

Episode 15 – Noticing Unhealthy Habits
Barb Knows Best
Transcripts

Michelle Maros: [00:00:14] Hello everyone and welcome back to Barb Knows Best, the podcast. It's a beautiful day and I'm here with my lovely mother, Peaceful Barb. And I'm your co-host, Michelle Maros.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:26] Hi, everyone.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:27] And here we are back again.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:30] So happy to be back again. They're in store for a credible hour.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:35] Yeah. How are you today?

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:38] I'm good.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:38] I feel like we haven't recorded in a long time, but. Life has just been hectic, huh?

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:43] Yeah. Time is. I don't know. I don't even know how to measure time anymore. But it's really great to be with you this morning.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:50] Yeah. So I have to admit, I'm a little nervous about this episode, and I just got a bunch of butterflies and anxiety about everything that we're going to talk about today, because it's a very vulnerable topic and it's not one that we've ever talked about and it's not really something that I've ever talked about publicly either so...

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:15] I just want to say I am so proud of you always. It is, as you know, I say it too often, but it is the joy of my life to be your mother. You are a blessing. And I. I love so many things about you. But one of the things that is really remarkable is your honesty and your ability to be vulnerable and to be exactly who you are. Because when you show up in life, how you are and how you show up are always the same. So it's really a blessing. So I think this

episode or I know this episode is going to be very meaningful for a lot of people listening out there. And I just want to tell you how proud I am of you.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:55] Thank you. I do try, as we always do, to show up in that way but...

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:02] Integrity matters a lot. And I think being authentic, we talk about it all the time in our work and in our personal and professional lives. And the idea of how can we actually be authentic is one of the I think one of the hallmarks of some of the teachings that we try to share with people is how can we actually be who we are?

Michelle Maros: [00:02:21] For sure, authenticity. Is a buzzy word. And sometimes I think it gets lost in the fold. But at the crux of it, it's all we really have. So it matters.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:35] It matters most. Yeah. So I'm ready.

Michelle Maros: [00:02:36] So, actually.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:39] Fasten your seatbelts, everyone.

Michelle Maros: [00:02:41] You make it sound like...

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:42] I know.

Michelle Maros: [00:02:42] I don't know. No, it's so. Actually, today, the day that we're recording this marks two, exactly two years since I stopped drinking alcohol. Which is very wild because you started this whole podcast with saying time is just such a weird concept in keeping track of time, but it's very weird for me to think that two years has gone by. And I've been obviously I like to keep track of my life with these milestones and especially something like this that's been such a huge part of my life. But thinking about two years and reflecting on that, it felt like it was a good moment to bring up this conversation in this way, on this podcast and talk about it, because you've talked about your struggle with addiction and your eating disorder. But we've never really and I've never really in such a public way talked about my difficulties with

drinking and alcohol and how that played out in my life and and really what I've learned from it. So.

Barb Schmidt: [00:03:59] I know.

Michelle Maros: [00:04:01] So here we are.

Barb Schmidt: [00:04:03] It's huge. It's really huge. And I just to go back for a second, you are a numbers person. You always have been a numbers person. I think that's one of the things that struck me early on in your in your when you were a little girl and and then middle school and teenage, you just you always have a fascination, had a thing for numbers. And I think it's what really clued me in that how intuitive and how thoughtful and how driven from the inside out that you are. So as I said, I was proud of you. But it doesn't surprise me that that your vulnerability and your willingness to share and really reflect because you do so much journaling and reflection for your own self on your life and and its meaning and all the things that you know, why things happen and how it happens and the sequence of things happening. You are so amazing at that. And so I think this moment in time, it being two year anniversary, is just so meaningful and there's no such thing as perfection. But in my mind, this could not be better or more perfect timing.

Michelle Maros: [00:05:06] So yeah, I do love the timing of it. And I wanted to say that I think with this episode, just to preface it all, I want to frame it through the lens of how I released a toxic had pattern and habit in my life. I'm very wary of labeling it addiction because my story is not a typical one like yours with rehab and 12 steps. And and I, I know that that's a very sacred journey for a lot of people. So I don't want to speak in a way that would offend anyone who's gone through that and has that story in that way. Like, that's that's so very sacred. So I'm speaking through my own personal experience with some destructive patterns and habits that I've noticed within my life and how I became aware of it and what I've been doing and just and what it looks like in my life. I just wanted to say that because I do really I know it's a very sensitive topic and a lot of people have different experiences, but I just wanted to say that, because I know you even have your own with meetings and things like that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:06:22] Mm hmm. And I think that's what's so important and special and makes this podcast so meaningful for me and for you and for the way we share it with everyone who's listening and with humanity is that we're always sharing it from our own personal experiences and our own lens. And you really use that word a lot lens, and I love that so much. And so, so through our own experiences and through our own lens, what we're hoping is that you start to describe or feel comfortable, you know, looking at your own lives and really speaking about your own lives through your own lens. And never feeling like you have to, um, you know, measure up or look like there's some cookie cutter way that we can describe anything or anyone's experiences. And even through addiction or compulsion or whatever, whatever lens that is, I think it's really important that it be unique and that I'm really looking forward to this conversation of hearing your story through your lens, though I've heard it many times before, this is really well, it's so special. It really touches my heart every time you speak.

Michelle Maros: [00:07:32] Thank you. So I think that this story starts in two different ways for me, and I will say that growing up for my whole life, it's been very present to me and I've always been aware of the fact that addiction runs in our family, certainly with you, with your eating disorder and then alcoholism running through other members of our family. That's something that from when I was a teenager was told to me, you told me and that that was always a concern for you, that this was something that was in our in our blood, so to speak. Yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:08:21] Yeah. Because it is it is part of the genealogy, the history, the make up, if you want to call it that of our family.

