

# #BehindtheMask with... Ntsiki Mkhize, founder of MentHer

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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This week, we go behind the mask with Ntsiki Mkhize, founder and chief social entrepreneur at MentHer, a global mentorship network supporting female social entrepreneurs. Mkhize recently took part in Liberty's Blue Table Sessions where she shared her financial and entrepreneurial journey.

The theme of the episode was 'work life', about finding the profit and the purpose. "We know there can be no profit without purpose. How can my money work for me when work and life change dramatically?"



#WomensMonth: Sitting at Liberty's Blue Table Sessions with Babazile Mbetse

Evan-Lee Courie 17 Aug 2020



The Liberty Blue Table Sessions is a six-part video series designed to tap into the power of our shared experiences and humanity in the face of unprecedented life changes.

Mkhize's key message to fellow women in business is this: "We should make an effort to invest in ourselves in order to create the future we each desire."



Ntsiki Mkhize, founder and chief social entrepreneur at MentHer.

## **1. So tell us, what's really behind your mask (literally and/or figuratively speaking).**

Always lipstick and a smile, even if no one can see it, it makes me feel like I've somehow dressed up a bit. Along with a million words that I often can't find the energy to express through my mask.

## **2. Where are you locked down?**

I was mostly at home on our farm working on my Masters dissertations.

## **3. How are you finding working from home or physical distancing at the office / how has your way of working changed?**

I've found this new way of working to be exactly my element. As an entrepreneur, I'm used to working from home or turning coffee shops into an office and it's been lovely connecting with people in this way. As a professional speaker, I definitely do miss a live audience. We've always known that technology bridges distance, but the lockdown has really proved that and I love being able to reach new audiences that were previously out of reach because physical live events were the norm.

## **4. Describe a typical workday, if such a thing exists.**

I often sleep really late working on stuff and I find my most productive and creative hours to be between 10pm and 2am, so I wake up around 9/10am and respond to messages (emails and social media). I'll then set out my top tasks for the day and get working. My new routine is fairly new as most of this year has been reading academic papers and compiling my research paper, so we'll see how what's next unfolds.

## **5. How do you maintain a good rapport with your teammates/clients?**

Check-in via mail or WhatsApp and comment on social media posts. I think people who normally don't share a lot on social

media have been doing so more during lockdown and it's been nice to see posts about their family, new things they're trying or their thoughts on an article. I find that little bit of engagement goes a long way.

## **6. How do you socialise these days?**

Zoom calls are definitely the new social norm and almost every "quick" call is now a video call of sorts. I'm fortunate to be with my family and it's always great spending time together.

## **7. What do you do to keep fit, healthy and/or sane (physically/mentally)?**

In this time physical fitness has been at an absolute zero, but I always eat well. I'm a firm believer in eating food that's "alive" so lots of fruits and veggies. I'm part of a Friday mental health group where we share different wellness aspects which have kept me mentally sound and reading books on personal growth.

## **8. What new apps would we find if we scrolled through your phone?**

I discovered a lovely loadshedding app, which I haven't used much as loadshedding was minimal during the lockdown. I also recently got Whova from an event I was hosting, which is fantastic for participating in virtual events.

## **9. Share your favourite Covid-19/lockdown-related meme/gif with us.**

I don't think I have one, but I'm loving the "Jerusalema" challenge.

## **10. What is the first thing you plan to do when the lockdown lifts?**

As soon as travelling is clear, I'm gone. I need a beach and some spacious rooms with a fresh breeze blowing through all day.

## **11. Describe your career and if/how the pandemic/lockdown has affected its course.**

I'm a social entrepreneur, author and speaker. The lockdown has actually allowed me time to focus on a venture I've been meaning to get going and I launched MentHer in this time, a global mentorship network supporting female social entrepreneurs. As a speaker, it's been a very quick pivot to online events, and that has been so well received and I'm enjoying it. As a student, it gave me much needed time to focus on my submissions with minimal distractions.

## **12. Any companies/brands that you feel have responded particularly well to the crisis and/or Covid-19-related campaigns that stand out to you, and why?**

I think universities have responded well with the resources available. There are several criticisms that can be made, but considering the unprecedented circumstances, they've done what they can to keep things going and not disrupt learning, and I really commend all the lecturers and students working overtime to complete the academic calendar.

## **13. What are you working on right now?**

I'm working on the membership for MentHer and getting our first cohort of female social entrepreneurs to come on board to inspire and support one another, as well as link up with a fantastic group of mentors. With this, we'll also be launching our "girl boss" merchandise, which includes the ideal home office starter kit for every entrepreneur.

## **14. What does the 'new normal' look like to you?**

Working with new and different people across time zones and doing more in one day because we no longer have to drive from meeting to meeting, so time can really be maximised with tasks that count.

## 15. What are some of the buzzwords floating around at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself?

"Guuuuur!" and "chiiiiilleeee" often encapsulate every experience based on where the emphasis is placed.

## 16. What advice would you give to other industry folk during this time?

This won't last forever so put time behind that idea, get a plan in place and execute. There's never been a better time to put out an MVP online and test the feedback, there's a captive audience waiting, so engage!

Visit Mkhize's website [Ntsikim.co.za](https://Ntsikim.co.za) and follow her on [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

\*Interviewed by [Jessica Tennant](#).

## ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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