

Episode 12 – Becoming Your Own Best Friend
Barb Knows Best
Transcripts

Michelle Maros: [00:00:14] Hello everyone and welcome back to Barb Knows Best, the podcast. I'm Michelle Maros, your co-host. And I'm here with the very smiley and happy, peaceful Barb, my mom.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:27] Hi, everyone.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:28] Hello.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:28] Hello.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:30] How's it going?

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:30] I am smiley and happy today.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:32] Good. You are smiling. Happy, which is so nice because I know the past couple episodes have been a little heavy.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:38] Yeah,

Michelle Maros: [00:00:38] A little sad. Talking about grief is not always the easiest or most uplifting.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:46] But necessary.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:47] But necessary because it's life.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:48] It's good people are always commenting. And thank you so much for doing this, all of you listeners always telling us that we're really talking about the hard things that we have to do in life. And so I think I appreciate that because I love talking about the hard things, but I also like talking about the, you know, the things that aren't necessarily so difficult

to talk about but that are also impactful in our lives. So I think that's what we have in store for people today.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:15] She does it all. She runs the gamut.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:17] We do.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:17] Happy, sad. Everything in between.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:21] All of the things that this unpredictable life can send us. Exactly. Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:25] So how is everything going? Good.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:27] Everything is going.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:28] I'm feeling today.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:28] I'm feeling great. I'm excited about our conversation today.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:32] Me too. We were thinking about what we wanted to dive into in this episode, knowing that, like I said, we've had a couple heavy episodes and and what really would be up for people right now in this moment in time and what's up for us, as always.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:51] And we talk about this a lot. You all have heard us have said, you know, the relationship that you have with yourself is the most important relationship you can have in life and all of the things that you do, it's really your foundation. So I think it is up for a lot of people and I've been really looking at my own relationship with myself. So I think it's really...

Michelle Maros: [00:02:09] So that is the topic.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:11] Well a little bit deeper and more than that, I always spill the beans, right?

Michelle Maros: [00:02:15] She can't contain her excitement. But, you know, interestingly enough. There's so much emphasis and energy placed on how to cultivate and manage relationships with other people. How to be a good friend. We've talked about friendships, how to be a good partner, romantic relationships, how to be a good family member. All of those things which of course are important relationships are so much of our lives. But. I don't feel like there's always that much of a conversation about really how to cultivate a relationship with yourself and what does that even mean. Like we've talked about it in other episodes of having that strong relationship with yourself, but I could say that to you, and you could in your mind be like, Okay, yeah, but what does that really mean when you actually digest it and try to understand how that plays out in your life?

Barb Schmidt: [00:03:16] And if I just want to interject, if you had said that to me, if someone if a teacher or anyone would have said that to me, I don't know, 30, 40, 20, 30, 35, 40, 50 years ago, you know, a long time ago, I wouldn't have had a clue what you were talking about. So I think it's really important. That's why I'm so loving our conversation today because I feel like it's going to be really, really beneficial and helpful.

Michelle Maros: [00:03:44] It is because I can think back to moments in my life where I was so outwardly focused on. the other stuff, the other relationships, the other aspects of life, the material, the jobs, the everything else. And it's all very difficult. To feel complete if you're always seeking that external, without having some sort of connection within. And I would go so far to say that you start to make interesting choices when you're not connected that can lead to us feeling stressed and anxious and feeling regretful or uncertain. And I definitely experience that. I know in our past episodes we talked about how I used to be really indecisive and I made a lot of choices based on other people and relationships. And while obviously I'm grateful for every chapter in my life that's taught me a lot about who I am and what I want, which is the whole point. I made decisions for other people. And that made me feel deep down, a lot of uncomfortable feelings and. Again everything happens in my life, I think, for a reason. Thus far I've learned a lot, but it's interesting to me to think about if I'd connect it a little bit sooner, what choices would I have actually made? And I just think this episode I would love for us to get into. What does it look like to cultivate that relationship with yourself? How does it play out in

our lives? What can it do for us? How can it make us feel? And how can it help us move closer to our, quote unquote, dream life or goals or wishes or deepest desires?

Barb Schmidt: [00:05:42] Yeah, well, that's a lot. I think I would like to just to set the foundation or maybe the premise or back up a second for when I first started, when I went into treatment, you all know that I was in treatment for bulimia in 1984. So I went into treatment. I got to for the first time actually sit down in therapy and had therapists talk to me about connecting with yourself or what do you like, what do you love or what matters to you? All those things. And I thought, I don't have a clue. I just because what you said, Michelle, is so true. We're so outwardly focused. And so when I got out of treatment, I started exploring all of this and really developing my own, my own experiences of what all of this looks like to actually be living my life, as we always say, from the inside out, not at the mercy of the outside world. And I remember listening to a teacher once who was talking about the outside world being an illusion. Like everything out there is an illusion. What's real is on the inside. And well, you know, I was trying to wrap my head around that. I didn't even understand that. So my first introduction to like a relationship with yourself was, was saying that everything out there is not real, basically, but everything within is real. So that as I explored that, that didn't really land right for me.