Michelle Maros: [00:08:28] So I will say, when I think back into my life of, of how I've gotten to this place, I've had that seed planted in my mind from an early age that we have this in our lineage as well as. For whatever reason in my being, my values and my morals or whatever word you wish to use to describe it, I have to feel aligned within myself. I'm not the kind of person that can do things that is not aligned with who I am for very, very long. Like I can't deny that within myself, because I just value too much feeling good within my own skin and and doing things and saying things and being they all have to align. And so even from when I was really young. That was true, but especially now at this age. So I think with those two things tied together, brought upon this topic for me of drinking and why I decided to stop two years ago and. There were a lot of, a lot of, a lot of things that have let that led up to that decision to

stop. But in my reflection over these two years of not drinking, it was really a long, long journey that really started. The first time I ever drank when I was 16 at a New Year's Eve party, and you came and picked me up and you could tell that I was extremely hung over. And that's when we first had the talk.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:23] But back up just the second you called me that morning, I knew you were spending the night at the New Year's Eve party, but you called me in the morning. I think it was like it was early, too. I remember being shocked that it was so early.

Michelle Maros: [00:10:36] I was like, I gotta get home.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:37] It was early. And you called me and you said, Mom, can you come pick me up? And I remember saying to you, Would you like for me to bring you some water? Are you thirsty? And you said, Oh, my gosh, yes. How did you know? Please bring me some water. And then I said, okay, I'll see you in about a half hour or whatever it was. I knew

Michelle Maros: [00:10:53] Yeah, You knew. And so that was really the first time you and I had a talk about drinking because I had gotten pretty drunk. I had, you know, gone I picked a fight with my best friend. I, you know, had a lot of hangover anxiety and remorse the next day. I obviously was extremely dehydrated. And you and I had that first chat at that age about look, you need to know what's in our our family history. This is something that you need to consider when you do these things and how you make choices in this regard.

Barb Schmidt: [00:11:28] And gave you the talk on alcoholism, in particular, the idea of, I guess, steeped in my my own life history of it and gave you all of my, um, all my, all my practice not practices, actually all my experiences of, of living in alcoholism for my entire life. And so it was the perfect opportunity because I'd never spoken to you about it, ever. Mm hmm. Because I'm not one of those people. I guess I'm one of those people that the moment will present itself. Because I know a lot of people in my life were saying, oh, my gosh, you should have the talk with her. You should have the talk with her. Not only about that, but about my bulimia, about everything. And I'm like, it just never felt right to have that this talk until the time was right. And I just knew the opportunity would present itself. And this was the perfect opportunity to have the alcoholism talk and to really get deeper into your experiences that you'd had all along

as a young, young girl in alcohol and alcoholism and watching some of the, you know, the events and the experiences. But this was the opportunity now to really go deep into it and really discuss it with you. And I think what is so cool about it, we walk into the house and we have a two story house at the time. And literally we had the talk. We were walking up to Michelle's bedroom and we just literally sat down.

Michelle Maros: [00:12:43] I probably couldn't make it up the stairs.

Barb Schmidt: [00:12:44] I'm wondering. I don't quite remember that it could have been I don't know. But we had the talk halfway up the steps sitting in the stairwell, which to me is so, just so beautiful. When I think back on, stopping in the middle of the stairwell and sitting down on the steps and having this well over an hour conversation about alcoholism and alcohol and all of the effects and all the things that, you know, leading up to this experience that you had New Years Eve.

Michelle Maros: [00:13:14] Yeah. So that was when we really had the conversation. But the thing is, is when I was growing up and I know it's still the case now, it's drinking was such a huge part of socializing as a young person. And it's, you know, it's glamorized and glorified. And that's what you have to do and that's how you make friends. And, you know, that's you go out and you drink and, you know, even then going into college and being a young adult and living in cities, it's like drinking is such a socially accepted and even pushed upon you practice from such a young age, you even sitting down and having that conversation with me, I was like, What are you talking about? Like I was. I remember being so annoyed with you that you would even come to me. And the first day I did this, you tried to stop me and like and make it, make me, not be cool because you're trying to stop me. And I was like, What do you. Like, you don't even know what you're talking about. Everybody does it. Everybody does this. If you couldn't do it or if our family couldn't do it, like, that's their problem. Like, it just I know. And even as we went down the road of through high school, through college, you know, we all we had these talks many times. I was always so annoyed and angry with you because I'm like, look, that's not my problem. This is everybody does it. Everybody is fine with it. This is how society is, like a societal norm. And I'm good. I was very committed to not having that be a problem, even though. You know, it's not a good sign of the first time you do it you go full throttle and do things that you regret.

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:06] Yeah. No, you're right. I remember that first talk. You're right. I wanted to stop you, right? Like, oh, my gosh, I'm so glad this is happening, because now I can stop. Like, I had control. It was really wild like, I can have the control and I'm going to scare her. I remember thinking this, I'm going to tell her everything possible because there's a lot of scary stuff, you know, when you're when you're living in alcoholism your entire life. So I was going to scare you because even though alcohol was not my thing, you know, bulimia was, so in my mind, it was just the genealogy of of addiction and of of having some compulsive disorder that would want to take you out of life. Because in my mind, in my view, my bulimia was was steeped in not wanting to feel life and not knowing how to feel my feelings deeply and that there was a whole thing with me that was trying to escape because I didn't want to have to deal with life. And so I look at alcoholism the same way. And that idea of how can you how can you numb yourself just enough, right? So that you don't have to deal. So, yes, I was trying to warn you. I was trying to scare you. And you're right. We had this conversation many, many times.

