

The HR Mixtape: Hosted by Shari Simpson with Guest Ron Monteiro, CPA, CMA, Author of *Love Mondays* and Former Finance Leader at YaYa Foods Corp

Announcer:

You're listening to the HR Mixtape. Your podcast with the perfect mix of practical advice, thought-provoking interviews, and stories that just hit different so that work doesn't have to feel, well, like work. Now, your host, Shari Simpson.

Shari Simpson:

Joining me today is Ron Monteiro, CPA and CMA, former finance leader at YaYa Foods Corp and the author of *Love Mondays*, a proven process to bring joy back into your work week and life, focused on practical, measurable steps to reduce stress and regain control of time and energy. Ron, thanks so much for jumping on the podcast with me today.

Ron Monteiro:

My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

Shari Simpson:

So I'm always excited to sit down and talk with authors. It's on my bucket list to eventually write a book. And you have a book called *Love Mondays*, which I don't think a lot of people love Mondays. What was really the turning point that led you to write that book?

Ron Monteiro:

So I had a 20 year career in corporate and much of it I loved, but I got to the point where, frankly, I wasn't enjoying Mondays or any other day, like I was getting the Sunday scaries and, you know, the energy level, excitement level

probably wasn't where I wanted to be. And then I went through, you know, we all went through different things during COVID. But I started, you know, really focusing on what do I want to do next? And I started my own business and it worked out really well in the end. I mean, lots of trials and tribulations, but I ended up unintentionally surrounding myself with, you know, people, written books. It had always been kind of like a bucket list, but something I didn't think was possible. I love how you mentioned bucket list. And, you know, things started to line up and I got introduced to the right people. And this concept of Love Mondays is something that's intrigued me my whole life. Like say, why do people, you know, it's only Monday and then Wednesday, Tump Day, and people get excited on Friday. And look, I love the weekends, but like, what if we all loved every single day? So it's just the spirit of everybody's an individual just finding more joy in their lives. And we spend, I think we spend 90,000 hours on average working.

Shari Simpson:

That's insane. Yeah, we forget how much of our lives are spent in the workplace. And it's no surprise that there's all this, you know, books and education and, you know, how do we make work better? You know, you took, I think, a pretty process-oriented approach. Maybe walk us through how, like, having that structured approach really helps us kind of lean into feeling better seven days of the week.

Ron Monteiro:

Yeah, so I think the structured approach that worked for me was starting with hiring a coach. And I had taken this course way back with an individual who had walked a similar path. So he was in corporate and then he started his own training business. And he just had tremendous energy. We had the right chemistry. So I actually hired him and said, look, Wayne, I'm looking to make a move. Are you open to coaching me? And he had this brilliant analogy of, OK, we're crossing the bridge like we were doing something very different. Let's do it one line at a time across the bridge. And he would use that type of language with me, which resonated very, you know, very well. And I started following his advice pretty much. OK, here's what we need to do. and going step by step. So the process was very, very helpful. And specifically, the coaching was

what really, really helped me stick with it as opposed to abandon it when I hit my first two hurdles, right, which were inevitable.

Shari Simpson:

How do you help those who might be in the same spot who might not have the financial means to hire a coach? You know, how do they get into that process where they are finding that balance and setting those processes and not losing sight? I mean, so I think our audience knows this. I, you know, and then last year I found out that I have ADHD. And so it was like a big aha moment for me as I navigated and kind of looked back at my life as to how I've tried to create systems for myself to work. But there are many a pile of things that I have started and not finished because I didn't have kind of, like you said, that person in my corner to be like, hey, you know, let's let's continue doing this. Let's take it step by step.

