

Episode 10 – How We Manage Grief – Part 1
Barb Knows Best
Transcripts

Michelle Maros: [00:00:14] Hello everyone and welcome back to Barb Knows Best the podcast. I'm Michelle Maros. I'm the co host of this lovely pod, and I'm here with my dazzling mother, Barb.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:29] Hi, everyone.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:29] Hi. How are you doing?

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:32] That's been a tough week, so it'll be a great episode for sure.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:38] How is it going being you today?

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:41] It's going well. I feel better today.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:45] Yeah. A woman of very few words.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:49] Let's dive right into this topic.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:52] She doesn't want any small talk. She wants to get right into it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:55] I'm usually not one for small talk. Especially before our episodes. But for sure today.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:00] You want to. You want to just go?

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:03] Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:03] All right. Well, we've we've had this topic on the back burner really since we were even. Thinking about doing a podcast. And it felt like the timing was right today because as we know, timing is everything. And so today, actually excitingly, this is going to be a

two part episode or two part series. So today we're going to kick off with part one and we're going to dive into the all consuming topic of grief. Yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:45] Yeah, I'm ready.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:48] And if you've been following us on social media for any period of time, I talk a lot about grief in my own life and how it's impacted my life. And you do, too. You've had a lot of loss in your life. But I think that the timing was really. Poignant right now because you're going through it and. So many people are going through it right now in so many different levels and different veins and different ways. But I think if anything else over these past couple of years and of course in life in general, grief is really up. There's a lot of loss, a lot of change, a lot of life being turned upside down and. I know from my experience, I know just how hard it is to navigate that. And so we wanted to just kind of talk about it in these next couple episodes of how it's played into our lives and what we've learned from it, and just open up the conversation to try and help as always.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:58] Yeah, and share our experiences and things that I love what you just said. Things that we've learned because we really have learned. You know, you can read everything that you can possibly read about grief and you can have people help you like therapists, wonderful, wonderful humans out there that can help you navigate grief and, and how to, um, you know, keep living your life, you know, at the fullest. But at the end of the day, I think what Michelle and I are going to share with you in this episode and the next episode is that when you're going through it, like you come out the other side or you start to learn things that you never thought that you would learn, and it might look very different than what maybe you've read or what you think is going to happen. Because I, I just want to say, there is no there is no cookie cutter way to go through grief. And we are all unique beings, which is what you talk about a lot, Michelle. And we go through it in our own way. And so being open and receptive and gentle and graceful with yourself, if you are grieving right now as you're listening to this, because there is no set way to go through it and we'll we'll walk you through our experiences today. What Michelle is alluding to is a week ago today, a week ago tomorrow, and it's taken me a whole week to be able to to talk about it. My dog my dog, Ellie, of 15 years passed away. And it has impacted me in ways that I had not even imagined, because, as Michelle said, I've

been through a lot of grief in my life. When I was six years old, I became the death, the attending "funerals person" in my family.

Michelle Maros: [00:04:38] It's important to note that we're both Scorpios. And I know Scorpios are often labeled as like the death people. And it's kind of true.

Barb Schmidt: [00:04:45] It's kind of been true. Yeah. Six years old, you know, my mother, we had five kids. And so when someone would die in the family, my dad and I would go to the funeral. So my mom stayed back with the other young kids. So I've been attending funerals since I was six. But I have to say every single death and every iteration of the grief that I've been through has been different. And that's that's absolutely the case with losing my little precious Ellie last week. So.

Michelle Maros: [00:05:14] And that is something I know we want to get into because. There's different. Well, first of all, just like with anything else, there is no competition to grieve. You know, we all experience it in different ways. But I think there's different.

Barb Schmidt: [00:05:28] Or scorecard like or think things. You have to check off a list, I think, to write.

Michelle Maros: [00:05:34] But I think grief in different relationships affects us in different ways. And and, you know, with Ellie, this is a completely different experience of grief, I think that you would probably say you've never experienced before.

Barb Schmidt: [00:05:48] Right. Yeah, I've never had to. Actually, Ellie passed away, but I had to I had to put her to sleep. So I've never, ever, in my whole life of 65 years had to do something like that. And it was pretty traumatic.

Michelle Maros: [00:06:01] Well, we've had other pets that we've put to sleep, but this was different.

Barb Schmidt: [00:06:04] This was.

Michelle Maros: [00:06:04] Different. Yeah. So, I think that's a new experience for you. And my biggest example is with my dad, but they're both. Extremely profound experiences, but they're different. And I think that's the biggest thing we want to talk about in this first part of this is just that everyone experiences it differently. Like you were saying, we're all our lives are unique and our experiences are unique. And so. Kind of throw away whatever you think it's supposed to look like and just allow it to be in your life as it is. We always talk about that. Life is experiential and so you can read everything about it. But until you go through it yourself, you just don't know how things are going to play out in your lives.

Barb Schmidt: [00:06:53] And I think the idea, too, is you're listening to this maybe allow yourself to be open and receptive to the things that we're going to say or the things that you may hear differently or you may learn and just being open to whatever it is that life is trying to bring you.

