

**Episode 41 – Holiday Q&A with Barb and Michelle**  
***Barb Knows Best***  
**Episode Transcripts**

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:12] Hello, everyone. Hello, friends. Welcome back to Barb Knows Best the podcast. I hope you all listening from wherever you are are having a fabulous day. Fabulous week. Wherever, whatever you're doing. We're thrilled to be back with you for another episode, another day, another week, another pod. I am here with Barbara, looking bright eyed and bushy tailed. Good morning. Good afternoon.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:44] Good morning!

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:44] Good evening!

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:45] Good Everything.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:47] Hi.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:48] How are you doing?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:49] I'm great. How are you?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:50] How's it going being you today?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:52] It's going.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:53] Good. I'm excited for this episode. We've done this one other time before and I'm really loving it. And the response that we got was overwhelming so...

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:01] Sure was. So as you all hopefully already know, last week we did a little holiday survival guide, a helpful breakdown of some of those uncomfortable holiday feelings. We know it's a lot. We've just passed by Thanksgiving. So hopefully you all were able to maybe reframe some of the difficulty and hopefully it all went okay. But if not or if you're still feeling a little iffy about some things, we we promised that we would do a little part two this

week of some of the other things that we wanted to share about the holidays and answer some of your questions.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:48] Yeah, Thanksgiving, if you're living in the United States, but we've got a whole other month of December.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:53] Yes, we do.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:54] Holiday parties and holiday stresses and all the things. And then, of course, the big one is ending this year.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:00] I know you're very excited for this year to end.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:02:03] Well, I'm very excited. I always love the ending of one year in the beginning of another. But I'm really excited. Yes. For this year to end and for us to really be fully present and intentional for 2023. So. Today we plan to share some things that will help you continue through the end of this year and all the holiday stresses and really start 2023 off. Feeling good. Feeling confident.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:27] Hopefully.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:02:28] Yeah.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:29] It's so interesting. Whenever we. Advertise for some questions for you all that we're going to do a Q&A episode because it kind of confirms what we already knew to be true, that we're all going through such similar things. Obviously different circumstances, different characters, different personal, unique aspects of it. But, you know. Some of these questions like. They're all they're all so similar. And it's cool to see. I mean, you know, I know they're heavy and deep and not always easy, but it's it's cool to see that we're kind of all going through the same thing, more or less.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:03:07] Yeah, having our own unique experience as we're doing them. But you're right, Michelle, We tend to....