Barb Schmidt: [00:06:57] It didn't feel right because let's face it, I was in the working world. I was all the things living in the outside world. So in my mind it was real. So I'd like to set the premise for this for everyone with my own experiences. And maybe this is true for you too, Michelle, as you as you hear it, that, yes, the outer world is real, but there is also a whole world inside of you that is real. So we're not trying to invalidate or negate that there's an outer world out there and we don't need to you know, we don't need to participate or pay attention to it, but that the inner world is just as real. And so that really changed my whole thought process of, oh, okay, I got that. So instead of being driven by everything in society and people and other things of people that don't even know where I'm trying to go, but I'm asking everyone else in the world for advice to something that I that I truly know for myself or one experienced myself. So that helped me a lot. I just want to say that. So let's begin this. I think this conversation may be for all of you as we look at developing and cultivating that relationship with ourselves, is actually by starting to validate that there is an inner world. There's a world inside of all of us.

Michelle Maros: [00:08:12] And what does that can you go a little bit deeper? What does that. That's very esoteric, I think. The inner world.

Barb Schmidt: [00:08:20] Yes.

Michelle Maros: [00:08:21] So what does that mean or what does that look like to you or how does that feel for you?

Barb Schmidt: [00:08:27] So for me, the inner world is that there are two voices in our in our being. There's the voice and the head. There's the we've talked about the 70,000 thoughts we think every single day and the chatter that happens in the head. So there's a voice in the head that's always saying you're not pretty enough or go do this or go to that and this is how you're going to be successful and this is what you need to do. But then there's also a voice in the heart. There is also that voice within that is saying, Barb, take a deep breath here. Connect within and connect with that knowing or connect with that place within that knows what it is or what choice you need to make in this moment or what you're feeling? So connecting to the body. I would say I would say having this inner connection to your body. And so I think. If you ask me what would be the first idea or step in, that it would be like paying attention to your intuition.

Michelle Maros: [00:09:24] Well, two things. I think when you talk about the two voices, what I hear you saying is there's a voice inside our minds, like you said. Inside of us that thinks all of those thoughts that oftentimes is a little more critical and harsh and maybe comparative and judgmental. And then there's that inner voice of the heart. That's the truth. That's gentle and loving and aligned with who you really are. And tapping into then the second piece of intuition. That is your intuition. And we hear people say, follow your intuition. Listen to your intuition. Follow your gut instincts. And some people I don't even think really know what that is or even how to tap into that. But when you can stop and sit and be in silence and listen, that's where you can hear and get clear on what's actually right for you.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:21] Yes. Well said. Yeah, exactly. Well, I think, you know, I used to think that there were intuitive people and they're not intuitive people. And I'm one of those people that's not intuitive and that's just not true.

Michelle Maros: [00:10:32] And I used to think that way. I was like, I am not intuitive.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:38] And you are the most intuitive person that I know. You are so connected.

Michelle Maros: [00:10:41] Well we are all intuitive

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:41] Yeah, exactly. Because you've cultivated the belief.

Michelle Maros: [00:10:44] We love to reframe and redefine. So I would love for us to redefine what intuitive means, what tapping into your intuition even means, because I think it feels so mystical and magical and a little bit woo woo and that's fine if you want to have that kind of relationship with it. But I also want people who are not as spiritually minded to know that. You can have an intuition and feel intuitive in a very grounded way.

Barb Schmidt: [00:11:15] Yeah, because I don't think intuition is spiritual.

Michelle Maros: [00:11:18] I know, but it's often talked about in the spiritual realm of very mystical things.

Barb Schmidt: [00:11:24] So for me, as I have developed my intuition over the years, for me, intuition is we are in every moment. We are given a hit in the body. Of what needs to happen next on the grandest scale of death or when I talked about losing Ellie in the last episode of Grief, I got a hit in the middle of the night. She was coughing a lot and I got a hit in the middle of the night. In my gut, I got this deep, sinking feeling. I got a hit that said, Barb, it's time, like the voice, the whispers of my heart. And that's the thing that's a little bit tricky because the heart whispers. It's not screaming like the mind is. The mind is saying, Oh, she's fine. Look at she's still happy, she's still eating. But my heart was saying it's time. And so I got goosebumps when I was saying that.

Michelle Maros: [00:12:18] So yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:12:19] What intuition is for me is to listen more closely to the whispers of the heart when you get that hit or when you get the pit of the stomach. If someone asks you to do something and you're first, we get the body, tells us immediately what we should do. When your first inclination if someone asked you to do something, when your first inclination is you get this heaviness in your stomach, which is where I get mine. I know the answer is no. It's not going to feel in alignment from here. It's not going to feel right in this moment or so. That's why I'll often say, if it's not a hell no, like, oh my gosh, no, I could never do that. I might say, I'll get back to you, which we've talked about before. So I think in developing for me, intuition is listening to the whispers of the heart, which is inside the body. The heart is inside the body. So training yourself to pay attention in every moment that something happens. So before the mind can grab your attention and then you're done. Usually it takes another episode or another, another iteration of whatever happened in order to get your attention again. But if you can practice paying more attention to the body and what's happening inside of your body, in your heart or your shoulders, you know, when someone seems to be driving you crazy or is there's there's a reason that's called a pain in the neck. This person is a pain in the neck because you literally are feeling pains in the neck. But we override that and we go straight to the mind and the mind will talk you out of what you know to be true almost every single time.