Michelle Maros: [00:07:11] So as always, here we are. So I actually think it's really interesting. Again, timing is so funny that we're talking about this today. We're recording this right before the holidays, Easter, Passover. That's coming up. And I don't think there are any coincidences, but Easter in particular, I grew up. In the Greek Orthodox Church. My dad was very. Heavy in the church. So much so he wanted to be a priest. Well, luckily for all of us, he wasn't. Otherwise I wouldn't be here.

Barb Schmidt: [00:07:54] Yeah, well, after we got divorced, though, he looked at trying to be able to resurrect that whole dream of becoming a priest. So it was really. It was very much his being.

Michelle Maros: [00:08:03] He loved the church, and he very much wanted to be as involved as he could. So anyways, I spent a lot, a lot of time in the Greek Orthodox Church growing up, and I really liked it. Mostly for the culture and the tradition and...

Barb Schmidt: [00:08:20] The rituals.

Michelle Maros: [00:08:21] The ritual of it. It's really, really beautiful. Obviously there's aspects of the church that, you know. I don't embrace. But I loved...I loved the ritual of it. So if you

know anything about the Greek Orthodox or any Orthodox religion, Easter time and Holy Week is just like the biggest. It's the biggest time of the year. You're at church all the time and I went to church all the time. During that time, even growing up, even in high school, I just loved it. Anyways, I spent a lot of time with my dad doing that. And so, you know, now that it's Easter time and my dad has been passed for he passed away almost...

Barb Schmidt: [00:09:06] 15 years.

Michelle Maros: [00:09:07] 15 years ago, I think about him a lot during this time of year. And it's interesting because I wrote this blog about grief at Easter time and now it's Easter time again and it's just and here we are. And here we are now talking about grief. So if you don't know my story with that 15 years well, 15 years ago in August, my dad passed away unexpectedly in his sleep. I was going into my senior year of college. It was the summer before going back to school. You and I, Barbara would often go on a little Mother-Daughter trip before going back to school and so that that year we were going to L.A. and so. We had a very early morning flight.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:02] And as always.

Michelle Maros: [00:10:03] As always.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:04] It's my favorite time to fly.

Michelle Maros: [00:10:07] We'll do a podcast once, just about some of our quirky personality traits. But she is a morning person and I am not. But whenever plans are up to her, it's early morning. So we had an early morning flight and. I texted my dad that we were getting ready to leave because I always would send a text to whatever parent I wasn't with, you know, taking off. Love you. And he didn't write back. And I was you know, it was weird because he always wrote back. But I'm like, it's early. Maybe he's still sleeping. But interestingly enough, I had a bad feeling.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:43] You did?

Michelle Maros: [00:10:45] I don't claim to. Have some sort of. Psychic powers, but I just kept getting hits about my dad and death from a lot of my life. Even from when I was young, I always thought he was going to die. Die young. So anyways, he didn't write back, turned my phone off and we took off for LA from Florida. Long, long flight. This was pre wi fi and flights. And so we were checked out of the world for like 6 hours. And of course, when we landed and turned our phones on, we turned our phones on to a lot of chaos. And that's how we found out that my dad had passed away in his sleep. Upon landing in L.A.. Yeah. On the plane. Still on the plane.

Barb Schmidt: [00:11:45] Very traumatic.

Michelle Maros: [00:11:45] And. Of course. That was that changed everything in our lives at that time. I was 21, going back to my senior year of college and having to manage all of that grief was really overwhelming in a lot of different ways. And. Even though it's been 15 years, it still shows up in my life every single day.

Barb Schmidt: [00:12:25] And I think that's what. Is a big part of what we want to talk about today on this episode to begin with, that, you know, grief is not, definitely grief is something that we're constantly moving through, especially if it's new. Like my my grief with Ellie passing away last week. But it's interesting to think that that of course, there is to think that we're going to completely heal and not feel the grief anymore or not feel the person or not feel the loss anymore, I think is really not true. I think it's very interesting. I was present with my mom when she died. She died of cancer in 1998. And I took care of her for almost two months here in Florida. And I was at her bedside when she passed away. And then my dad died in 2012 of ALS, and I was the only person at his bedside when he passed away. And so I think...

Michelle Maros: [00:13:22] You've witnessed a lot.

Barb Schmidt: [00:13:23] A lot of death. A lot, you know, just a lot. But in a very up close and personal way. And I think what what you're saying what you're what we're saying today is that grief shows up in many, many, many different ways. And especially with this pandemic. And there are many ways to experience grief. There's many types of grief and loss. I think grief is is equivalent to loss that we've lost someone or something. And it's very, very, very traumatic and very difficult. So we really have to offer ourselves some grace. And I think what has helped me

the most to move through it, to continue even the process of moving through it, is allowing yourself to feel the feelings, allowing myself to feel the feelings. I did not think that I was going to be I mean, I thought so because Ellie and I are incredibly close for 15 years. And when you're when you're talking about a pet and she's been sick for a while, but talking about a pet, I mean, she was with me all the time.