Michelle Maros: [00:16:12] And I will say respectfully to you, I would oftentimes downplay, what you would say to me because you did not go to college. And so you did not have that college experience of what, college and alcohol, how they went together. And so you would tell me this things. I'm like, Well, you just don't get it because you never had that experience and you didn't, you know, you didn't, you didn't have alcohol as a social tool. You only had alcohol as the family dysfunction. And so whenever you would come to me and talk to me about this, I'm like, she just doesn't get it because she never experienced this, but this is how people are. And it she was the outlier.

Barb Schmidt: [00:16:59] Yeah. And I remember....

Michelle Maros: [00:17:01] And so I often would just kind of push you off and be like, you just don't get it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:17:06] And I have to tell you, and I think you know this, but I have to tell you that when you would say that to me, there's a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny part of me that was like, okay, hope, please, God, let that be true. I hope that that is true because I knew that I did not have that college experience. I knew that I did not have a clue what alcohol and college. I

only knew what I read. I only knew what other people said, but I didn't have my own experience of it. And I'm a real I'm real deep into I want my own experience of things in many ways. So I used to walk away from our conversations thinking, please let that be true. Maybe she does handle it. Maybe. I don't know how drinking can be a very socially acceptable thing where you actually get drunk and wake up the next day and have all the regrets and all that like.

Michelle Maros: [00:17:51] She was like Did you get Drunk

Barb Schmidt: [00:17:52] I didn't think so, but I thought maybe....

Michelle Maros: [00:17:53] Last night I'm like, Mom, everyone gets drunk.

Barb Schmidt: [00:17:56] I know I couldn't handle it.

Michelle Maros: [00:17:57] Drunk for you was like the sin.

Barb Schmidt: [00:17:59] Yeah yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:18:00] And so just we weren't even speaking the same language honestly, because especially getting into college, like getting drunk, everyone's drunk, you know, that's not even a question. But you were like, Oh my God, are they drunk? So it was a different language that we were speaking. But I will say that from from high school, I've had the same therapist for quite a long time who was who I've spoke of, who's given me lots of advice on lots of things that have helped me throughout my entire life. But, you know, when we started this conversation and you and I had a conversation with her about alcoholism, she very clearly. Described to me in a way that. You know, you have to think about addiction as a line that can be crossed and you have it in your genes because it's in your DNA and send your lineage of your family. And yeah, you can make your own choices and you can do what you need to do. But just know that there's a line, and once it's crossed, it's kind of like. The line of no return. And when you cross that line, it goes from being in your control to out of your control. And she was like, you know, basically, if you can keep it before the line, you know? That's fine, but be mindful of the line. And that was something that really stuck with me because I for so long really thought that I had kept it on the right side of the line, even though. I can look back and

think of many, many reasons why I was over the line. But that was something that was really that struck me. And that was again planted in my mind from an early age of there's over the line and there's right before the line. And it was kind of if I could keep it together enough to make it even seem, even if that wasn't true, that I hadn't crossed the line, I could. That I would be fine.

Barb Schmidt: [00:20:22] You could live with that.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:23] Yeah. That I could convince you that it was fine because that was, it was for better or for worse more or less it was. How could I convince you that I hadn't crossed the line, even if I was doing destructive things, causing problems for myself, creating a lot of stress and anxiety? I could handle that because that was the norm and that's what everyone did. But how could I convince you that I hadn't crossed the line? That was really the biggest piece for me at the for a lot of this journey.

Barb Schmidt: [00:20:56] And I think it was the biggest piece for me, honestly, when I, I think even we've had this conversation so many times, but sitting here right now with you, when I think back on it, that was such a blessing that your therapist gave you and gave me. Because when I think about you going off to college, you know, people have always asked me, how did you handle it? Your only daughter went off to college. She went all the way up to Indiana. We live in southern Florida. How did you handle that? How did you handle being away from her? And of course, you know, I have my spiritual practice and my meditation and my mantra and all the things and the life that I that I live and, you know, writing my book. And I had a whole nother life. So I had a whole way of being able to be full within myself and allow you to go off into this next chapter of your life, experiencing life. And so but having the alcohol little thing hanging out there was scary to me. So when your therapist said that, I thought, well. You know, maybe, you know, cause we. I have no control.

Michelle Maros: [00:21:55] You have to give me the...

Barb Schmidt: [00:21:56] I had to give you the opportunity to live your life. And

Michelle Maros: [00:21:59] And experience it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:22:00] And experience it. And I knew that I could not control your college life. At in Indiana from south Florida.

Michelle Maros: [00:22:08] It was the number one party school. When I went, it was like you were like, oh, lovely, you know? And as a sidebar, like, that was the school that my whole family went to. It was it was a very family thing that I went there. I didn't go because it was a party school, but big party school.

Barb Schmidt: [00:22:22] I think just for me when I look back on it all and I think about that whole time, it's always and not that we need reassurances or or ways of knowing that, oh, this, this is working, this does work. But it's always so nice to know that I can let go. I can surrender my control over you, my control over whether you are going to abuse alcohol and get into whatever could happen at this scary place called college. When you told me that all they do is drink and I'm thinking, Holy goodness, she's going all the way away.

Michelle Maros: [00:22:58] Like With the concept of like a pre game. You were like, what do you mean a pre game?

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:01] Yeah, I didn't have any idea. So I think.

Michelle Maros: [00:23:02] Drink before you drink.