Michelle Maros: [00:13:47] Well, on what's interesting, listening to you say all that is the biggest piece of that that stuck with me just now is the heart and the inner voice is a whisper. And obviously our minds are always screaming at us. So, of course, it's so much easier to listen to the mind, than it is to be to sit and to try and be still and to be in silence and to not push through maybe some of the uncomfortable feelings or whatever is going up going on for us to listen to what's being said to us in the whisper. Which is why I think actually now that I'm saying this right now, a lot of us feel like we don't have that intuitive hit or the intuition because we're so on autopilot to just push right through. But it's accessed when you stop and you listen and you sit and are in that uncomfortable silence sometimes.

Barb Schmidt: [00:14:47] We're not trained to do that.

Michelle Maros: [00:14:50] But that's where you access it, and that's how a lot of us miss it because we keep pushing through to the next or just listen to the screams of the mind or don't want to stop because we're afraid of what might come up if we do. And then a lot of us are

afraid of what might come up when the intuition says, you know, maybe this... I mean, perfect example for me is that I know we talked in a last episode about me trying to make a decision on where to move after college with a boyfriend situation. And looking back on that, my intuition was telling me not to do it. And that's why it was such a battle, because I could hear a little bit that inner voice of like. It's not it. And I knew it wasn't it, but my mind battled back and said, Oh, but like, you can make it what you want. You just get there.

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:46] You can change.

Michelle Maros: [00:15:47] You can change the situation. If you move there, then you can create this, you know, writing all of the stories of what it could be or my idealized version of what this. Not great relationship could have been, but I did have the intuition back then, even though I would have if you had asked me in the moment what are what's being told. I just really chose to ignore it because I didn't want to believe it. And I think that, too, is the biggest piece. A lot of us who say I don't have it or I don't hear it, not necessarily the the case. Sometimes we just don't want to hear it because what it's telling us might not be exactly what we want to hear, even if we know it to be true. Like with a relationship, like with this romantic relationship, intuitively speaking, if I had listened. To what my intuition was saying to me. That relationship probably would have lasted two months and not almost six years, which is just. And again. It is what it is. That's my past and I've learned a lot, but it's just really for me, being able to look back and learn so much so that maybe in my next whatever, I don't have to take six years to learn that lesson or whatever it might be. It's just interesting for me to look back on it and I'm sorry. I know going on like ...

Barb Schmidt: [00:17:10] it's true no....

Michelle Maros: [00:17:11] But and to also recognize that that intuitive hit was there. Yeah. And to pinpoint it so that I know and can remind myself again. Like with everything else, it's a muscle. That muscle was trying to work in that moment, but I chose to ignore it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:17:28] And I think your story is a perfect one at this place and this episode, because that's why I self-compassion. And I would like to add something to what you just said. You chose to ignore it. And I would also like to say that sometimes we're not ready to hear it. So

we really need to have some discernment and some self-compassion because sometimes I'm sure I probably got that hit about Ellie long before I got it a couple of weeks ago. Because now that Ellie has since passed, I can't tell you how many people have said to me, Oh, my God. Oh, my gosh, Barb, we we could see this coming weeks ago. We could see this coming months ago. We could see this coming. And so not that what other people are saying is that beyond the end, all of it. What I'm trying to say is sometimes, sometimes we need more time. And that's why I love the Maya Angelou quote.

Michelle Maros: [00:18:20] That's the human experience.

Barb Schmidt: [00:18:22] Of course. Exactly. So sometimes we're being protected. Sometimes we're being led and guided. You know, I like to think of that whispers of the heart as the inner guide. It's our inner knowing. And sometimes we know, but we're not ready to take the step in the in the not ready to take that step in the knowing. And so until we're ready and when we're ready, then we know. And that's why I love that Maya Angelou quote, When we know better, we do better. It doesn't mean that all of a sudden we know something we're going to automatically do better. No, I read her message as once. We actually know better and know that it feels right for us in that moment. Then we make the steps and take the steps that will help us get to where it is we're trying to go. So I want to just say to make sure that everyone listening that you truly have deep compassion for yourself. Because in this instance, Michel, that you're talking about with this relationship, you really beat yourself up a lot. I remember you saying to me, we were on a retreat. We were sitting in the bedroom on a retreat at night after dinner before we went to bed. And you were crying and you said, Mom, why did it take me so long? Am I ever going to get over this? Why did it take me so long to realize what was happening? And I remember saying to you, Honey, you know what it takes what it takes. Because that's just the way life unfolds. Sometimes it takes a long time, sometimes it takes a short time. And so I always love this quote.

Michelle Maros: [00:19:49] We will do an episode about some of our favorite quotes.

Barb Schmidt: [00:19:51] I always loved...