Michelle Maros: [00:14:25] They were attached at the hip.

Barb Schmidt: [00:14:26] You know, and especially there are certain times in the morning or certain times at night. So I think the idea that we're going to have, you know, be able to move through it or there might be something wrong with us or how do we do this or can we even survive? There's so many things that will come into play. And I think what I want to say early on in this for this being just a week a week ago, is that I just said, just allow yourself to be in it. And I think something you and I talked about a lot, and I remember saying that, too, when your dad died, when you were going back to college, you know, allowing yourself to be with the grief and allowing yourself to have the feelings because it's really, really important to be able to cry and be able to to be angry or upset or whatever it is that you're feeling. It's so important to allow yourself to feel it and not to try to make sense of it or not try to push it away or not try to explain it to people or even not try to explain it to yourself just to allow yourself to be in the feelings.

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:26] Because I had never gone through what I've gone through with Ellie. And so it's really important for me to understand that we don't know what we don't know what it's like until we're actually in it. And then when we're actually in it, we still don't know what it's like because every person's feelings about the loss that they're feeling is unique and their own. And so I think that's the most important thing that I've been feeling this past week with Ellie. I've been around a lot of people who have lost their pets, and I felt I thought, oh, my gosh. I mean, I adore Ellie. She's like the brightest light in my life. And I can't even imagine. And no, you can't imagine because it's always different for every single person. So I would love to start with that as how I'm feeling. I just want. And you've been so wonderful the past week, Michelle, of course, like just a lot.

Michelle Maros: [00:16:15] I did call me the Queen of Grief, so I get it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:16:18] You are the queen of grief. But just allowing yourself, if you're someone who is grieving or have experienced a loss, be in it. And if you're someone who is a friend or a family member or a close colleague or whatever with someone, just allow them to be and to give them the opportunity to just be in the be in the sadness or be in the whatever the feelings. Be in your feelings.

Michelle Maros: [00:16:38] Be in your feelings your feelings for sure. And what's interesting about this whole thing, it's kind of a full circle moment is that, like I was saying, my dad died 15 years ago and it just really. It's hard to even find words to describe how just upside down everything was. There was a lot of other aspects of it that made the grieving process extremely difficult. My dad was not the most responsible with things, so he didn't have a will and just. All that stuff is just tricky when you're not prepared. And it was unexpected, so it was just tough, but.

Barb Schmidt: [00:17:18] And not being able to be there with him, I think. The fact that he died unexpectedly in his sleep and we were all the way in California. So the first time you got to see him was when we got a flight back in the middle of the night. We got a flight back and we landed in the middle of the night and went to the funeral home. So just the idea that when someone passes away and you actually can't be there to say goodbye in that moment, I think is representative possibly of how some people have been feeling during this pandemic. First, it's just it's just another layer of of loss that's that's a little bit nuanced than actually being at the bedside of someone dying. And neither one is easy or ideal or whatever. You just don't label things, I think is where I'm trying to go with this. Just loss is loss and being able to accept it in the moment and understanding that it can be traumatic at any level for sure.

Michelle Maros: [00:18:11] And what's interesting is I went back to college even though things were crazy. And a few months later, you. I remember you. Texted me saying that you had a surprise for me because you're obviously you're always trying to make things better and fix it and try to make me happy. And I said, What? And you texted me a picture of a tiny white puppy. And it was Ellie. She had. Gotten me a dog. For myself. To try and make me happier during that time. And so. There are a lot of reasons why I could not have a dog. I lived in an apartment that didn't allow pets. Very strict. No pet policy. I was not really in the right in any

sort of mindset to take care of a dog. I was in senior year of college mode, if you know what I mean. And we. We really determined that Ellie was for you.

Barb Schmidt: [00:19:19] Yeah, and it wasn't that I went out and went out to buy a dog. This was like a I felt like it was. Oh, my gosh, it's a divine intervention of some sort because I got a call from someone who needed to find a home for this little puppy in Texas. And otherwise, it was going to have to go to a to a facility because no one wanted it, because it was the runt of the litter and all the things. It had a lot of medical issues. And and she called me and she said, Any chance you want a dog? And it was so bizarre because I immediately said, yes, I'll take her. She didn't even weigh a pound.

Michelle Maros: [00:19:52] She was so small.

Barb Schmidt: [00:19:53] Yeah, yes, I'll take her. How do I get her? And well, we just put her on an airplane and we send her to U. So it was such a bizarre situation and I thought, oh, this would be perfect for Michelle.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:04] Oh, yeah, it's really laughable.

Barb Schmidt: [00:20:08] Honestly, it's indicative of what can happen when you're in the midst of a traumatic grief or traumatic loss. Like you do things sometimes that you look back and think, Oh my gosh, what was I thinking? And I think Michelle just said it perfectly. I was thinking that, oh, yes, maybe this would make Michelle happy. But no, I was thinking that this little thing was going to be for me and she was sickly and I was going to be able to take care of her.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:32] And she was I mean, she is your dog.