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:04] It was the perfect, you know, it was what I did, what I needed to do. And that was to be able to let you go live your life and for me to be able to be be okay with it. You know, I leaned heavily, heavily, heavily on my practices, on my meditation, and knowing that all is well in this moment and she has everything that she needs. I just every morning in my meditation, I would I would do my writing and I would do my meditation. Please, please show me. And please help me know deeply that Michelle has everything that she needs. All will be well. And I think that that served me really, really, really well because I know we've talked a lot about college and your college years and stuff, and you're going to share some more here. But I think when I hear about them and stuff, it's kind of like, okay. You know, it's really interesting

cause I knew that I had no control. And when we're able to be able to be all right with that, even though it's scary, I mean, it was incredibly scary, but it was what had to be done.

Michelle Maros: [00:24:05] It was. We all have our our life paths and things that come into play. And we're just along for the ride. But I will say for me. And one of the reasons I think why I never considered it a problem until two years ago is that, I was never a person...drinking for me was always a social thing. You know, you go out with friends and you drink and college, you know, gosh, that was all we did and that was the fun thing to do. But I was never the person that was like hiding alcohol in my room so I could have it by myself, which I always thought, okay, I'm not that so I don't have a problem. You know, I wasn't drinking alone. I never drank alone. And I will say that, you know, then getting into COVID, when that started to happen, that was really one of the things that kind of was like, I'm drinking a bottle of wine at home alone. Like, What am I doing? So I never really thought I was like, you know, I'm just doing what everybody else does. And that was really the thing that kept me going because everybody around me did that. The thing that was different for me than everybody else was. And you said this to me, too. You're like, Can't you go out and just have one or two? Can you stop yourself? [Yeah.] Can you start the night saying, okay, I'm going to have three drinks the whole night and then actually stick to that? And three in her mind, three is like, Oh my God.

Barb Schmidt: [00:25:33] You blew my mind when you would say that. Can I just have three? And I'm like, Well, could you actually tell yourself maybe two?

Michelle Maros: [00:25:40] Well, in college forget it, but yeah, but even could you are you ever in control where you can stop yourself.

Barb Schmidt: [00:25:46] Or you can say, this is what I'm going to do?

Michelle Maros: [00:25:48] And I lied to you and to myself a lot and saying, Yeah, of course. But the truth of the matter is never. [Yeah.] If I was going out in college and that high school party post-college living in Chicago. Living in New York, living back here in Florida.

Barb Schmidt: [00:26:06] Never happened, did it?

Michelle Maros: [00:26:07] No, no. It's always, always became like. How much could I drink, actually? [Hmm.] And. That even though I was in denial about that for a long, long time. That was like the big piece because there was never the ability to say, okay, I've had enough and maybe I might make a bad choice because ultimately not being able to stop led to me making bad choices or saying things that I would never in a million years say to someone or doing things that I never... And that's why I go back to the start of how much I value feeling comfortable in my own skin and being aligned with myself because I was saying and doing things that are so opposite of that. And so being out of control to stop and then basically living like a Jekyll and Hyde life of doing all of these things that I would do when I was drinking and putting myself in unsafe situations and the whole thing. That was really how it started to become apparent to me that it wasn't normal. But the thing is, society makes you.... I would go out and do things with friends and, you know, maybe I would drink too much and cry and I would talk to friends and like, oh, you know, this happens to everyone. And so I was reinforced on the other side that it's all good because this is part of life. And, you know, this is just what we do and this is fun and and you're fine. So. I had you on one side. It's like the two angels or whatever on your shoulders. I had you on one side being like two drinks, holy smokes. And then the other side being like, You're good. And so I think I allowed that I listened more to the I'm good, I'm good. This is what everybody does. Even though I was so uncomfortable inside myself about it for so, so long.

Barb Schmidt: [00:28:18] And I think that I want to say I think that that's normal. I mean, it is normal.

Michelle Maros: [00:28:22] And it is normal. I say this all because I, I think.

Barb Schmidt: [00:28:24] I mean, I'm your mother and I'm older and I you had all the you know, I didn't go to college. I didn't understand the lifestyle. I didn't understand, you know, like I'm so disconnected and I'm generations away from you and all of that. But I love what you're saying because I think if I could share for me, I would hang on to, like I would, I knew I had zero control. And that's a good thing when you get to that point as a mother when you know you have no control. So you have to just let it be and do what you can do in the moment when something presents itself. And so I would I would hold on to that. Okay. Okay. She's telling me this. I'm going to I'm going to hold on to that until one day when you were going to a party in

Miami and remember how old you were then where we I probably was. I don't even know you. I know you're out of college. So whatever it was, you were probably 27, eight, maybe 29, whatever it was, you were going to a party in Miami with a friend that I knew, and you were getting dressed up. And it was and I remember being in your room the whole time where you're getting dressed. So it's going to be all right and you're going to drive yourself and you go, Yes, mom, it's going to be fine. I'm driving myself, so I'm not going to drink. Everything's going to be fine. And I'm thinking, Oh, God, this is really good, Barb, stop back. Because I kept saying, You want me to drive you? You want me to pick you up or whatever? And you said, No, Mom, I'm driving myself. I'm not going to drink. I may have one drink and I promise you I'm not going to drink because I'm driving myself. And so I thought, okay, so I did. I actually was helping you get dressed and thought this is, Oh, maybe all these years of the things that you were saying, you know, are true until I always set the alarm at night. So I always knew when she was coming home. So when the alarm went off and I met her at the steps at the top of the steps.

Michelle Maros: [00:30:12] Oh, God. Any of my friends from high school, from college listening to this knows that dreaded little Barb face in the shadows at the top of the steps. Who would watch us walk up to see if we were stumbling? And it was like, How can we sneak up without her waking her? So she doesn't watch us walk up? And she always.

Barb Schmidt: [00:30:30] Always.

Michelle Maros: [00:30:30] Always.

Barb Schmidt: [00:30:31] The mother, always.