Michelle Maros: [00:19:51] That's been requested.

Barb Schmidt: [00:19:52] This has helped me tremendously. I love this quote and it's taken from the Eastern Orthodox base, either an Eastern Orthodox faith, you know, that says, and I'm paraphrasing, that it can take a short amount of time for information to get into the head, like we can get it immediately into the head, but it's can sometimes take a lifetime to get from the head to the heart. And so as we start developing this ability to connect within, to listen to the body, to listen to the whispers of the heart, to when we're when we're in the in the fork of the road, let's say, or we're at the crossroads of a decision that we have to make. So if we could tune into the body first before the mind, it'll it'll guide us to where it is we're trying to go. And I think that's what is meant by listening to the heart, which is not easy and it can take a while. So compassion and knowing that we were never taught this and we were never trained in how to listen to the heart and the body instead of only listening to the voice and the mind.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:57] Yeah. And I think that's that's to why we wanted to approach this episode in the vein of becoming your own best friend. Cultivating that relationship with yourself. Because when you think about some of your really closest relationships and friendships, you do have that compassion for the people that you love. You do have that understanding. You do have that. Oh, you didn't know. It's okay. If someone came to you with a problem, you would be openhearted and accepting. Most of the time, I would imagine, and forgiving. But it's so much harder for us to flip it back at ourselves. We're so. We're our own harshest critics. We're so quick to never forgive ourselves for the things that we've done years ago.

Barb Schmidt: [00:21:48] And holding on to the regrets.

Michelle Maros: [00:21:50] Holding on to the regrets. And oftentimes we rewrite our own stories to forget why we did some of the things that we did with our relationship to I can mentally and emotionally know everything like I just said and recounted with that relationship. But when I take myself back and go into that mindset that I was in. Even though I was getting all those hits, it was what had to happen.

Barb Schmidt: [00:22:15] Yeah. And you're doing the best that you could in the moment.

Michelle Maros: [00:22:17] Again, with a lot of other circumstances at play. But and so none of this is meant to be harsh and judgmental of yourself. But I think life starts to get a little less gritty when you have that relationship with yourself, I feel better making decisions about anything. Now that I feel more connected with who I am and what I want and where I want to go and. It's that tiny piece that's so subtle, but it really starts to impact every aspect of your life. And again, life is a journey. We're not always perfect. We're never perfect, but we're not always going to be act in alignment with everything but. Maybe if I'm not as hard on myself for making that mistake, you know, and we're going to talk about this in other episodes. I've made a ton of mistakes in my life. A lot of big ones in the past couple of years that have really been difficult to get through. But, I realized in that moment I can either beat myself up to a degree of of doubling down and, you know, keeping me stuck in a spiral forever. Or I can forgive myself. And have some compassion. And it's that subtlety of not doubling down on myself that made all the difference.

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:43] And I like to look at mistakes as information, of course. But I'm just saying.

Michelle Maros: [00:23:47] But I'm just saying it's....

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:48] What I was just going to say, though, when you....

Michelle Maros: [00:23:50] Are you your best, best friend or your biggest enemy? And so often we're our own biggest enemy. We have... We cultivate these amazing relationships around us, or we try to we often say we want the best partner, the best friend, the best family. And we spend so much time bringing the, quote unquote, best around us. But then we're our own worst enemy. And that kind of cancels all of it out. And we have to meet ourselves and meet the people in our lives halfway. And that's kind of to me the epitome of doing the work. It's not even about anything else external. It's about what do I need to do to support myself so that I can show up to the life that I meant to be living or that I even want to live?

Barb Schmidt: [00:24:39] I agree completely. And I think as I love to reframe definitions, reframe words and redefine words, actually. And so I like to think of a mistake as information. So if we think that we've made a mistake, so how you tell yourself what something is, is how

you will treat yourself? I think because we become what we think. And so if we can start exactly what you're saying, Michelle, if we can start treating ourselves like we would our best friends, our dearest family members, then we will start to realize that, wow, I'm not going to beat myself up anymore about making, quote, these mistakes because it was information, because it's information that has shown me what I don't want to do next time, [of course], what actions and what things I won't do next time or how I want to change this particular part in my life, because we are the only ones that can change our own lives. We are the only ones that can change our own behaviors. And we have absolutely no control over anyone or anything in the outside world. We can only change our own actions and reactions to what happens in life.

Barb Schmidt: [00:25:43] So I love what you just said because it really sets up this whole framework of how can we truly start to love and trust and accept ourselves completely? And that doesn't mean we won't make mistakes. When I say trust myself completely, if I'm going to make a decision, I have to trust myself. I'm actually going to step into the world taking the action on that decision. Now, maybe it wasn't the right decision at the time, and I will learn whatever it is that I need to learn from that. But if I don't trust myself, and like myself and accept who I am, the chances of any action that I take. Being successful or leading to my happiness or my joy is just slimmer. If I'm not feeling confident, which we talked about in an earlier episode, or if I'm not feeling comfortable in my own skin to make this choice or to take this action. So I think that's one layer of developing this friendship, this best friend, because you are with you all the way to the end of life. There is no one that you are with all the way to the end.