Barb Schmidt: [00:20:36] Yes, 100%.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:38] Even when I told this story recently to someone, they're like, no way was Ellie supposed to be awesome. Like, actually, yeah,

Barb Schmidt: [00:20:44] Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:45] But as we know, I'm a cat lady through and through, so. But I just think that that's an interesting full circle. And really for me too, with Ellie passing, it's kind of really the closing of that chapter because she came along so quickly after dad passed. And and here we are 15 years later. And now it's.

Barb Schmidt: [00:21:13] Now it's Ellie's time.

Michelle Maros: [00:21:15] Mm hmm. So. Talking about grief and what comes up. I wanted to just share some of the things that. What happened for me? Obviously I was very emotional.

Barb Schmidt: [00:21:34] Hot mess.

Michelle Maros: [00:21:35] Thank you.

Barb Schmidt: [00:21:36] No, I mean, I guess just to even just to even fathom the fact that your dad died one week. And we're in Bloomington, Indiana, taking you back to your senior year of college the next week. I mean, it is pretty. Pretty chaotic and traumatic and dramatic.

Michelle Maros: [00:21:54] And I remember being embarrassed, almost, of my inability to, like, just shake it off and get back to normal, whatever that meant. And I vividly remember my my best friend, my roommate. I was talking to her about it and I'm like, I was almost apologetic. Like, I'm so sorry that I can't get back to normal and be fun for you guys. It's our senior year. You know, because I'm so sad all the time. And she was like Mich you get a year. She was like, you get a whole year. And she's like, you can be a hot mess for the entire year if you want. And that really helped me because it left me off the hook of, like, feeling like I had to be on some sort of really tight timeline to just push through and go back to normal and. It's true.

Barb Schmidt: [00:22:49] You didn't have to apologize anymore for your feelings.

Michelle Maros: [00:22:51] I didn't have to apologize. Although I really took the hot mess to to a degree. But, you know, that first year after grief, you. You hit all the milestones, you hit all of those moments. And it's hard. But I will say, as that one year mark approached, I felt such an

immense feeling of pressure, like, oh my God, my year is almost up and I'm still really sad. And what happens if the year mark comes and I still don't have it together. And of course, the year mark came. And it's like it had all just be gone, you know? I think the first year for me was just survival, honestly. And it really showed me that it was my first entry point into really understanding that grief was not finite. You don't hit some sort of mark and then it's gone and then you're back to normal. It's something that becomes a part of you and you live with it. And you have different phases and different stages and different periods where it is intense and when it's not. But it it. It's infinite. It doesn't go away. So here we are. Well, I think that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:24:24] What you're trying to say is really, really important, that. We don't have to follow a timeline for getting over grief or for getting over the loss. I like to use that actually a little bit more than the word grief. Getting over the loss, we find ways to live with it. We find ways to incorporate it into our lives. Like, how does it look? And I feel like for me, the way that I, I have been able, the only way that I've been able to do that and I feel like it's I'm on the same path of of of grieving. The loss of Ellie is that I allow myself to feel my feelings deeply without apologizing for them and without trying to make sense of them and without trying to rearrange it or get other people's advice. Or like if someone says, How are you doing today? I say, You know, I'm getting a little bit better, but it's still really hard. I'm still sad. I spoke with one of my good friends this morning and she said, How are you today? And I said, You know, I'm still sad, but it might be getting a little bit better. So I think acknowledging where you are in the process is really important and then understanding that. That, of course, we don't want to live in the feelings of grief for the rest of our lives, but we want to be able to move through. We want to be able to acknowledge the feelings so that we can allow them to move through our bodies. And so that we can actually begin to start feeling. You know, what does life look like and feel like with the loss of this person in it, no longer in it in the same form that it is? And how can we start to notice that it could take different forms?

Michelle Maros: [00:26:08] It's a new chapter of life, right? So I know that grief is universal. I mean, everybody at some point is going to experience it. It's going to be touched by it. It's not for certain certain people. And I think what really brings us together in this sense is that we grief is such a unique sense of, like that longing or yearning to. Have that that person or that thing that is no longer, you know, it's like that itch that you can't quite scratch. And I think what differentiates us is, of course, how we allow the grief to show up in our lives and what role it

plays and how it shapes our personality. And a lot of us can feel a lot of anger depending on the circumstance and of course, sadness and bitterness and resentment and a lot of regret. You know, there's a wide range of feelings that stem from grief. And a lot of us feel like when is this going to go away? Like I was talking about the timeline, when am I going to stop feeling this way? And I've thought a lot about the question of does grief ever go away? And in my experience and my belief, no. But even going so far is I don't want it to. I hope my grief never goes away because for me, I feel like if one day I wake up and I don't have my grief anymore. I'm no longer tethered to that person and that past that I want to be connected to. Obviously I don't love to feel sad or hit have those pangs of longing, the itch that you can't scratch. But I would be sad if one day I woke up and I didn't feel that anymore. Or if I didn't, if I was driving and I heard a certain song and it didn't hit me in a specific way because it reminds me of someone. Or if I didn't have a certain food that reminded me of someone. So. I just hope maybe in thinking about grief, rather than wanting to wish it away, that we can....