Michelle Maros: [00:30:32] That is burned in my brain.

Barb Schmidt: [00:30:34] So anyway, you walked up and you were so drunk and I remember thinking, Holy goodness, did you drive this person? I said to you, did you drive home? And you said, No, I took a cab. And then I think you went to I said, okay, go to bed. We'll talk in the morning. I thought, I don't need to talk about anything else. That was the only thing that I thought. If you drove home, I'm going to be terrified. You said, no. I took a cab and I said, okay. And we spoke in the morning. And you woke up regretful and all the remorse and all the things.

And do you mind driving me back to Miami to get my car and, you know, all that stuff? So it was the turning point for me, realizing that that you couldn't not drink. Like you even drove yourself. You had other and I think whenever we have other options available to us, like if you've got the money to go take a cab home, you can say that to yourself. Okay.

Michelle Maros: [00:31:25] That was a very expensive cab home.

Barb Schmidt: [00:31:27] Yeah, Miami. Yeah, it's an hour. So it is interesting to see the progression of it all. And that's what I love about your story so much, because it really does show the progression of it and how you can talk yourself out of it'll be okay because I can take a cab home, I won't drive.

Michelle Maros: [00:31:43] So yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:31:45] And that was the moment though. That was the turning point for me that I knew. I knew that you possibly probably for sure had a problem. And so it was really then letting go and letting you sort out, letting you having all the experience. Because I know for I know for me living with alcoholism my whole life, with my family's situation and living with my own bulimia for six and a half years, no one can do it for you and no one can tell you. You have to come to it on your own.

Michelle Maros: [00:32:15] And so I hope this conversation I would love somehow to just to normalize not drinking as a young person as something that you think that you have to do to be social and hopefully society can kind of catch up with that because I know I'm in my thirties now, so it's hard to say that to someone who's younger, but it really didn't feel like there was a choice. You either did and you had friends or you didn't. And you and obviously there's a middle, but I felt like there was no choice. And so if I wanted to keep up the lifestyle that I had and the and the dynamics and the socializing that I had, I felt like I had to do it, you know, to meet people, you know, to to go on dates and to, you know, all of that stuff. It really felt like there was no option. And and even still now people say, well, how do you socialize? How do you, what do you do for fun? How do you go on dates? How do you meet people? It's like a foreign concept to a lot of people. And so I just would love for this conversation to, if anybody feels weird about it, maybe open up to normalizing, not drinking as. That crutch. But because

society does, I mean, I take full responsibility for myself, for my actions, for my words and everything that I did when I was in that toxic habit and toxic dynamic.

Michelle Maros: [00:33:44] But I will say it always felt like even if deep down I knew I didn't want to do it, I felt like I had to do it and not to make it sound like a dare commercial, like, you know, keep kids off drugs, peer pressure. But it just felt like such a huge part of young adult life that there really was no other choice. And I did this again, my own experience. You might be listening to this and say I've never had an experience up, but from from what my path. That's just how it felt. But I will say that now, looking back. You know, I think there were a lot of things that led up for me to stop in May, May 17th, 2020. But certainly, the anxiety and shame and remorse that I felt almost every time I woke up after drinking of not knowing what I did. Not knowing what I said. Having to retrace my steps was too much. And I made a lot of bad choices while I was drinking. And again, I started to live. So outside of alignment of who I was and what I wanted and what I said, I cared about it just. It was like living two different lives. Like Jekyll and Hyde.

Barb Schmidt: [00:35:18] Share what we talked about on our walk about, I don't know, five or six months ago, it was so profound to me that I stopped dead in my tracks. I said, Please repeat that because it was so important and it was so amazing what you had realized about the life that you want to live and about being out of alignment. And I think something that you talk about a lot feelings, feeling your feelings and things like that and just the way that you said it was. So incredible when you just we were talking and you said, you know, mom, I think I asked you a question. Because we were talking about this. I think you were. You were I don't even remember how we got on to it. But and I said I said something. I want a question I asked you and you said, you know, mom, I just I, I never want to feel so crappy again. I would wake up every single morning feeling. I think you used the word crappy. I can't remember what word you used, but I just you said I felt awful. I felt awful. And now not drinking, I think it was it was like a year and a half when we were having this conversation we were going for a walk. You said having this whole year and a half of not drinking and now you have two years. I feel good when I wake up in the morning. I don't feel...

Michelle Maros: [00:36:29] The thing about it is life is really hard and stressful and difficult and there's anxiety and stress and pressure from life in general. And so me adding on with my own

toxic patterns of drinking was was giving me so much anxiety because there would be a lot of times when I wouldn't remember what I had said or done the day before. And so, you know, why would I continue to keep doubling down on these patterns of adding on to the stress and anxiety and feeling awful? I mean...

Barb Schmidt: [00:37:13] Physically too.

Michelle Maros: [00:37:13] Terrible hangovers.

Barb Schmidt: [00:37:14] Yeah, physically. You said your body never felt so bad as it did in the morning.

Michelle Maros: [00:37:18] Terrible and I just. I value too much feeling good. Like I said, feeling good in my own skin, feeling confident in myself. I can't be confident in myself. The thing is, it comes down to trust. I can't trust the Michelle that drinks because the Michelle that drinks does and says things that not drinking. Michelle would never she does not have good judgment. She... Her morals are out out the window. I can't trust her. And I started to realize that I have to be able to trust myself. And there was no middle. There was no gray area. Like you said, if you can be in the gray area of drinking, fine. But there was it was either Jekyll Michelle or Hyde Michelle. And there was no in-between. I don't even know if that makes sense. But it became so apparent to me that I could never trust myself if I drank. Even if I had one drink, I would wake up. Oh, my God, what did I say? Who was I with? Does that person now hate me? Because I was weird the night before. What did I do? Did I do something that made people feel uncomfortable? And I'm not saying I was like a raging lunatic when I was drinking, but it just created so much anxiety that I was like, I couldn't trust that person.