Ron Monteiro:

Yeah, no, I like your question and clearly we can't all afford coaches and I was at a point where I could, but I think it's around finding who are some other people in your circle who may be going through the same thing and you can use each other as an accountability coach, right? And just to say, what's the amount of time we're spending each and every day on this journey to start finding more joy in our lives. And look, I think it's a simple say, I'm going to carve out 15 minutes a day to work on it. And, you know, the way I structure my book is I put in a bunch of exercises to say, let's work on it as we read or read it and come back to the exercises, because I'm also the type of person, it's very hard to carve out the time to do the exercises, right? But I think to make meaningful change, it takes commitment, right? And so whether it's accountability coach, whether it's maybe just doing a few minutes every day, because our lives are really, really busy, so I don't undress to make that. But it's just that commitment to make a little bit of progress every single day.

Shari Simpson:

Well, and that goes to that concept around really being able to set boundaries and keep them. I've shared this before that, you know, several months ago now, probably over a year ago now, I started blocking out my Fridays to have

no-meeting Fridays. Now, granted, sometimes I had meetings on Fridays, but for the most part, my Fridays now are free. And that changed so much about the way I looked at my work week, what I had to accomplish Monday through Thursday, what I saved Friday for. Now, everybody has that luxury, but everybody does have the luxury of starting to set boundaries. How did you use that process of boundary setting to help make these steps that you needed to make?

Ron Monteiro:

Yeah, and I'll start by, I was absolutely horrible at this in the early part of my career. I would let my work take over my entire life. I wouldn't even, I would skip appointments, dentist appointments, all these things to say, I really didn't understand how important it was. And then I started observing some of the leaders I worked with who were CEOs and executives, and they would carve, okay, they'd block off every single lunchtime. They'd have their assistants religiously block off times in their calendar. I didn't quite understand it, but you know, what I did a couple of years ago, I had to drop my son to school at 7 a.m. or 7 30, and then I had to pick him up at 3 30 was, uh, and I'm, I'm an entrepreneur, so I could figure out a way to do it most days. I blocked those times, my calendar, and I don't have to do that anymore. He walks to school now. I left that in my calendar. And I think it aligns to what you said about your Fridays to say, I'm intentionally carving out time to make meaningful progress on the things that matter. And then the other thing that, you know, from atomic habits, I'm a big book person. There's a cool strategy to say, Hey, what's, what's the thing you may be procrastinating on and reward yourself after. And so every single morning I do a 10 minute meditation. And only if I do that, I have my coffee. And that's a little trick I have because we're all natural procrastinators. So what's, what's a mechanism to almost trick yourself or a hack or, or something like that to carve out time. And when I was writing my book, my publisher said, look, it's about daily action. So let's make a rule at least 30 minutes every single day. And I would, sometimes it would be nine o'clock at night. I'd go to the coffee shop, pretty close to our house. set a timer and some days, 30 minutes, I'm done. Other days, I'd be like, oh, I can keep going. Right. So again, I think it's down to that daily action. I love your strategy of time blocking because, you know, we naturally

procrastinate and our phones are a huge asset and a huge distraction. Right. So let's spend more time with it being an asset, I think.

Shari Simpson:

Yeah, that's such a good point. I, you know, I'm, I'm pretty good with my phone, um, I think compared to others, but there are definitely days when I know that, you know, whether I'm tired or, you know, I've got a lot on my mind, the phone is the default, right? You kind of just end up in that doom scroll. Cause you're trying to give yourself that hit of dopamine to like, maybe if I, you know, sit and watch TikTok for 10 minutes, I'll feel motivated cause I'll have laughed or whatever. Uh, but we know that doesn't work, right? Like our phones are not, are not used that way. You know, you have a background in finance, and I find it interesting whenever I get to talk to somebody who's got that background, but also has this very personable, you know, way of interacting with people and thinking about coaching and work-life balance and stress reduction. How did that help you as you kind of went into this process of writing your book? How did you leverage that background, that finance background that you have?