**Michelle Maros:** [00:03:12] The themes are strong.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:03:13] The themes are very strong, and it is kind of nice that we are in the same boat. We truly are with the different circumstances obviously, and different ranges of how we're all in the same boat, but we generally all feel the same stresses or feel the same worries or heartaches or all of the things that we might be going on in our lives. We're kind of in the same vein of having some of the many similar situations. So I'm excited about this episode and being able to give our experiences of how we would discuss and how we try to handle all of these questions that you all have so generously provided for us.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:03:54] Yes, so many questions. So I'm going to do my best to kind of lump them into different themes and try and answer as many as we can, because they're all very good. They're all very important, and I'm excited to dive into it. So first question that we got was... We got so many about boundaries, but I think we've talked about boundaries so often on this podcast. But one, you know, it's they're easy or we can understand them in theory, but putting them into practice, especially with family, especially with all of this pressure and expectation of the holidays, boundaries feel like they kind of go out the window. So what do you do when your boundaries are not taken seriously over and over again? Or how? What do you do when you feel like you're constantly having to defend your boundaries or people, your family, your friends don't want to accept them? What do you think we can do? I mean, because I think, you know, we've just come off of one holiday here in the US and we're kind of gearing up for around two or three, whatever. So what can we do going forward?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:04:58] So I want to start this episode off with a quote, which is my favorite things to do.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:05:04] Love it. Quote Queen.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:05:05] Henry David Thoreau. And he says this, The greatest compliment ever paid to me was when someone asked me what I thought and then tended to my answer.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:05:15] Hmm.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:05:15] So I start off with that quote with this in mind. Communication. Communication is everything in life. We are we are mostly engaged in relationships with other people almost all day long. And if we're not engaged with relationships with people, we're engaged with a relationship with ourselves from the inside out. So it is so important to start looking at how we answer all of these questions that you and I are going to talk about today in the vein of where can I learn to communicate my needs in a way that I am heard? And then when can I learn how to listen to what other people's needs are in a way that I'm truly listening to what it is that they need? Because as I look through all of these questions and as Michelle said, there are so many here, really the bottom line is there was a lack of communication to begin with. And I get that because it's so hard. It is really hard to have that conversation. Look, this is what I need. This is what's happening for me. But then to also say, and what do you need and how are you feeling about this situation? So I just wanted to preface it with that, because we're talking about the holidays, we're talking about December and the end of the year and going into 2023.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:06:28] The first thing that I want to say is trying to set a boundary and trying to communicate your needs during the holiday season or during the event or during the dinner or during the breakfast or whatever the party or event is. Trying to do that during that is always a recipe for chaos, for stress, for difficulties, for and not so great time that you might want to have. Because I think that's the greatest question that I could ask everyone out there. As we start to answer your questions, what is your intention? For the holiday season. How would you like to feel? Michelle talks about this all the time. How do you want to feel? So this is the backdrop for the answers that we're going to give you. I just want you to take a pause for a second and think about what is my intention for the next 45 days till we enter 2023. How do I want to feel? How can I express myself in a way that isn't chaotic and dramatic and will cause tension? And how can I really learn to kind of take a step back if I'm not quite sure that I have communicated my boundaries and not try to change people or get everything changed during this holiday season? So I think that this is important to start this way.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:07:45] And so if we're talking about boundaries right now, we had so many you're right, Michelle, We had so many questions about boundaries. I would say, have you set any boundaries already or is it you're coming out of last year's holiday time and you're thinking,

I don't ever want to do last year again, so how can I change it? Which is really good. But you have to have the conversation ahead of time so it doesn't really work. I don't believe to try to set a boundary while you're in the middle of the event or while you're in the middle of the meal. So the best way to set the boundaries that really matter to you is having the conversation with the person that you need to have the conversation with being open hearted, being willing to freely share your feelings and your thoughts about it, and then being open hearted and willing to accept the other person's feelings and thoughts about it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:08:37] Yeah, and last week, you know, we said in our tips. Making a plan. If you plan, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail in this kind of falls into that category of really taking the time before some of these events and situations with people and thinking about what your needs are, like you said, and communicating them beforehand. And if it's with people who maybe don't take it, take you seriously, or you feel like you're constantly having to defend yourself, you know, maybe reaching out and saying, Look, I really need to talk to you before dinner in a couple of weeks. I just really need this. And I hope that, you know, you can respect that or whatever language you would use with people, but. It is true, even if it's really uncomfortable. I find that when people communicate with me clearly. And honestly. It's easier, like I can understand it, I can digest it and I can act accordingly. It's when things aren't clear or a little confusing or kind of in a tone or a manner that's not you know, you don't know if it's true or not. That's when things kind of fall apart. But if you can really think about what you need and how you can communicate it. And then of course, like when we've talked about boundaries in the past on other episodes, you know, think about what you're going to do if the boundary is crossed, you know, are you going to say something to the person, you know, take them aside and say, like, I really don't. You know, what is what are you going to do? Or are you going to, you know, excuse yourself, depending on what the boundary is thinking about how you're going to handle it beforehand so you're not taken off guard and then taken out.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:10:18] Beautifully shared, Michelle, And it kind of goes hand in hand with having the conversation before the event. One of the questions, you know, my daughter will bring up big issues, big issues like patriarchy or family events. How do I set a boundary? It really has to be done before the event, really has to be has to have the conversation with the person or with the people. And then if you do that and it still happens, there's a way of being able to, I think we talked about this in the last episode to be able to shift the conversation or there's a