Barb Schmidt: [00:28:36] Redefine it is what you actually are saying. How can it move in from a place of...

Michelle Maros: [00:28:40] Redefine it and try to embrace it? Obviously, there's I'm 15 years in, so I've had a lot of time to process and to heal and to work through the initial feelings of trauma and shock. And there's a lot, you know, that happened there that was really, really, really difficult. But ultimately, I'm at this point now where I know that grief is the reminder of what was.

Barb Schmidt: [00:29:08] So you're talking about grief kind of takes on the forms you heal from the trauma and the and the shock of a loss like that. You're talking about how grief then can kind of morph and transform into their memories and the reminders of what was or the reminders of of of the life that this person represented. Like your dad represented, like you said, the food and the.

Michelle Maros: [00:29:36] Um. And of course, there's lots of things. So many things. And now grief is my reminder of what I had. It triggers the memories that I hope I never lose. That I. I hope I always remember. I hope whenever I hear Alanis Morissette, I always think of Dad or

Easter time or Greek food, you know? Yeah. And I think the same with you, with Ellie going certain places, being in certain circumstances, doing certain things.

Barb Schmidt: [00:30:08] Yeah. I love the idea of thinking of, um, of grief as being redefined as you move through the trauma and the chaos of it. And then it moves into a place of. You know, sometimes still sadness. I mean, when I when I think about some of the things when you talk to me about your dad or when I think about my mom, and that's been quite a long time ago, 1998, I still may have a tear in my eye. I still feel the sadness. But then right after that comes the warmth of the memory or the warmth of whatever it is I was thinking about in the smile. And so I love the idea of of letting grief morph into a new way instead of trying to push it away or instead of trying for it not to be there anymore. Someone said to me a long time ago, especially when I was talking about about death, someone said, Well, eventually you'll get over it and you won't have the charge anymore. And I thought that's true about certain traumatic events and stuff in life, because I've certainly felt that way where I've had enough therapy, where some of the traumas that I've experienced in my life, where I can look at it as the trauma and the event, but I don't necessarily have the charge. But when it comes to the loss of a person that you love deeply, I don't know if that's exactly true and I don't know if it's if it feels the same or fits the same way. So I think Michelle and I are trying to open you up to another way of looking at how can we embrace the loss of someone that that meant everything to us or that that you care deeply for, that you loved, you know, a person, a pet, whatever it is, the loss of some something and being able to. Allow yourselves to be open enough to embrace it in different ways as you move through the grieving process or the loss process.

Michelle Maros: [00:32:04] Well, and I think, too.

Barb Schmidt: [00:32:05] Because I just want to say for me, the way that I look at death and I wanted to share this, the way that I see death, I don't see death as the the spirit or the energy or the love of the person dying. I see the body going. And so Ellie's body is gone. My mom, my dad, my best friend, Mary, she died in 2013 unexpectedly. So their bodies are gone, but their energies and their spirits are here with me. I love that Cummings quote. You know, I carry your heart in my heart. It is always with me. And so I forever think of it that way that the people that we love the most that are no longer with us in the physical form are still with us. But now they're not. They're not hindered by their bodies. So they can be with us all the time, or they

can be in our presence and in our energy space all the time if we are open to it and allow it to actually happen. And so we see it. You see a cardinal and you think of your dad, you see a white feather and you think of your dad. So I like to think of death that way. So the person, spirit and energy and love is never gone, just the body is gone. So it's helped me move through my loss and my grieving in a way of that I can now access the love that I felt for these people and for my my dog and vice versa without the boundary of of the body. I just wanted to put that caveat out there that I feel.

Michelle Maros: [00:33:34] Know and it's true. Thank goodness for that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:33:35] I deeply feel that it is.

Michelle Maros: [00:33:38] It's the ending of one chapter. Of course it's an ending because like you said, it's. No longer physical, but it it transcends into something more energetic or spiritual or just the relationship that you have with them doesn't have to go away.

Barb Schmidt: [00:33:59] And I don't think that it does. It's up to us to be open to other forms of their presence being in our lives.

Michelle Maros: [00:34:06] For sure. And I think that's the silver lining of it all. Of course, there is sadness because of the change. But I like to think of grief being that forever friend. It's it's like ushering in a new relationship with what's been what's what's lost. And just like with any other relationship, it has its highs and lows. There are waves that come in that feel like they're going to take you out. And. Be gentle with yourself when that happens. And then there are times where you're like, Oh, I'm good. And just knowing that that's okay, too, because it is it's fluid. And every day is different. But I have noticed for sure that when I embrace it all. The feelings. I don't push it away. I look for, you know, the little signs and connections. It it makes me feel more connected, and that gives me comfort, for sure. And I have a sense of gratitude for it, too, because it's. Thank goodness for all those little connections that still are there.