Michelle Maros: [00:38:32] And so it became to the point where I have to be able to trust myself. And the only way I can trust myself is if I stop because I can't keep living my life of constantly retracing my steps and going, you know, poring through text messages, you know, the drunk dials to ex-boyfriends and to people I was dating, like humiliating the shame of of things I said to some of my best friends, like I was in Italy with my best friend after graduating college and I said a really awful thing to her because I thought she was flirting with a guy that I thought was cute when we were out at the bars. Like, horrible. And so thinking about all of

those things that I've done and I started to tally up how many times, how many moments in my life do I have shame around things that I've said or done from drinking? I'm like. You know, it's probably a handful. It's not it's more than I can even count. And when you start to tally it up and really look back at your life, and for me, at least looking back and feeling completely overwhelmed with the volume of the amount of times in my life that I've done things that I feel shame about and that are still charged, that still are haunting for me, even though, of course, I'm working through it.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:56] I think that's part of being quote unquote sober, is you come to terms with the things that you've done when you were drinking. But. They are like hauntings. You think back and you're like, Oh, my God. Like, horrible. I would never. And when I realized the sheer volume and there's ones I'm sure I haven't even remembered, but. It's it's an overwhelming amount that that I could not ignore. And so that was really the turning point and I think too talking to my therapist. And really realizing that the volume of it, I think you you normalize it because that's what everyone does. Everyone goes out and has too much and blacks out. I remember you saying you blacked out like oh, like like that's normal. But it's not normal. And I blacked out where I didn't remember things often. Sorry, I...

Barb Schmidt: [00:40:55] No, no, no, no, I you've said it before, but it is...

Michelle Maros: [00:40:58] I know. Like you're sweating.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:00] I'm sweating, sweating because it is scary

Michelle Maros: [00:41:02] You were scared and the things like I put myself in a lot of really dangerous situations and sometimes I had consequences. And sometimes and the thing is, the times where I didn't where I made it home, you think I'm good? I can keep doing it because, you know, it was fine. You know, I blacked out on the L train in Chicago at 4 a.m. by myself. Probably not smart. Your face.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:29] Oh, my God. I don't know if I've heard that one. It is very... It is very scary. And I am sweating. I think I need to go take a shower after this podcast, after this episode of the podcast. But it is very scary. And I think it it certainly, you know, therefore, by the grace

of God go I, it certainly gives you compassion and understanding for people that that are in the throes of any kind of alcoholism, addiction, bulimia, mental, any kind of mental health situation that we're all facing in this in this world today, and especially if I can talk about our country today. And so it does it gives me compassion and just understanding that it's hard. It's really, really hard. And I think I guess the way I frame everything that you've talked about and talking about your journey and stuff, I look at it in so many different compartments of my own life, obviously, and the things that I've been through, but also and the things that you've been through. And when I think about especially the college years, when I think about your dad dying a week before you went back for your senior year of college, in my mind, when I think of all the the episodes that you we've talked about or some of the things and I hadn't heard the one about the yell in Chicago, thank you very much for that visual. Since I'm from Chicago, I definitely can see that one. And oh my gosh.

Michelle Maros: [00:42:51] I made a friend on the train. I was crying. I was crying. I had gotten into a fight because I was in a very dysfunctional, romantic relationship. I'd gone into a fight with my boyfriend at the time, hysterically crying on the train. And I do remember a stranger gave me a tissue.

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:08] Wow. Well, and I just think that... I think there's a lot you know, we are going to have more episodes of this, I think, which is going to be so wonderful. But I think one of the things that's important to always remember, I know you talk about society normalizing, which is true even at my age. At 65 years old, I've been at gatherings and I've been in events where I witnessed someone saying to another person who had stopped drinking, someone saying to them, you know, why don't you drink anymore? You were so much more fun when you were drinking. I remember thinking, Oh, I remember I had to speak up. And I go, Look, that is not cool and that is not okay. I really like this person here. It's so crazy. It's so, you know, it's just you have to really be comfortable in your own skin. You have to be able to say no and you have to be able to not take anything personally. I mean, there are so many variables that have to happen. You just have to be able to do the hard thing and stand up and stick up for yourself in every aspect of life. But when it comes to drinking, it is social, and it's social at every age and it's social at every generation.

Michelle Maros: [00:44:07] But that's the fear. The fear is if you stop, you won't be fun. And I...

Barb Schmidt: [00:44:12] But I just want to what I wanted to say, though, that's so important is the denial is huge and denial on the person that's doing the drinking and denial on the other end, which was me as the mother observing it all.

Michelle Maros: [00:44:24] Yes.

Barb Schmidt: [00:44:26] Denial can sometimes really protect. Denial can be our greatest protector and denial can be our worst enemy. So it's really important to I guess really understand what's happening and what can you actually do about it as the person that's watching, the person that's going through the overdrinking and the too much? What can you actually do and do the things that you know that you can do and not cross the line to try to control things that you cannot control. [Right.] And vice versa. The person who is drinking too much somehow trying to stay in the non denial phases, even if it's for just a glimpse sometimes, which is what I think you're describing. You could feel out of alignment.

Michelle Maros: [00:45:11] I think the denial comes from that fear of the social pressure and of not being the fun as fun to be around.

Barb Schmidt: [00:45:21] Can I just say, could it also be not feeling comfortable? And the alcohol takes the edge off and helps you let down some inhibitions and things like that. Does it feel like that could be also a part of this whole culture thing that makes it okay?