Michelle Maros: [00:26:50] Yeah and I know we've talked about that in the past of we are the only ones who are inside of our minds and inside of our life experience.

Barb Schmidt: [00:26:58] And walking in our own shoes.

Michelle Maros: [00:26:58] 24 seven. We're the only ones walking in our own shoes. And....

Barb Schmidt: [00:27:02] So why in the world would I ask someone out there what I should do?

Michelle Maros: [00:27:08] Right. And I think that brings that quote that you say a lot. Can you live your life?

Barb Schmidt: [00:27:16] Can you live your whole life, never having met the person who is living it?

Michelle Maros: [00:27:22] Can you say it again?

Barb Schmidt: [00:27:23] It's I know it's really deep. When I first heard it, sitting with it, it made me cry.

Michelle Maros: [00:27:24] It is because it's the epitome of everything we're talking about in this episode.

Barb Schmidt: [00:27:30] Could you live your whole life never having truly met the person who is living it? And so I think it's really deep and really profound. And it made me cry the first time I heard it on this retreat that I was on with the former Trappist monk, James Finley.

Michelle Maros: [00:27:50] Your favorite teacher.

Barb Schmidt: [00:27:51] One of my most favorite teachers. And you know, it struck me so deeply. I said I started to cry because I thought, wow, that could happen, because I'm not sure that I've actually really met the person who's living my life because I was early in my sobriety, my sobriety, my recovery, and I was early in my living, my my path and my practice. And I thought, wow. And I remember feeling so excited but concerned like, no, I don't want to waste this one wild and precious life that Mary Oliver talks about in her poetry, not having met the Barb who's living it. Wow. No, I want to I'm getting such goosebumps talking about this with all of you. Like, I want to meet that person. I want to love and trust and accept that person completely. I want to be her best friend. I want to be her biggest ally, her biggest advocate, her biggest supporter, because that's the kind of friend I want to show up in life for my friends and my family. I want to be that person. And so I want to be that person for myself, too. And so I think that quote from James Finley really shook me up and really helped me open my eyes to start to discover how can I actually do that?

Michelle Maros: [00:29:11] Of course, and it is the epitome of everything that we're talking about today. And just thinking about how easy it is to go through life without cultivating that connection and not ever really knowing who's living it. It's so easy to get caught up in the autopilot of of life and of what society expects for us. You do this and then you go to this, and then you go on to this, and then you do this and you tick all of the boxes.

Barb Schmidt: [00:29:39] And then in their timeline, society's.

Michelle Maros: [00:29:41] Society's timeline, and then, you know, at the end, you're done. Without any bit of personality or uniqueness involved, and we've said this a lot in other episodes is we're all here for a unique purpose. We have unique lives, we have unique timelines. We have unique, unique paths with circumstances, people, places, resources. Everyone is so different. And if you don't place some sort of priority or take the time to, like you said, get to know the person living this unique life. Then it's sad to me because it's like you're missing out on the most meaningful relationship you could have. And I'm just hesitating to say anything that's too overarching of like, that'll be the biggest regret of your life or anything like that. But it's sad to me to think that I could live my whole life and not know who I really am. And I would never want to feel that regret of placing so much importance on everything else externally with people and not really feeling that connection with myself.

Barb Schmidt: [00:31:04] And I think it's so profound and and it really the steps to starting to. Form and forge and cultivate that relationship with yourself are not as difficult as it might seem. And I think starting with the fact that you matter and I think understanding that like. Who you are, I mean, who you are matters like you're an extraordinary human being. And some of that kind of talk is hard for people to wrap their heads around in the beginning, but just understanding that you and your life matters. And so if I think your life matters and I don't even know you, but I am such a lover of humans and human beings and....

Michelle Maros: [00:31:47] She loves the people.

Barb Schmidt: [00:31:49] So I love like your life matters, you matter. And I want everyone to find that sense of that you matter so that we can give more to this beautiful world that we're all

supposed to build together. So I think let's walk them through a little bit. Michelle is a little bit of a way that you can begin to cultivate this beautiful friendship with yourself.

Michelle Maros: [00:32:11] Yeah. So, first of all, I just want to. Talk a little bit about our own personal examples of how we've gone to cultivate this relationship with ourselves. I personally, you have to have silent time to sit with myself and connect. So for me, that's meditation daily and I also journal daily. And I find that the silence that I can cultivate in my meditation allows me to connect. It's like plugging myself into myself, like I would charge a phone overnight. My meditation practice is like. Charging into myself. And then the journaling practice for me is tapping into my thoughts unfiltered to see what's going on, for me, to see what's up, for me, to see perhaps a deep desire that I have that I've been pushing away. You know, I bet you if I went back into some of my journals of the past, I can see some intuitive hits coming through about relationships and decisions and things like that. So those are my two practices that I do to maintain the connection. What are yours?