Ron Monteiro:

Yeah, I know. And again, I've had quite the journey, right? So at one point in my career, I got promoted to a director role, you know, very senior. I was like really taking it seriously. And I had this VP who was I was working with, and he would pretty much send emails the entire day and night. And it was it was not a negative intent. It was just the way he would think of an idea. He was a brilliant guy and he'd shoot off an email. And I had this misconception that I had to respond right away. And I remember very clearly my kids were really young. I came home one day and I'm on my phone and my wife just looked at me and she's like, why are you even coming home? And it was just like a moment for me that just clarified, OK, I got to figure out a way to set some boundaries right back to what you said. And from that day on, I started slowly working on these boundaries. And then by my last corporate role, again, I would block off my lunchtime. So I'd block off my morning. And, you know, if I had to coach a soccer game for my son, for example, I would let my CFO boss know in advance. But the funny thing was, many people in that culture just

didn't really understand that it's OK to set boundaries. And I did it. Many of my peers didn't do it. They would cancel vacations if meetings got moved, things like that. I was at a point where, like, I felt like that I knew my priorities a little better. But many people just don't believe it's possible. So I think there's a huge responsibility for leaders to set an example. And so when I was at those in those senior roles, I would be very clear with my team, okay, it's Friday afternoon, our company is saying summer off, summer Fridays, whatever it is, let's go. And they'd look at me with this bewilderment in their face. So finances, you know, we've been beaten down for many years, right? And it's a hard function because oftentimes you're at the end of a process, right? So you're requiring a lot of information to come to you that you ultimately have to present it. So look, there's going to be peaks. I remember two in the morning, I'm putting a presentation together at 3 a.m. I know other people do all nighters. So as long as that's the exception, that's OK. But I think it does come back to being very clear on boundaries and knowing, hey, I'm going to get the work done in a quality manner. And that's what counts.

Shari Simpson:

Well, and HR sits in that space as well. We don't have the same cyclical demands that finance has, right? Year-end, month-end, that kind of stuff. You can't move month-end, right? It just exists. But, you know, HR often sits in that space where they feel overwhelmed because not only do they have the administrative tasks of some of the cyclical things that they do, performance management, open enrollment, you know, budgeting, those types of things. But then they have the constant barrage of employee requests and employee needs and, you know, employee relations issues and performance issues. It does become very, very hard for that group to set boundaries. And I know earlier in my career, I probably had the same mentality of like, People are depending on me. I am the HR person. It was an HR department of one. And so I was like, well, nothing should happen unless they talk to me, right? Like you create this inflated sense of self, because let's be real. You leave the job, you're going to get replaced, right? Everybody is replaceable, no matter how special you think you are. And so how do we learn to start that? I guess I go back to your book. What's the single habit, right, that's going to produce these early wins for these HR professionals who are trying to do this?

Ron Monteiro:

Yeah, I think, so the book, it's a little bit more on individual purpose, but I think it does come back to just being really, really clear on what your role is and what your vision is for that particular role, right? And I love your point about, hey, we're all replaceable, and that's actually a good thing, right? Many people feel like it's not, you know, it's a good thing to be like, oh, I'm irreplaceable. Well, I don't believe in that. I really believe it's empowering to know, hey, I'm helping the next generation of finance folks or HR folks learn. And, you know, oftentimes, if I couldn't make a meeting, I would send a team member. And it's such tremendous growth for both sides, right? As long as the person's prepared, and I would do my due diligence to set up time in advance. But I think that that habit of just really understanding, okay, what's my vision? Is my vision to help build the department of the future? Or is it really about my own career? that, you know, distinction really helps. And then again, it's back to those simple habits, shouldn't say simple, but those habits of time blocking, and being really, really efficient. And you know, the other thing that in corporations, I worked to 20 years, if a meeting scheduled for 60 minutes, it goes 60 minutes, if it's 30 minutes, or more, I shouldn't say 60, sometimes it goes way longer. But I think it's being very diligent to say, how can we get things done in a more efficient way? And look, I'm an entrepreneur now, so I don't waste time in unnecessary meetings that have been blocked. by somebody, I'm much more, okay, how do we get this done in a more efficient way? And if it takes 60 minutes, and it's worthwhile, perfect. But if we can get it done in 30, or 20, or if we can have a conversation, that really, really helps, right? It's about carving out time, that maybe seems like we can't, you know, find efficiency. But I remember my days, I used to work eight to six, and then like, when do I do my work? weekends, nights, you know, those type of things. So I think it's really looking at our whole schedule and saying, hey, where can I intentionally find more time to do the things that matter?