Michelle Maros: [00:45:35] Yes, of course. I think there's a lot of social anxiety and I think people tend to use alcohol as a crutch to break through that, that barrier of feeling uncomfortable and social circumstances 100%. But for me, I will. And that for sure. But for me, it was the fear of not being the fun friend, which is funny because I would be the fun friend until I wasn't until I was the crying lunatic friend. But until I got to that point, I was the fun friend and I was like, Well, who am I if I don't do this? Well, people want to hang out with me. Will I still be the fun? Will I be a boring friend? There's that fear. And you mentioned this a little bit ago. I will say, too, that, you know, going into my senior year of college when my dad died, that also did change the dynamic I had with drinking, not where I started to drink more, but I went from, okay, I will... There was never a time that my relationship with alcohol was

functional. The first time I drank, I got too drunk, started fights with my friends, you know, don't remember what I did. And that continued. Like there was never control, but I was, you know, whatever. When my dad died, I started to become the friend that cried at the bars because I was so sad. But I, you know, I kept it in and held it in. So I became the very emotional drunk friend after that. And so I became the girl that was always crying and just kind of the liability and a friend group of is she going to get so drunk that she's going to cry in the bar or whatever? So that definitely also changed, you know, my relationship with with drinking.

Michelle Maros: [00:47:21] But ultimately, I will say and you said this, too, about being the person that watched one of the biggest things catalysts for me to stop in 2020 was right before we went into whatever Florida's version of lockdown was I had had a pool day with some of my friends, and we had been drinking and I was like posting a bunch of stuff on my Instagram stories from that day, and you called me the next day, you were so pissed and you're like, Did you see what you were posting? And I didn't think anything that I posted was bad, but I was very clearly drunk in my stories and that was horrifying to you. And you're like, you know, you can't be posting that on your social media. Like, you look sloppy. I was sloppy. And it really hit me. Having you say that to me and thinking about the fact that I have a platform on social media that I've cultivated and that I care about and that it there was these double lives of me going online and telling people about self-love and self-care and living in aligned best happy like, you know, all the stuff we talk about life and then doing all this other stuff on the side that really wasn't a reflection of that. And then to be putting that on online, thinking that that was okay was, it was where it just really started to become clear to me that I was not living in alignment and it just was I had to make a choice. I had to either decide to go live that life, but be honest about it fully or notice what I was doing and stop.

Barb Schmidt: [00:49:06] Well, I remember I said to you the next morning, I said, This is not who you are. And then I remember saying, or is it? Is this who you are or is this you know, it's like what you're saying so beautifully. You had to make a choice because I'm thinking, well, Barb, maybe your out of alignment is is this the life that Michelle likes to lead and is this who Michelle is? But I knew in my heart that it wasn't. So I remember saying that to you, is this who you are? So if this is who you are, go do it. I mean. I mean, I...

Michelle Maros: [00:49:35] Don't lie about.

Barb Schmidt: [00:49:35] It, but don't lie about it. Yeah. Don't ever don't ever...

Michelle Maros: [00:49:38] Don't blog about self-care.

Barb Schmidt: [00:49:39] Yeah, don't ever try to pretend. I mean, because obviously we started this whole episode with integrity and and authenticity. And so I remember saying to you, either be that person or not be that person, but you know, that to me is not who I think that you are at the core of who Michelle Maros is.

Michelle Maros: [00:49:59] So that really started to open my eyes to it. And like I said, early COVID times, I went from socialize drinking to drinking alone.

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:09] I think the quarantine really opened that up for a lot of people, not just alcohol, but everything. I mean, when you're when you are quarantined alone. So there are no social things. There are no social things happening.

Michelle Maros: [00:50:20] You know, and I know we're we're really running along with this episode and we can do more about this. But the things that everyone always tells you to look out for is, are you drinking alone and are you hiding it?

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:34] And tell that story. Yeah. Tell. Yeah, that would. Yeah, we can't. We can't close this up, this episode without telling that story.

Michelle Maros: [00:50:41] And so I was drinking alone. I mean, we were we were all alone because it was COVID times, but I was drinking bottles of wine home alone. And to be fair, and this is we can get into this in another episode of like, you know how I deal with it two years later? Do I miss it or how does that work for me? But I did love a good Chianti classico from Italy.

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:03] But I know...

Michelle Maros: [00:51:04] So that's how I that's how I rationalized it. You know, this is a beautiful bottle of wine that I'm enjoying in my home, so for whatever it's worth. But I was drinking alone. And I take my recycling to my mom's house because she has recycling at her place. And she started to notice multiple bottles of wine in my recycling. And she's like, You're living like you just gave me some last week, and now you have more this week. Like, that's many... You were. You would go through my recycling, but can you stop going through my trash? But she started to. She said something to me like, this is a lot of bottles of wine for one person. So I started hiding them, hiding the bottles of wine in my house to ration them in the recycling so that she wouldn't question me. And she, I remember I put one in my closet. This is so insane. And she went into my closet and found it. Because you were looking for something clothes related?

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:02] Yeah, it had nothing to do with alcohol.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:04] No. And you were like, Why is there an empty bottle of Chianti in your closet? And so, you know. Those are not normal behaviors. And I say normal because they're not normal for me, at least if I was in control of myself and if I was proud.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:22] If I felt free instead of normal, maybe acceptable.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:25] Well, if I was proud of that, if I truly if in my heart of hearts didn't think that there was that that was an acceptable behavior, I wouldn't care what I did. I just did it. I wouldn't. [Yeah.] Um, but it had just become something that was toxic for me, and again we can get into more of although of this journey but, all of those things really came to a head two years ago and. I will say that. Being able to trust myself again has been such a blessing because I didn't I couldn't trust myself. And you talk about living your best life. And if you're if you can't trust yourself, it's just impossible. It was impossible for me. And so now that I can yeah, my life is still stressful in a lot of ways. I have a lot of anxiety. I, you know, there's so much else going on in my life that that I work through every single day. But not having that factor in my life has made all of the difference. And having that control, you can't control anything in life. We talk about this all the time, but the fact that I don't have that totally out of control aspect. Overshadowing everything else has has made all of the difference. And do I think that I cross that line that my therapist told me about when I was a teenager? She's shaking her head. Yes.