way of being able to say something like, I'm not really comfortable with that. Could we talk about that in another time? How do you find really being, you know, really being heartfelt and really being authentic and trying so hard not to get your feelings hurt and not getting triggered and not getting negative about that, but just kind of coming from a place of, oh, that's not something, you know, and maybe even bringing in a little levity. That's not something that I want to talk about during this event. Could we just shelve that for another time? I'd love to know how your trip was to Canada last week.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:11:18] You know, really, really thinking about this ahead of time. Because if these are really big issues for you have a comeback that's really genuine and authentic, but also kind and really helping people see that. This matters to you. I had to think for just a second this really matters to you. That's why it's so important to have the conversation beforehand. But if you can't or it doesn't happen, there's always ways to be able to do that. I think someone else asked how to set limits or leave politely after sharing a meal and talking about boundaries. I always, when the meal is over and I'm ready to go, I say, Oh my gosh, this was such a wonderful time together. I really want to thank all of you for all of us coming together. And I'm going to leave now or I'm ready to go home or or I hope you all have a good rest of the other night. I'm going to leave having finding some way to be gracious and thankful, but also respecting that it's time for you to go because I like this one the best, because I am the known as the person that always leaves early.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:12:22] Well, yeah, she is always known as someone that when it's done, she's done. She's not someone that lingers or wants to chit chat after an event.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:12:28] Especially if it's nighttime.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:12:29] Well, and also you can say, Oh, I have to leave by 930. You can tell someone, but I want to reverse a little bit because I wanted to have a little whole. Section dedicated to because we had so many questions about people bringing up politics and uncomfortable topics or controversial topics at these events. Because, I mean, that's the biggest thing of all. I think all of us are kind of afraid about of butting heads with loved ones at the dinner table about politics. It's so divisive, it's so difficult. You know, we're really on opposite ends of the spectrum in so many different ways. When you think about politics these

days. And I think, you know. For me at least, and for our family. It's like we're just, we're not going to talk about it at dinner. And if it's something like because I do believe that we should be able to talk about these things and air out our issues in a kind and productive way. So I would never advocate to just like never talk about it, unless, of course, the person that you're talking about it is just completely disrespectful. And it won't be a productive conversation, but maybe say, look, we're not going to talk about politics at dinner. Maybe at breakfast we can have a little politics chat and then we're done or whatever, you know, like figure out a time maybe that works, but not at the times that matter to you. To me, that seems like a good compromise. And I think. Like you said, figuring out how to change a subject if it does come up, being able to pivot.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:14:05] But I like what you said. Having the boundary to start and doing it..

**Michelle Maros:** [00:14:08] Saying ahead of time, guys, we talked about, you know, elections last year and it was really uncomfortable. And I really just want this to be fun and lighthearted. And I know there's a lot of issues up. We can find time to talk about it, but I'd really love for this holiday dinner to be politics free.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:14:23] Exactly. And finding ways to do it where it doesn't feel so heavy, where it can kind of be lighthearted. Okay, you know what? You guys, we did this last year. Or let me just say that I would love to have this conversation about politics and all the things that you said, Michelle, at another time. Let's really just have fun and enjoy each other's company for this dinner and see how it goes. I think just putting it out there and laying it out there is a really good start. But if there's issues that you're having before you even get to the dinner, it's really important to let the person know if it's family member or if it's a friend or whatever it is. What works for you? I know someone said they're a cancer patient and how do I deal with anti-vaxxers in my family? It's really important to have that conversation, say, and being really heartfelt and trying not to.... It's really important not to have your, you know, we have our strong opinions about things, but when you're asking the other person to do something or you want, you want to be able to convey a boundary or want to be able to convey convey a concern, it's really important to come from your heart. This is really this is really I'm really scared about this or this is really an issue for me. How can we solve it? So bring the other person in to help you solve it. And I think when someone can feel you coming from your heart