Barb Schmidt: [00:33:32] Well, so and I think where I started forming my relationship with myself and what was my practice definitely is meditation. And so when we say meditation, we mean just finding time, even if it's just for a couple of minutes to sit and quiet with yourself and just try to begin bringing your attention inward and listening to the voice within those whispers of the heart instead of instead of bringing your attention and paying attention to the thoughts and the mind, just gently for a couple of minutes, bringing your attention within your body and into the whispers of the heart. So I start with that practice, and it doesn't have to be hours, doesn't have to be for long periods of time. It literally can just be for a couple of minutes. And then when I really thought about what how do I start? What do I want to how do I start to listen to those whispers of the heart? I started asking myself four questions.

Michelle Maros: [00:34:18] Asking yourself the questions.

Barb Schmidt: [00:34:20] Yes. And so you sit in that quiet, just give yourself just start breathing and bring your attention to your breath and bring your attention inward and letting the mind do its thing. Not trying to stop yourself from thinking, but not paying attention to the thinking, not talking to the thinking, not answering those thoughts back, and just really making the effort to to keep your attention within on the beating of your heart or on the breath, on the into the

nose and out through the nose and feeling the chest, you know, rise on the inhale and come back to the body on the exhale. Just starting to come within and then asking yourself and I asked myself these four questions for a really long time.

Michelle Maros: [00:34:56] Yeah. And these questions when you're indecisive, when you don't think you know what to do or what you want, when you're not feeling like you know who you are. These have always helped me. I know they've helped you. They're so, so meaningful and informational and so in that space that you just walked us through. If you have a journal or just sitting in meditation, you can ask yourself, Who am I?

Barb Schmidt: [00:35:25] And I think that idea of Who am I? What happened? And I just want to give people a little what happened for me and who am I? I got past the surface level in the mind that said, I'm a mother, I'm a teacher, I'm a whatever it is out there in the outside world. And you start when you're listening to the whispers of the heart, why this is so vital and why it's so why it's so important and so cool. Actually, it's so amazing is that you start to really tap into who you are deep within Who am I is kindness. Or who am I is compassion. Or who am I is love. And so when you can see yourself as love, you can see yourself as beauty. You can see yourself as compassion. That's those are the gateway words to loving yourself and trusting yourself and accepting yourself completely. So that's what opened the door for me when I got past the labels of being a mother or a wife or whatever it is and got into I'm beautiful, I'm beautiful, I'm beauty, I'm love, I'm creativity, I'm compassion.

Michelle Maros: [00:36:31] And sitting with yourself long enough to get past that surface layer of external descriptors.

Barb Schmidt: [00:36:40] And by long enough. I want to interject here. By long enough you mean a couple of minutes every day for maybe a week, a month, two months, a year. It can take a little while to get the the stillness and to train yourself to listen within. It doesn't necessarily happen in the first time sitting, and you don't have to sit for hours and hours until you get the answer of who I am.

Michelle Maros: [00:37:00] Well, none, of course, to life is not stagnant, so it's going to change. And not being so don't have such a tight grip on what comes up. [Right.] So sit with yourself and ask yourself, who am I? And it could be just sitting and repeating, Who am I? Who am I?

Barb Schmidt: [00:37:15] Right. And remembering to do that consistently every day for a while until you until you actually you'll feel like, whoa, I just heard the whisper inside. Because I'll tell you, when I first heard the whisper inside that I was kindness, that's the first thing that came up for me. I was like, Whoa. I always think other people are kind. Wow. Your kindness to Barb. [Sure are.] And so it opens the door, I think, to all the other ones. But I think being patient and loving and compassionate and caring with yourself, to just sit every day for a couple of minutes knowing... knowing that you will hear the answers. So it's the consistency that we talked about in one of the other episodes. It's the consistency of every day training yourself to this inner practice of asking yourself who you are and not the length of time and expecting a result in that instant or tomorrow could happen, but be patient.

Michelle Maros: [00:38:11] Yeah, it's like we said, the mind is going to want to scream some things, but the heart whispers and so.

Barb Schmidt: [00:38:19] And what the mind screamed to me in the early days was, This is such a waste of time, but this is not going to work. This is such a waste of time. But mine. No, but I was determined.

Michelle Maros: [00:38:30] You had the desire.

Barb Schmidt: [00:38:31] I have the deep desire to know myself.

Michelle Maros: [00:38:33] And that's the first piece. Having the desire to make this a priority. So who am I? Question one And that's, of course, I mean, that's the biggest question of all.

Barb Schmidt: [00:38:46] That's the question of life.

Michelle Maros: [00:38:47] So obviously it's not trying to just bypass through it. But number one, who am I? Number two, what do I really want?

Barb Schmidt: [00:38:58] And I always had several more really after that.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:00] What do I really, really, really want?

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:01] And just listen. What do I really, really want?

Michelle Maros: [00:39:08] And that was a big one for me. It always is a big one for me.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:12] And just listening and accepting what your heart tells you.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:16] And not having any judgment for because this is a practice for you. So if weird things come up, let it come up. You can analyze it later but just let it come out. It's got to come out.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:27] Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:29] Do with the information what you will but let it come up and out.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:32] Without judgment. Without judgment, without even understanding it at first. Just I like the fact that you journal because just write it down and just let it let it come in and go out and then maybe later you'll look back on it. Or maybe it'll come up in another form and another time. But really just being okay with just allowing whatever is whispering inside of you to come out.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:57] Yep. And you might be surprised to. Yeah, I love pleasant surprises. Question number three, what matters to me?