Shari Simpson:

Well, and there's that adage that, you know, where you spend your time is what is important to you. So, you know, when people say, I don't have time for dot, dot, dot, what they're really saying is that's not a priority for me. Yes. I'm not prioritizing it. And so that exercise of really sitting down and thinking

about, and sometimes people will describe this as I'm going to go do a values exercise or I'm going to go do, you know, something else, some sort of assessment. You know, for those that are going through this journey and they're picking up your book, I'm curious, as you went through it, as you were writing it, was there any ahas that you came through that you were like, wow, I really don't like that thing or that thing, you know, that I've been doing. I really shouldn't have prioritized all these years and I need to make some changes there.

Ron Monteiro:

Yeah, I think it's similar to the last answer where I would literally have other people book my week for me. I would default to whatever shows up in my calendar rather than being very clear on, okay, is this something that aligns to our organizational priorities, our department, our individual goals? And I would just attend, right? It's almost like the CC in an email. It's just like CC the whole world. I think it's being very intentional and asking the question, do I need to be here? Am I going to add value? And look, I'd say even if you're the most junior person, I'd had this one gentleman who came into my team. I talk about him in the in the in the book. His name's Akil. And he would come to me and he'd have two things. He'd be like, OK, why are we doing this? He'd ask the question. And oftentimes we don't do that. The second thing he'd come to me every every single morning, he'd be like, hey, Ron, what's the goal for today? And he'd be and some days like, you know, it's like mail in Fridays. I would just be like, and I didn't understand how powerful was that was at the time. But I think it's those simple daily habits. OK, what's my goal for today? And so one of my mentors and he's one of the one the people encouraged me to start my business. He's at one point he told me, Ron, stop talking to me about this. When you register your business, let's continue the conversation. So anyway, he's an entrepreneur, super busy guy, multiple countries, locations for his business. And he would say every single day, he would write three things down on a post-it note. Those are the top three things he wants to get done for that day. Some days would take 30 minutes, some days would be 10 hours. But he would say, I want to keep that front and center, such that I'm not pulled into a million directions like HR professionals, finance professionals, And look, the emergency of the days are still going to come. So

we have to prioritize, get them done. That's like, how do we have a little bit of compass to say, what are the things that are going to help me move my agenda forward? Me find more energy, me find more joy, right? And that little tip to me is something I've stuck with it. And I've reminded myself now, so I might have to do that today. I wasn't doing that this week.

Shari Simpson:

I love that. I love, I love a good Post-it memo. You know, I think for those of us that do have ADHD, we're always trying to find like the hack for our brain that's going to help us. So I love that, you know, your three goals for the day. And I want to, I want to highlight something that you said, because I really appreciated how you said it. It doesn't matter what level you are in your career, you have the opportunity to continue to ask. Do I need to be at this meeting? Can I contribute in a meaningful way? What is the expectation for me to be there? And asking the question, why are we doing this? I was in a meeting yesterday and somebody was presenting something that was a very valuable new resource that we had talked about creating for our organization. And you know, I really felt as we were going through the meeting that while what the person presenting was valuable, it really felt like we were solving a problem. that was a symptom. We were solving a symptom and not actually solving the problem. And so, you know, there's a way to ask questions in an appropriate way that doesn't diminish the work somebody's done. And I just said, hey, I'm going to play the dissenter for a minute and ask, why are we doing this? It seems to me like this is the problem we have to solve, but we're over here doing this. Help me understand, right? I didn't want to obviously diminish the work that was being done, but there's definitely that opportunity to say, Like, hey, help me understand, because if you're thinking it, you're probably not the only person thinking that.