and you're asking for them to contribute to the solution to it, usually there's a better outcome to be had and it's not so constructive and it's not so divisive. So I think coming from your heart with anything that you're going to ask, especially before you before you come to the event or the dinner or the party or whatever it is, and really bringing the other person in to ask them how they can help you solve it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:15:58] Mm hmm. I think that's really good.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:16:01] We had a lot of people talk about I know there's always a discussion about food and what are we going to cook and what are we going to eat? And people have all their ideas and their views about what they will eat and what they won't eat and things like that. So having the conversation, this is what works for me. How could we try to find a balance here? How can we, how can I get my needs met and you get your needs met? I think it's really, really important that it's a conversation where both people are participating or all people, however many people are involved, are participating in the solution.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:34] Yeah that the whole food, body image, dieting and even the whole conversation about relationships, marriages, children, you know, ticking the boxes of life and society's expectations. Those are big hot topic items that come up at the holiday time. You know, you haven't seen family and, you know, maybe since last year and everyone wants to know what's new with you or, you know, when are you going to be doing these things. And it's it's not always comfortable. So even thinking of your response to those questions ahead of time so that you have them in your back pocket of like, you know, when are you going to get married? Oh, thanks for asking. But I'm really focused on this new project at my work that I'm really excited about, and it's going to come out next year, you know, or when are you going to have kids? Same thing. Whatever the question that might be triggering for you, maybe kind of come up with something that you can say that will kind of end the conversation, but also give them an answer that feels good for you is really, really helpful. That's happened to me often, and I used to get really taken off guard and then it would take me out. And I felt that like when I when I plan, when I think ahead, it really helps me in the moment. And the same with foods. You know, you've been vegetarian for basically my whole life, but people didn't always know that or remember that. And you've always just been like very you tell people, but you're you don't make it a big deal. You're not, you know. Talking about it all the time, and it's always been



very good. So I think thinking about how you're going to address some of these issues so that there's no confusion.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:18:20] And I think to it's I try to be easy breezy about it. Those are my favorite words about all of this. As you're listening to this, if you could adopt the attitude of easy breezy, I have family members that to this day, after 30 years almost of being a vegetarian, they don't really understand it, which is fine. I don't have a need for them to understand it. So if one of them would say to me, You're still not eating meat. Yep, same old me, You know, nothing's changed.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:18:47] Nothing's changed.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:18:47] So it's kind of and that's what we mean by not taking things personally. Try not to personalize. It's not enough front that a family member may be saying it. Or maybe they're saying it because they they they just don't like it or it makes them uncomfortable. So a lot of, I do believe strongly, that people say things because there's some kind of a thing going on with them inside of them. And it really doesn't have a whole lot to do with us. So if you can be easy breezy about it, have like a fun. Yeah, same old me or I know there was one somebody asked a question about, you know, they weren't included in a wedding photo and it really is hurt their feelings. The dinner is not the time to bring that up. But if it does get brought up, say, yep, that was that was really an interesting thing. I'd love to talk about that at some other time or just really having an answer and not using the event or the dinner or the party to resolve any issues, any issues, any long standing issues, or to try to change people or to try to get your point across. It can never work. It will always end up in a disaster. But doing it at another time. I'm not saying to let it go and ignore your feelings, but doing it in another time. And if someone brings it up and you don't want to talk about it, say, you know what, I would love to have that conversation. I'll give you a call.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:20:06] Yeah. It's just not the time. It's not the time to fix things. It's a time to just be present or get into things that have happened in the past or the future, but to really enjoy what we have in the moment. But kind of going off of that same topic, a lot of people want to know how to deal with maybe, you know, the negativity of family or just being bothered by other people's opinions and family's opinions of you and not taking things