Barb Schmidt: [00:40:09] What matters most to me? Like we rarely ask ourselves that. Sometimes we think about it in hindsight. If something tragic happens, we think, Oh my gosh, that really mattered to me. I wish I had made that phone call or I wish I had done X, Y or Z. So just really knowing up front, like what matters most to me. And then when am I? So when you know what matters to you, you start to then prioritize the time that you're spending during

your day. Am I spending most of my time on things that matter, or am I frittering my time away on things that really don't matter to me at all? It's because society or someone else has told me that I need to do this or that I have to do this because I can't say no.

Michelle Maros: [00:40:48] Frittering my time away just made me laugh. But it's true. And thinking about the societal expectations, the family responsibilities, the timelines that were placed on ticking all the boxes, it's easy to get so caught up in all of those things. And when you sit with yourself, maybe none of that matters.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:10] Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:41:11] Maybe what matters to you is something so much more simple and basic, but it's easier to get caught up in the the fritters of life.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:20] Well. That's where the surprises came to me, actually.

Michelle Maros: [00:41:23] And for me too, because I used to think I had to fall into that timeline and tick those boxes in that order. And my life has not been that way at all. But I'm at the place now where I'm really good with it and I like it because what matters to me is what matters to me. And I, I'm happy because I'm connected with what matters to me and not what other people say should matter to me.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:52] And I think what is so beautiful about what you said, Michelle, is what really connected with me as well during this this time period was that I noticed how little time I was spending on what really mattered. Like, I looked at my life and I wondered why I was so tired or my energy. Of course, I'm a morning person, so my energy is always up in the morning. And am I doing where my energy is the highest and where my desires are really up? Am I doing the things that matter most to me, where my energy is really good and feeling good, or the things that matter most to me am I waiting until five or six or 7:00 at night?

Michelle Maros: [00:42:27] She is a different she is a morning person. So whenever we do things, it's got to be before a certain time because we know. So the Barb golden hour.

Barb Schmidt: [00:42:36] Yes. And so I think that was my surprise, like, wow, these things really matter to me, but I'm really not placing them in the highest priority of my energy. So it's really it's always remember, like you're the scientist in a laboratory of your own life. And so everything that you're going to get from this exercise is information and being loving and compassionate because it's really valuable information and having no judgment.

Michelle Maros: [00:43:03] And also tapping into that, too, with what matters to you. What do you value?

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:07] Right? What do you value?

Michelle Maros: [00:43:09] What are your values in this life? And we talk about values a lot because I think we think of values being placed upon us. Family values, religious values. Societal values. But at the core, our values might be something much different or much simpler. And so when you think about what matters to you in this question, number three, think about also what you value. And these two years of the pandemic, too, have shown me that I really value simplicity. A slower paced life. And if I think about what my life was before the pandemic, I was anything but that so tapping into your values and what matter and asking yourself that question is really interesting because again, things can come up that you might not have even thought. And you might be surprised. You might surprise yourself. And the number four. Is what impact do I want to make in this world or in my life or in my community? What impact do I wish to have? Yeah, and I like this last one because the first three are obviously so inwardly focused of me, the person. And my wants and desires and my core values. In this last question is so interesting because it's like, what do I want me to look like in the world? How do I want me to interact with the world world being my community or the people around me? Obviously, I'm not with eight, 9 billion people all the time, but how do I show up in the world? Yeah. What's the energy I bring to life. And to the people and to my projects? And this one is important because we all know life is difficult. We're in a really difficult moment in time with so many conflicts at play. And just thinking about how you singularly wish to impact that, I think is really powerful and important, especially right now.

Barb Schmidt: [00:45:36] And it's not your purpose or it's not any of those kinds of things. It's truly what you're saying, Michelle. Just like, how do I just what impact or what use this word

legacy, but what legacy are? I remember when I first did this, I was thinking like probably three or four months in as I was doing this every day, I was at one point it came up for me like... If after I'm gone, they're having a party for me... What are some of the ways that you want to have left your your mark or your your heart or, your feelings in the world? Or what are some things that people might remember about you or what? I think impact is the right word. And so sorting out what that means for you, but it isn't necessarily tied to a purpose. And I want to do all these things. It's not at all. It's more tied to that inner feeling of how do I want to how do I want to show up? You said it beautifully, Michelle. How do I want to show up in life?

Michelle Maros: [00:46:35] Well, and what's interesting, too, is I think the mind will scream, the purpose, the tangible. I want to write, create a multimillion dollar company or I want to be famous or I want to, whatever, that external thing. And I think for me too, I used to think I want to build something fabulous in my work or whatever. But the silent whisper is not is none of that for me. It's more I want people to remember me as being kind or authentic. You know those. Those words that we talked about at the beginning, you said I am kindness. That that other external stuff doesn't matter to me as much. Of course I want to create and feel fulfilled when my time is done here. But it all matters. What impact do I want to have? I want to bring an energy that's kind and compassionate and caring and funny and lighthearted and helpful and meaningful and purposeful. And everything else that comes along with that comes along with that. But that's the impact.