Barb Schmidt: [00:35:29] Yeah, I love that so much, Michelle, because I feel the same way. And I think that all it requires of us is just to be open to it and trusting and believing it. I mean, there's that whole thing that if you believe that you will see it. And I love to take it to the next

level. If you believe it, you will feel the energy of it. And just the other day, I was watching a little dog run around and Ellie couldn't as you know, Ellie couldn't walk the last few months of her life. And just watching that little white dog running around, I thought would make me cry. And actually, I brought a smile to my face because I thought, oh, my gosh, now Ellie is no longer trapped in her body. She's actually wherever she is in this next lifetime, she's actually running around like all dogs love to do. So it actually brought me a little bit of a smile thinking that now she's free and she can actually run around, that I did not expect to happen so soon. And then I'm sure the next day I woke up and I was crying because I didn't get to take care of her that morning. So I think you're just allowing yourself to be and open to whatever whatever life will present in whatever form the person that you've lost, will show up. Um, I think just believing and trusting that the love is always there and the presence is always there. And the energy and the spirit is always there. Um. And I feel it.

Michelle Maros: [00:36:58] It is. And I wrote this in in my blog a few years ago. And I often go back and read it because I'm like, did I really write that? And I.

Barb Schmidt: [00:37:06] Think it's extraordinary.

Michelle Maros: [00:37:07] Especially with with that blog. I don't know. I must have really been channeling something because when I read it, I'm like. Damn.

Barb Schmidt: [00:37:17] It's extraordinary.

Michelle Maros: [00:37:18] But. Grief is the reminder of someone or something that meant a tremendous amount to us. It's the reminder that love was present, and even if it's no longer in its original form, that love still exists.

Barb Schmidt: [00:37:36] Yeah. Take that in and take a deep breath into that. Yeah. The love. Love never goes away. Um. I believe that strongly. And I think, um. Just embracing the new experiences, but also allowing yourself to grieve and feel the complete feelings of what was. I think kind of be open and receptive to what's next and what what can be, but not allowing that open and receptivity to what's next and what can be in this moment shut you down from feeling any of the feelings that you still have from from the loss. It's like a really delicate,

beautiful dance, so to speak, that we do, I think, with trying to honor the feelings of the loss, but then also being open and receptive to the presence and the energy of the person, um, or the pet or whatever it is that we lost and their energy still being here with us in their love.

Michelle Maros: [00:38:44] Yeah. So because this is what we do, I'm a little hesitant to say this just because I don't want anyone to think that there's some sort of magical formula to get through grief. Oftentimes we give a little 1 to 3. This is what to do. This is what worked for us. Kind of thing about life. And I always. We always like to give tangible takeaways. As we know. So we're going to give you some things to remember. But just know that if none of this resonates for you and your very personal experience with grief, then leave it. Because I really do think that with this in particular, it's so unique and you really do have to go through it in a way that's aligned for you. Obviously, of course, you know, not that you're harming anybody else in your grief, but you have to go through it in your own way. But...

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:50] It's very personal.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:51] It's extremely personal.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:51] We've talk about that a lot and the things that you've written about it over the years. And it's very personal. And I think you even mentioned that it's your it's our own unique responsibility to embrace and cultivate the relationship that we have with it.

Michelle Maros: [00:40:07] Yeah, I wanted to maintain whatever relationship with my dad. And I know that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:40:14] And you have.

Michelle Maros: [00:40:16] Yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:40:17] He's ever present. And I think that that's a beautiful thing. Um, as we move through life, because we all know that, that, um, you know, our bodies go. And so to be able to, if you are experiencing a great loss right now, to be able to use this time to feel your feelings, I'm gonna say that as many times as I possibly can during this podcast because I feel

like it's so important. But then also being open to what kind of relationship you can start to cultivate with the person that you're feeling, the loss or the pet or what kind of a relationship you can start to have with. With grief. Yeah. Um, with the loss.

Michelle Maros: [00:41:05] So we do have so some tangible takeaways. But honestly, there are just things for you to think about if you're if you're in grief right now or if whatever. You know someone who is these are the things that really were helpful and are helpful for us.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:25] I think if you're in grief, but I also wanted to add it, I think if you're also feeling any regrets because I know that for me, if there's been any lingering feeling that I've had to work through maybe a little bit longer, it's almost always been the regret because the mind likes to come in and tell me, Oh, you should have done this one last thing, or you didn't quite do this good enough. So if you're still if the grief has been a while and you still kind of have that feeling of regret coming up from time to time, this this hopefully may be of some comfort as well.

Michelle Maros: [00:41:56] And that's an interesting thing that you and I have such different experiences because so much of your loss and grief has been. No. Like you said, you were with your parents. You were with Ellie. You've been present to it. So you've you said you had those regrets of. Oh, I wish I had done this. As in this. And with my main example, it's it was completely unexpected. So it's just interesting to think about I don't really have as many regrets. As much as just...it just feels like the rug was pulled out from underneath you. But it's I think it's just all the different types of shows. It shows up. It just shows. And you and I were in the same family. You're my mom, and we have completely different experiences with it. Yeah. So firstly, of course, give yourself allow yourself to be a hot mess. And like we've been saying with you since Ellie, you know, this is barbed month. I know. I love. And you're allowed to be as Bonkers as you want this month and as long as you want, obviously I said don't worry about the timeline, but it is important to let yourself just feel without filter. Yeah. And VMs cry if you need to. We went for a walk and you got sad and you're like, Oh shoot, I'm going to cry. And I was like, Cry.