personally, which is really hard. We think that being with family, we can be who we are and be loved unconditionally, and sometimes that doesn't feel to be the case. So what would you say about not taking things personally, especially during the holidays?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:20:46] I think we have to make a decision. I mean, family is family and behaviors are behaviors, and they're not going to change unless the you know, we all know this. We can't change other people. And we also don't change ourselves unless we want to. So that's really the bottom line of it. People are not going to change unless they want to. So trying to get a family member to change or to see that they need to change during the holidays is a recipe for disaster. So I'm going to go back to if you're having issues with family members, it's really important to have the conversation ahead of time and just say, could we have a truce? And let's not talk about maybe these five things and maybe we could do that in another time, Could we? You know, going back to what how I started this episode, what's the intention? So maybe you convene a little conversation or you one on one have a conversation and say, can we let's what's the intention of this? Could we have a plan or have a thought or have a intention that we want this to be fun.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:21:49] But what about like if it's not even something that's a conversation, but like, what if it's a little more unspoken that you feel judged by someone like that maybe your family judged you because you're a vegetarian, or maybe you feel like you're being judged by someone because you're not married yet, or because you're divorced or because you don't have children or whatever. The thing is that's not necessarily spoken about, but you feel that like you're not accepted and it's unspoken, but you're letting it bother you, like you're taking it personally, or you feel that that tinge of sadness that that you don't feel accepted because of something that's happening for you. That's happened over this year or whatever it might be.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:22:32] So if you haven't already had the conversation with the person, you ignore it. You don't come into a family event with your antenna up that this person judges me. I don't I don't know what I want to do about it. You really do something about it before the event. If you're going to choose to go to the event. I really feel strongly about this because as I said before, other people's opinions of you, you say this, Michelle, all the time, other people's opinions of you and their judging of you and your they're comparing of you is their energy. It's their opinion of you. It's not the truth.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:23:08] And it's really none of our business.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:23:09] And it's not the truth. So if it's someone who is judging you, you're showing up at a family event and you're always feeling judged by them. That's just their truth and that's what's going to happen. So you have to make the decision, do I want to go? And most of the time, most people that are asking us these questions, they feel like they don't have a choice whether they can go or not.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:23:29] Which we're going to get into.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:23:30] But if you're going to go, then you need to protect yourself. You need to protect your peace. And that doesn't mean trying to get the other person to stop judging you or you reacting to them judging you. It means someone starts to judge you. You find a little escape plan, is what I call it. They say something that's judgmental. You say, Oh my gosh, I need to go to the run to the grocery store. I forgot to get X, Y, or Z. Or you Excuse yourself. Excuse me. I'll be back in a little bit. And you go to the bathroom, or you go run an errand. Or you go take a little walk around the block so that you can calm down, or so that you can let that judgment go through you understanding that it has nothing to do with you. It goes back to intention. If you're if you truly want to just have a good time or just have fun or just be at peace with yourself and and the event, the party, the holiday, you truly have to not react. You have to be able you have to do the work of not reacting because it's not about you. It's truly about the other person. And I don't know. There's no other way that that can be handled. Except in the future, being able to have the conversation. You know what? I feel like I'm being judged and give some examples. And what can we do about it? Because I love you so much. I would I would like for this to get resolved. And I just want to let you know how I feel. But the dinner or the party or the holiday time is not the time to do it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:24:59] Yeah, it's hard.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:25:01] Well, these are all hard. Everything. I mean, I mean, it's. It's hard during the holidays because it's amped up and there's so much stress and pressure, as we've talked about, about being perfect and having it all go just right. But then we've got this anxiety