Barb Schmidt: [00:47:50] Beautifully said. Beautifully said.

Michelle Maros: [00:47:53] And so, of course, those are the four questions. Who am I? What do I really, really, really want? What matters to me and what do I value and what impact do I want in this world? And so thinking about those answers right now today. But knowing that it's going to change. We've done this. We've you and I have done this exercise together with our work. I've done it personally within myself. You've done it personally. We've done it for years and years and years and years. And I know that those answers have have...

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:29] You get deeper.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:29] Shifted.

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:30] You get deeper into the listening and the whispers.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:32] Yeah. And so using again, like I like your knowledge, your words of using these answers as information. On your journey, but not holding them too tightly. Yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:45] You're taking your life. Taking the life that you're living seriously, but not taking yourself so seriously and really being light hearted, but being passionate and caring. I mean, I think we're always walking that that middle path that I that idea that I don't want to I don't want the strings of my guitar to be too tight and I don't want the strings to be too loose. I can't play a guitar if the strings are too tight. I can't play a guitar if the strings are too loose. So how do I find that balance of being accepting and curious and open to what what is happening inside of me and what my heart might be saying to me, but also be mindful of the information that I'm given time after time after time at every given moment. So and and I think it's... I just was going to say sorry.... I was just going to say also like looking at yourself in the mirror every day, too, I was going to say this one thing that I do every day, and it took me it took me forever to even get up the courage to do this. Look at yourself in the mirror every day. The first thing after you get out of bed, just walk. When you go into your bathroom, look in the mirror and just say, I love you. Look into your eyes and meet that person that's standing there in the mirror. It starts to it starts to melt the hardness that you might have of, oh, my gosh, how could I even say that to myself? Maybe the silliness or the awkwardness or whatever it is that you might be feeling about how to cultivate this relationship and this deep friendship with yourself.

Michelle Maros: [00:50:09] I remember I went on a retreat with Anna-Louise Haigh years ago and she gave us a little compact mirrors and had us sit and look at the mirror and tell ourselves, I love myself, I love you, all of those things. And that was the hardest part of the entire retreat because people really struggle with that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:30] Yeah. And it becomes a little bit more palatable and easier if you think about yourself as meeting yourself like, I want to meet you. I wanted to meet the Barb that I am. I wanted to meet myself.

Michelle Maros: [00:50:42] And being your own cheerleader. [Yes.] You know, talking to yourself like you would a dear friend, like you, like a loved one, or even like your pet. I'm the nicest to my cat.

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:55] Yes.

Michelle Maros: [00:50:55] So.

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:57] Yeah. So really just cultivating we all have people that we are in love with and that we deeply care and admire and treat with the utmost respect and kindness. Just start thinking about that. You are that person as well and start meeting that person as well. So I think I would like to close my part of it with just saying, you know, just like my hope for all of you out there listening is that that may you awaken like you awaken to the dance. I've been thinking about this a lot over the past several years, especially during this pandemic. Like, may you awaken to the dance of the life within you, of life within you, and just really see how spectacular you are. Hmm. That would be my deepest desire for everyone. Awaken to that dance of life within you and start to really see and feel how spectacular and how magnificent you are. I love you all so much. I love you so much Michelle.

Michelle Maros: [00:51:59] I love you. When we were talking about creating this podcast, it was out of the vein of wanting people to feel like they were sitting in on a conversation that you and I would have about our own lives. And I feel like this episode is kind of the epitome because what you just said is, is so much of like what you would say to me personally in any moment in time. And so I'm so glad that all of you listening now get to experience that because that's this is the Barb.... Who knows best. So thank you for that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:36] Oh, my gosh. I'll go write it on your mirror today, too.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:39] And write things on your mirror. She writes things on my mirror. And it's a beautiful practice to get into. So. Thank you for all of that. And I'm excited for everyone to hopefully dive into this and really get to meet the people who are living all of these fabulous, wonderful lives.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:57] It's my real honor and pleasure to be here.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:00] Oh, likewise.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:02] I love it.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:03] And thank you, all of you, for listening and being with us again in this episode. We really do love being with you week in and week out, and we're grateful for all of the love and support and messages. And you know, we couldn't do all of this without you all. So please remember to like and subscribe to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. Apple. Spotify. Google. If you haven't already, we would love a review if you have one. Five star rating really, really helps us out. So please make sure to do that if you haven't already. And of course, make sure you're following us on social media, at Peaceful_Barb, at Michelle Maros and at Barb Knows Best Pod. You can connect with us there or give us some requests for podcast topics. Whatever's going on for you, we love to hear from you there. So make sure you're connected with us and connect with you. Connect with yourself and we will talk to you all next week. Thanks so much. Because as we know, Barb knows best.