Michelle Maros: [00:54:12] Probably, yes. And I think there's a mourning that I have to do for all of that and am reckoning with myself that I've been working on ever since. Of all of that of the person that I was and. You know, going through all of those, charged, triggering moments of my past that I did things and said things and hurt people and making amends for that and just being a better person because. I think my whole life I don't want to add to the difficulties of life. And so if I can just keep living in alignment with myself and who I am and what I value and take whatever life throws at me as it comes as like a whole person, then, you know, I'm doing pretty good. And not having that as something that's always bringing me down and it's like two steps forward, ten steps back. That was how it was. That's always how it felt. When I was drinking I could take two steps forwards in my career or in my own relationship with myself or my health or what relationship with other people. But the drinking would take me ten steps back, so it was always like I was playing catch up with myself and I could never catch up because I was always pushing myself further and further back. And at least now with this, with not drinking at least I'm being where my feet are.

Barb Schmidt: [00:55:52] Mm hmm. Be where your feet are.

Michelle Maros: [00:55:54] I can handle whatever I can handle in this present moment, but I am not pushing myself backwards with my own toxic habits. And that's really what I value. And so it could be drinking for you. It could be anything else. I think the whole moral of this episode for me is just starting to recognize whatever things are happening in your life that you can control, that are keeping you in a and a pattern that doesn't serve you and what can you do to take back your control so that you can feel like you're living a life that's aligned with who you are and what you want and what you're trying to do. You know, we did that episode a few episodes ago about becoming your own best friend, and if you don't listen to it, you can go back and listen to it. But those questions that we had, you ask, Who am I? What do I really want? What do I value and what impact do I want to have with my life? I can't fully live the life based on those answers if I'm doing things that are out of alignment with myself. And so I just hope that. You know, if there is even one person that resonates with this and feels like there's kind of a light bulb that's gone off of like things that they can do to really just come home to themselves and and maybe be more in control of some of those toxic patterns.

Michelle Maros: [00:57:11] That's really all I hope for with this episode. But. It does feel very freeing to share it. I mean, it's weird because for me now. You know, this has been a pretty private two years of sobriety. Obviously, the people in my life know that I don't drink anymore, but a lot of people don't. I didn't really share very much about this publicly, and it's kind of weird to think that now it's going to be out there like this whole part. I feel like I did such a relatively good job at keeping this toxic pattern under wraps, so people might even be surprised by it. Or even like what? I had no idea. And so, you know, now that it's out there, it's it's a little funny to think about it, but it does feel I think it always feels good to tell the truth about yourself. And if the truth can help somebody else. It makes it all worth it. But certainly I hope that if nothing else, it can help us all remember to come home to yourself and just think about about living in alignment in that way.

Barb Schmidt: [00:58:26] I love you. You know, I think you have the last word here today. It's powerful.

Michelle Maros: [00:58:34] Well, we will talk about this more because there's lots more we can share, obviously. But really. Yeah, that. I do hope that. Um. This can start the conversation with anybody who feels like they want to have that conversation with themselves. And again, we're always here to, to connect outside of the episodes, if you have any, anything you want to share, especially on this topic. I'm that's why I preface this at the beginning that I'm not, you know, an addiction expert, because I did not go the traditional route of rehab or meetings or AA or anything like that. I just stopped. So you do have that. So, you know, I think we have both sides of the coin here, but that's all to be said. I hope this is helpful for anyone that that might have needed. Maybe a reminder of this and we'll do more for sure. But ultimately. You know, I think we're all here to just live lives where we trust ourselves and can love ourselves fully and completely. And if there's something that's getting in the way of that, maybe it's time to finally let it go. So.

Barb Schmidt: [00:59:54] Or At least take a look at it.

Michelle Maros: [00:59:55] Or at least take a look.

Barb Schmidt: [00:59:56] At it with an even if you take a look at it with another person, I think it's important to have, you know, one other person in your life that you can and you can be yourself with and that you can that won't invade you or abandon you or that you can trust completely. And I think that's what you and I have.

Michelle Maros: [01:00:11] Yes. You have always been the person that even when I made the biggest mistakes, you still showed up for me. And I'm very grateful for that.

Barb Schmidt: [01:00:17] Yes, always. I love you.

Michelle Maros: [01:00:19] I love you. And we love all of you. Yes. Thank you so much for listening to this episode. Personally, for me, it means a lot to have all of you listeners supporting us in this way. And it's just a beautiful place to connect with all of you. Please make sure, if you haven't already to like and subscribe to the podcast or wherever you listen to podcasts, Apple, Spotify, Google and of course, make sure to keep in touch with us on social media at Peaceful_Barb, at Michelle Maros and at Barb Knows Best Pod. That's the best way to stay in touch. Let us know what topics you'd like to hear us talk about and give us any other feedback, tips, tricks, comments, any of the things. And of course, lastly, we have to ask, if you haven't already, please make sure to give us a five star rating and a nice little review that really, really helps us and we would be so very grateful. We love you all so, so much. Thank you so much for being a part of this community and being so supportive as always. And we'll talk to you next week because as we know, Barb knows best.