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:28] I think what I want to add there to it's it's so important to have someone in your life that can say that to you, that can say it's Barb Month.

Michelle Maros: [00:43:37] Because our friend Louis said that it's Barb Month. Yeah, and She keeps showing up in weird, wacky ways and I'm like, oh, it's Barb Month.

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:44] My very patient. And I think that's what your best friend, your roommate in college did for you. You got a whole year. So it's not meant to bring pressure, which it does, because you think, oh my gosh, the month is up. But I don't feel the pressure of the month is up. I'm feeling like sometimes we just need that outside permission to just be.

Michelle Maros: [00:44:04] Well because it makes you feel safe. Like you always think, Oh, what are people going to think of me if I'm still sad or if I show up and I look like I've been crying? Or if someone's I still work through this. I do not like when people see me cry. And so when you have people in your life that are that care about you enough to just say you can be however you want to be and show up and feel however you want to feel. It's like, wow, it makes you feel safe and seen and heard and understood and just really cared for.

Barb Schmidt: [00:44:32] And I also think just not even to show up. Like sometimes what's been helpful for me as Michelle said.

Michelle Maros: [00:44:35] Cancel it all!

Barb Schmidt: [00:44:38] As Michelle started this episode, we haven't we didn't record last week because I just said, you know, I can't do it. I don't want to do it. She said, okay. So I think that's just being there in whatever way that, that you need is a blessing to have someone in your life that you can actually say that to. And if you don't have someone in your life, then you just do it. Allow your give yourself permission. You are the boss of your own life. So give yourself permission to be exactly how you need to be. Sorry. I didn't mean I didn't want to derail you from that, but.

Michelle Maros: [00:45:10] You jumped to a next point.

Barb Schmidt: [00:45:11] But go ahead.

Michelle Maros: [00:45:12] That's okay It's all perfect. It's all good. But just give yourself the permission. You know, no one has it all together anyways, but you definitely don't have to have it together when you're in grief. And just allow. And then, of course, don't put yourself on a timeline. It's big because. You're going to come up and bump up against life experiences where you thought you would have that person years and years later. And the timeline doesn't matter because like I said, the grief is going to come in waves. You can still be sad about something that happened 15 years ago. You can still have moments. I literally actually last week with Ellie, didn't I say this to you where I was? I was like, Oh, I need to text Dad. Which was bizarre. But also I think very... almost a little spooky because we've been talking about how. She was going to be with Dad.

Barb Schmidt: [00:46:19] Yeah, now she is.

Michelle Maros: [00:46:20] Now she is. But I. There are still times where I go to text him. Yeah. And and so I just think ditch the timeline, you know..

Barb Schmidt: [00:46:31] And that doesn't mean that anything's wrong with you. Just for some reason. I got a hit right there. You know, some people may be listening to this. I go to this sometimes they just go to text him. 15 years later, it doesn't mean you're crazy or that something is wrong with you. It just means that...

Michelle Maros: [00:46:43] Your brain that's like Wired said to maintain that. Yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:46:48] And I think it's also what you've cultivated. You've cultivated a relationship with him in this different form. And so it just means that his energy and his presence. You were feeling his presence even more than that particular moment. So when you when that happens for you, if it happens for you, it's cool. I love it because it's.

Michelle Maros: [00:47:07] no, I'm not saying there is anything wrong with it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:47:08] No. I know you don't.

Michelle Maros: [00:47:09] I love it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:47:10] I'm just saying it to everyone listening that I love it because it means wow. It's like an affirmation that you are still here. Thank you. I love you. I'm so happy that you're still here. This is what I was going to text you and, like have a little conversation.

Michelle Maros: [00:47:25] No, and you can. Yeah, you know, I journal a lot. And that's one of the ways that I. Kinect or of course, songs for me are a big one. So find those things that make you feel the most connected but but really release the need to be on a timeline. Because, like I said, this isn't something that's ever going away, thank goodness, because it's a new form of the relationship. And so it's going to ebb and flow. You're going to have feelings, immense feelings, intense feelings, and then you're going to feel normal and just know that it's part of the journey. And it's part of you now. And that leads into letting yourself be sad and really don't be embarrassed by your grief. Grief isn't a weakness. Being sad isn't a weakness. It just shows how much you loved. Yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:20] Beautiful.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:22] And of course, also don't compare yourself to others. Don't compare the trauma of the grief. Don't compare how your grief shows up. Don't compare the speed with which you feel like you can go back to normal. Obviously comparison is never helpful, but especially when it comes to grief, because, of course, we're all going through things in such a unique way.