Ron Monteiro:

Yeah, no, I totally agree. And we're in such a different age, right? Like with AI and things like that, right? Like the most dangerous words to me are we've always done it this way, right? And, you know, you mentioned a good old month end meeting for finance and it's a ritual, right? But why do we spend, I've been thinking lately about it. Why do we spend so much time on the past

and not enough time on the future? And so one of the frameworks I teach is what's the what, so what, the now what, and how do you spend way more time, whether in HR, finance, things like that? on the now what, how are we going to impact the future, the future results, the future people, the future engagement, of course, learn from the past, spend the appropriate time there. But I think those type of questions are really powerful, whether you're the intern. And again, I've had a lot, I've had most interns who started in most of my career, come in, and they say, tell me what to do. And that's fine. The odd person will come in and say, here's what I think we can do to improve the organization. And I've tracked some of those people and they've just turned tremendous in their career because they're always willing to ask that question. I love how you said it. Do it in the right way, not being rude about it, but maybe in a frame the right way. What's the problem we're trying to solve, right?

Shari Simpson:

Well, and as a finance leader in your past, am I asking this question on purpose? Because I kind of have a feeling on how you're going to answer it, but I suspect that you weren't offended. You didn't chastise somebody who came and asked you a question like that.

Ron Monteiro:

No, I didn't. And at the same time, look, I've been in organizations, one of my last CFOs who I reported to was really stuck in his ways. Amazing person, but just very like, Hey, here's the way we roll. And there wasn't much flexibility. But in my last few roles, and I think most of the leaders I work with now, they're very open to how can we do things better? Because there's fewer hours in the day, I mean, not fewer hours in the day, but it's way more priorities, and it's hard to find time to do anything, right? So that approach for it, think about an entire team that says, hey, how do we make things better, more efficient, really focus on the things that matter? There's all kinds of time in everybody's day, I believe, to find that time.

Shari Simpson:

Oh, I agree. And for those that are probably screaming into their radio or their

phone as they listen to this, you know, there's that saying, like, this could have been an email, right?

Ron Monteiro:

Yes.

Shari Simpson:

This could have been a 15-minute meeting if you had sent me the agenda in advance instead of a 60-minute meeting. All those different things. You know, Ryan, as we wrap up our conversation, what's the one nugget or the one thing that you want the audience to take away to really help improve how they create the purpose for themselves and move forward and really start to love Mondays again?

Ron Monteiro:

Yeah, no. And so so just to explain the book a little. So the way the book works is like, let's say you have a, you know, a dissatisfaction with your work right now. It could be small. It could be large. It works through a very systematic process to say, OK, let's find purpose in our job, in our life. That's step one. Step two is building that bridge to say, how do I maybe it's within the same organization, find a different role which lights you up a little bit more. So it's it's what are those steps to build that bridge to Loving Mondays more? The third is is what's called burn the boat. It's like, hey, I'm going all in on this business, on this new role, on this podcast, whatever you call it. And then the last step is flex your muscles, which is really how do you adjust to change? Because change happens all the time and being open and excited, maybe by change instead of, hey, apprehensive, like most people are. The middle section is, hey, how do we engage our team? So it's seven different factors to say, how do we build a system and an environment where people want to come in on a Monday, like imagine that. And then the last is just 20, what I call Monday mavericks. And it's amazing people, teachers, a Buddhist monk, CEOs, a publisher, like people from all walks of life who have found their joy. Right. Because I really believe it's unique. that our ability is, you know, that we can find. And so it's those people and what do they do? They have early morning routines where they focus on themselves before the world gets to them. It's

things like that. They think about what have they, what did they love in their past when they were young? And how do we come back to it? So there's many different things in there just to provoke some thought to help people believe it's possible to love their Mondays a little more, because I think it has to start with that belief.

Shari Simpson:

Ron, such good advice. I can't wait for our listeners to grab a copy of your book. I'll make sure I put a link in the show notes so that you can grab Ron's book and start to love Mondays again. Thanks so much for sitting down with me today.

Ron Monteiro:

Thank you so much. It was a lot of fun.

Shari Simpson:

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. You can find show notes and links at thehrmixtape.com Come back often and please subscribe, rate, and review.