you know, when, when, you know, soldiers in a trench or, you know, when people are faced with abuse or whatever, when you're in an extreme scenario and I've been, and I'm sometimes still in that, You find out who you are, and the only thing I guess I can recommend to people is you don't have to be, if you don't like who that person is, you don't have to be them.

[00:38:39] **CJ Morello:** You can be whoever you want.

[00:38:41] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah,

[00:38:42] **CJ Morello:** You just gotta find the right strategies to do it.

[00:38:45] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, that's really profound. How, How do you look after yourself in amongst all this Like what's, how, how do you do that? I mean, it's not like you get a night off

[00:38:56] **CJ Morello:** No.

[00:38:58] **Antony Whitaker:** I mean? How, How do you, how do you do that? What, How do you nurture, look after, protect yourself

[00:39:04] **CJ Morello:** Yeah, that's a good question, and that's always at the bottom of my priority list, but at the same time, if I'm creating

[00:39:10] **CJ Morello:** a 100 year plan, I do have thoughts that I need to look after my health, because I can't ship off this mortal coil early. I can't leave. Before I've achieved my goal, if that makes sense, and some, some people might think that sounds a little bit morbid or a little bit clinical, that's what my life is, you know, forces you to think about some things that you'd never would have thought about before.

[00:39:31] **CJ Morello:** And I regularly think about my deathbed I regularly think about what my last thoughts will be. And I know exactly what it will be. Um, it will be on my kids. Okay, and I'm not waiting between now and then, you know man I'm not waiting till that point. I'm figuring this out now. So to answer your question, how to look after myself I get regular feedback from people who love me, like my wife, that I don't, for starters.

[00:39:55] **CJ Morello:** Um, but, uh, you know, the biggest thing for me is I [00:40:00] share a lot, I talk a lot, my wife and I talk a lot, I do not bottle things up. You know, everything's got to come out. The longer you keep anything inside negative or

[00:40:10] **CJ Morello:** positive, you know, it's got to come out of you. And whether, if you want to seek out a mental health professional, I've done it I highly recommend it. If you've got one person in your life that listens to you,

when you speak, you know, we've all got friends that necessarily are there for, for the good times, but not necessarily, you know, they're

[00:40:27] **CJ Morello:** the lend an ear, you just need one, you don't need a group, you just need one, um, but do not keep it inside, you know, always keep talking about it. Um, so that would be, you know, how I

[00:40:37] **CJ Morello:** look after myself. I don't get time to myself. Um, just this week at what day is it just yesterday because both of my children were actually in school for the first time ever my wife and I went out for breakfast and had a meal together alone for the first time in six years in six years, it was it was an incredible milestone for us and you know, we still can't [00:41:00] get out at night, but the fact that we were able to. Have that time alone. It was amazing. Um, and yeah, look, I think that's that's how I just

[00:41:07] **Antony Whitaker:** it was a good, I hope it was a good breakfast

[00:41:10] **CJ Morello:** we did was talk about the kids.

[00:41:12] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah, yeah, of course you did. Of course you did. Okay. You have mentioned. A couple of times about school and your kids and you just mentioned it then again, and, uh, I think you said it's called giant steps and, I know that from our conversation that you talked about how it's, uh, is it, it's not government funded Is that correct it's not government funded

[00:41:34] **CJ Morello:** Yeah So the school which is also set up as a charity, um, an incredible sort of facility is set up. So, uh, they need about, I think the figure is about 3 or 4 million dollars a year to keep the doors open and they only get about half of that. Uh, from the government, uh and the school also has an incredible ethos where they don't charge school fees, uh, they don't want to have any barriers to entry for families in my scenario Um so they rely on fundraising,

[00:42:03] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, I mean, the hairdressing industry all over the world have been are often, involved in raising funds for all sorts of different, causes. And I know that you're putting on an event to raise funds for giant steps. So tell us. A little bit about that. I mean, obviously everything we've spoken about up until this point is is relevant.

[00:42:25] **Antony Whitaker:** No matter where in the world you're listening to this, but when you talk about the fundraising event, it's more relevant just to a more local audience.

[00:42:34] **Antony Whitaker:** so explain what this event is that you're putting on and how people can get involved or, you know exactly what it's going to be

[00:42:40] **CJ Morello:** yeah,

[00:42:40] **CJ Morello:** absolutely. So we're putting on an event on March 25th here in Sydney with. Some of Australia's best stylists and most well renowned artists is what I'll call them. And the whole point of the day, they're all presenting a one day look and learn for me, completely free of charge. And the idea is 100 percent of proceeds go to the school Giant Steps.