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:50] Yeah in that quote by Shakespeare kind of always comes to me. Comparison is the thief of joy. So if you're comparing yourself with other people's grief or the way that they handle life, it's going to take away the joy that you might be feeling and will be able to cultivate and feel for the person that you've lost, possibly because you're so wrapped up in doing the right thing or doing it the way society or other people are telling you to do it instead of just being the wonderful, magnificent, authentic you.

Michelle Maros: [00:49:18] I always like to say comparing yourself as just so useless and worthless. It's a waste of time because we all are here on unique, very specific circumstances. We're here in unique ways, on a unique path with unique people. And how could you ever

compare yourself? My brain is not your brain. We go through a lot of the same things, but we perceive it differently. We react differently, it touches us differently. So why would I even compare myself with you, with anything? And you and I are pretty similar in a lot of ways, and that just goes for everybody else too. So just really, really try to release the need to compare yourself to others and just let this journey be yours and embrace it. It's your forever friend. And lastly, which you alluded to before, but find comfort in people who you can who can show up for you without judgment and find people who can get it. You know, my friend Iris and I, we met. A few years ago now. But what connected us and bonded us is our dads unexpectedly passed at the same time, basically within the span of a couple of months. And she is my Dead Dad Club co-founder. And whenever things come up, we're like, Is this a D.D.C. dead dad's club moment? Maybe we'll have Iris come on and share more about it. But it's helpful. It's helpful to have people who who get it. And who don't have judgment. And like you said, give you Barb month. So it's comforting. To have the people like that. Yeah. And if you don't have people like that. I would say really tap in with yourself. And then just if you feel like people are going to be judgmental or cruel or mean, you know, keep it personal.

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:24] Yeah. Don't share.

Michelle Maros: [00:51:24] Don't share until you until you feel safe. Because it is such a precious and. Very sensitive topic and you really need to share with people that have your best interests at heart.

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:40] Yeah .Beautiful, Michelle, I think. The only thing I would add to wrap up my piece of this whole incredibly powerful episode is that what has helped me as well is that. We can't change what is. And we all know that death is death is inevitable. We come here, we live to the best of our ability to be happy and successful and learn and do all the things that we want to do. But ultimately, we do die. And so death is inevitable. And what I have how I have taken that is, as I said, found ways to to feel my the energy of of the people that I've loved and who have passed away in a different form. But also what's helped me tremendously is that even though I can't change what is, I have 100% power and control over what will be like. I can create my own relationship with with the person or the pet that has passed away that is within my own power. And it kind of goes into what you were saying. Don't don't allow yourself to be persuaded or detoured by any other person. Allow yourself and give yourself the freedom to

create whatever this next chapter will look like with the energy and the love and the presence of the loss that you're feeling. And I think that's given me a great sense of power. I don't know any other word to describe it, but just power and control. It makes me feel really comforted and excited about. Now what the next phase of how the loss will look in my life because I love your idea that you know death embracing it as as a way to um um that it's something that's not ever going to go away, but we can cultivate our relationship with it.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:29] Well, grief and death makes us feel so powerless. And if there's any way that we can take back our power and feel more in control is everything. Yeah. So thank you. Thank you for that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:41] Thank you. So.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:43] Yeah, I know you were a little.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:45] I was a little iffy about it, but I thought would start crying.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:49] I know and you can.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:49] I know I can. I know I can.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:52] So, like I said, this is going to be a two parter. So next week's episode, we're going to continue the conversation. And I'm excited about the next episode because we're going to talk about the one piece of advice about grief that didn't really resonate for us.

Barb Schmidt: [00:54:13] Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:54:13] Which is interesting.

Barb Schmidt: [00:54:14] It is interesting.

Michelle Maros: [00:54:16] And we're going to answer some of your questions. Yes, we put it out to everyone. So if you still have questions, send them in because we're going to tackle some of the questions that you all have about grief. And then get more into how you can really start to embrace grief and change your relationship with it. So definitely make sure you tune in to next week's pod.

Barb Schmidt: [00:54:38] How? Where will they send their questions in to?

Michelle Maros: [00:54:40] You can send it into the Instagram at Barb Knows Best Pod.

Barb Schmidt: [00:54:44] Perfect Dm there.

Michelle Maros: [00:54:45] Dms or on our social media app useful barb. Michelle Maris any of the ways perfect. So we look forward to continuing the conversation. Thank you so much, everyone, for joining us on this very personal conversation. Thank you, Barb, for knowing best and for being so open to talking about this so quickly after going through such a loss. We're grateful for this community to being so kind and open and welcoming, to welcoming us into your lives in this way. As always, please be sure to make sure you're liked and subscribe to the podcast so you always get updates on when new episodes drop. You can follow us wherever you listen to podcasts. If you're feeling extra generous. We always appreciate a five star rating and a nice review. We love reading the reviews. They are so lovely and you've been so kind and generous with us, so thank you for that. And of course, social media. Keep in touch with us. Write to us. We love hearing from you. And we'll talk to you all next week. Thanks so much. As we know, Barb knows best. Love you.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:02] Love you.