[00:43:02] **CJ Morello:** Uh, the event's called Come Together. Um, yeah, like I said, One Day Look and Learn. Michael Kelly from Salon Her in Sydney, who's an incredible international educator and beautiful salon Um Belinda Mills from Pipsqueak in Saigon Um Freda Rossetti the co-creator of Mr. Smith Uh and Monique McMahan from Q Color in Sydney Um it's going to be an incredible day and I think it's actually might even be a bit of a landmark day for our industry here in Australia because I can't, I can't find anybody who can tell me about another charity-based day where all the proceeds

[00:43:37] **CJ Morello:** were going to such an incredible cause Um, I'm so proud to be able to rub shoulders with these elite Hairdressers. Um, career hairdressers have just done an amazing job. Um, and just, you know, who leapt at the chance to be honest, I'm indebted to them because they've leapt at the chance to be involved in this event. Um so look yeah you know if you people want to check out the event we will have a little link on there for people who want to donate to the school from wherever you are in the world.

[00:44:04] **CJ Morello:** Um, you can always find this on our Instagram page on the Salem, which is AH Salem in Sydney. If you just look that up you better find us And I'm really excited. Yeah, I'm really excited about what it means for our industry and obviously what it means for the school

[00:44:17] **Antony Whitaker:** Is it a Is it a live event for a whole day with a whole lot of different presenters? And it's in in Sydney. Whereabouts is it in a hotel or

[00:44:27] **CJ Morello:** No it's a it's in a quite a different venue So it's called the Grand Electric, which is typically a, um, a cabaret venue. Um, so in a beautiful space with a lovely round stage in the middle and there's four artists, you know, focusing on different color techniques. How to build your Instagram following and get, you know, build your clients all through, uh, social media channels.

[00:44:47] **CJ Morello:** Frida's just going to come back from London and Paris fashion weeks and talk about the latest trends that she's seeing internationally and how you can replicate them in the salon. Um, so it's a one day look and learn that's just got these four incredible artists that's going to give you a wealth of knowledge.

[00:45:01] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay Um, so you mentioned your Instagram before. So where can people connect with you? Um, on or any of your social channels, how can they reach out to find out more about this event or anything just to share, like, you know, to contact you and connect with you,

[00:45:20] **CJ Morello:** absolutely.

[00:45:20] **Antony Whitaker:** send them

[00:45:21] **CJ Morello:** Yeah, we'll definitely come to AH Instagram page, which is, uh, a underscore H underscore salon. You'll find us on Instagram. There'll be a link there. So if you want to find out more about the event, the link will take you straight to the event. And I manage the Instagram page. So if anyone if there's anyone listening out there that finds themselves and A similar situation to mine or you know if

[00:45:44] **CJ Morello:** you if you ever want to reach out I'm always up for a chat you know and don't feel like there isn't anyone there that's that's not willing to listen because I always am So um find the Instagram page you know if you're interested in checking out the event if you're interested in making a donation you can do that too, no matter where you are in the world.

[00:45:59] **CJ Morello:** Um, or if you just want to find out a little bit more about autism you can do that too So, um, so yeah, that's how they can contact me and how they can find out more about the

[00:46:07] **CJ Morello:** event.

[00:46:08] **Antony Whitaker:** Got it. Okay. Um, well, I'll put those links, uh, in the show notes for today's podcast. So wherever you're listening to this podcast and the show notes, those links will be there. They'll also be on my website, growmysalonbusiness.com. Uh, if you're listening to this podcast with CJ and have enjoyed it, then do me a favor.

[00:46:26] **Antony Whitaker:** Take a screenshot on your phone and share it to your Instagram stories. And don't forget to subscribe and leave us a rating and review on the Apple podcast app. So before we wrap up CJ, is there anything else that you'd like to finish up with

[00:46:41] **CJ Morello:** Well, look, obviously firstly thank you for having me on the show I've been a huge fan for a long time, so it's, it's, it's an honor, Antony, to be sharing some time with you. And I don't say that flippantly, I mean that, you know, very sincerely, um,

[00:46:54] **Antony Whitaker:** My pleasure

[00:46:55] **CJ Morello:** yeah but anything else, the only other thing I'd say that if, you know, a lot of people out there around the globe have probably find themselves in some difficult financial times. Um, I know obviously in the UK that's particularly difficult and I think here in Australia, we're heading down that same path. Um **find your why find your why**, you know, because it'll get you through anything, man It will get you through anything and you'll, it'll be the thing that helps you succeed when everybody else is giving up. So that's the only message I want to leave your your viewers with

[00:47:23] **Antony Whitaker:** I think that's a really good place to finish up with. So CJ Morello, thank you for being on this episode of the Grow My Salon Business Podcast

[00:47:32] **CJ Morello:** Thank you, Antony. Appreciate it.

[00:47:34] **Antony Whitaker:** Thank you for listening to today's podcast If you'd like to connect with us you'll find us at Grow My Salon business.com or on Facebook and Instagram at [Grow My Salon business](https://www.facebook.com/growmysalonbusiness) And if you enjoy tuning into our podcast make sure that you subscribe like and share it with your friends Until next time this is Antony Whitaker wishing you continued success