about it all going just right. In the minute someone says something, we're off to the races of, Oh, my gosh, I knew it. It's always like, you know, we have all these thoughts going on in the mind about how bad it is, and it's always bad. And I'm never doing this again. And, you know, we know all the conversation. Yeah, but this time flipped the script, which you talk about a lot. Flip the script, just don't let it happen. Allow other people to be however they're going to be without your reacting and make it an experiment, actually.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:25:41] You know, you are the scientist and the Lab of your life.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:25:47] And just go back to what? That's why I love the idea of setting an intention. My intention for this holiday season is to have fun. So no matter what, if I'm starting to feel like I'm not having fun or I'm feeling aggravated or something's happening inside of me, I'm going to use that as my affirmation. I'm going to pause. I'm going to say, Wait, I just want to have fun. I just want to enjoy this moment. Mm hmm. So that's why I really feel like having an intention is so important, because it acts as your barometer. It acts as your highest ideal for the holiday time.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:26:19] Yeah.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:26:20] It acts as your affirmation.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:26:22] Yeah. And gave yourself reminders of that as you're going through it all. That you want to have fun or you want to feel peace or you want to feel family connection or you want to feel excitement, whatever it might be. And this is all under the vein of that. You've chosen to participate in your family's activities or whatever event it might be. But like we say so often, you do always have a choice. And we had quite a few questions of. How do you say no if you don't feel like this is something that you can do this year or that you can't have contact with certain family this year or, you know, should you feel guilty about not participating? What do you think "no" is when it comes to family gatherings?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:27:16] First of all, guilt is a useless emotion in my mind. Guilt helps us understand things, but to feel guilty without the caveat of asking yourself, What's making me feel guilty here? Why am I feeling guilty? Is really important.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:27:33] I think a lot of us feel guilty because of that. Societal pressure of the holidays mean you all have to sit around the table and be together and and reminisce about family tradition and, you know, be with the ones be with your your family. And that's what's, quote unquote, normal. So how can you start to feel okay if that's not. What your reality is. Because there is no normal. But it's a lot for us to break that down.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:28:04] Well, I think we're having this conversation right now and this episode is going to air before December. I think so. We're having it before the holidays for the most part, or close close to the beginning of December. So it really matters that you have the conversation now. Like if this is really, really important to you, it really matters that you have the conversation right now. Instead of waiting until the middle of December, the end of the year or the last day that you possibly can. So having the conversation, because if this is how we're feeling and this is so hard and I think that's why this episode is so hard and why almost all of these questions have the same have the same theme or the same answer to them in many different and many different versions of the answer. We have to have the conversation. So if my mother in law doesn't respect my boundaries, I have to be able to have the conversation with her. And if I can't have the conversation with her, I have to have the conversation with my partner. Or my mother in law's son or daughter. And be able to say, look, this really matters to me. Could you and I please find a way? That I don't feel left out or that I feel like I can say no or I feel like I'm not excluded.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:29:22] Like the conversation has to be had. And so it's why I started this episode with with communication. The conversation has to be had somewhere. So for everyone that's asked a question about feeling excluded or that the boundaries of saying no aren't acceptable or guilt trips. About doing things the same way that we've always done it, or any of those ways, especially when we're talking about mother in laws. You have to be able to have the conversation with with her. Or you have the conversation with her son. And I think that's really important to get to the bottom of what how you can start to feel okay with the situation, how you can start to accept it's never going to be perfect. But you can start to make little inroads of how can I be okay with what's happening? Because that is the only way for real change to happen is if someone knows how you feel. And even if you've already communicated it, then it's trying to find what would be acceptable to me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:30:28] But is it okay to say no and not go at all?

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

**Michelle Maros:** [00:30:31] And not do anything.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:30:32] It's always okay to do.... It's always.... See, here's the point. We're going to do what we want to do. And so if we truly do not want to go, which I did that one holiday time, I decided I tried and tried and tried and had many conversations. And I decided that I had to say no, I could not go. And I called everybody up and I said, I'm not going to be there this year. Yes, there was. Oh, we're sorry. We're going to miss you and all of that. But the way that I did it in a way that this this I just I'm not going I have to say no this year. It went down. They were sad and disappointed, and I don't even know what the conversations were behind my back. It doesn't really matter. But in the end I did what I needed to do that was right for me. And if you've decided that you have to say no, then you have to be confident that that's what you need.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:31:23] Well, because I think a lot of us feel, you know, we come to the end of the year. We're stressed, we're overworked, we're tired. We're stretched to our limits, you know, financially, physically, emotionally, energetically. And sometimes the thought of getting on a plane, train and traveling somewhere to go, you know, emotionally. Tax ourselves during family and, you know, financially is a lot. And so I think giving ourselves the option of of caring for ourselves in a way that where it's like I just can't swing it this year, you know, you don't you know, we often talk about in other circumstances outside of holidays, you know, with friends or family, like you don't need to go into debt, you know, whether it's actual money or in your energy or your self care just to show up for something, you know, And if it's in your best interest to just stay back and to rest and recharge because you've had a long year and things are tough or tight, that's also allowed and acceptable and normal and that's great to.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:32:33] Exactly. And I think it goes back to coming from the heart. So some people have asked, how do I lovingly explain, you know, that I can't travel, I feel burnt out from work. I need the rest. Or how do I respond to passive aggressive comments? How do I do that?

It's lovingly coming from the heart. So if you can't travel, if you're just not like you said, Michelle and I know you, you can get like this and you're very expressive about it. Look, the idea of getting on a plane or traveling right now just doesn't work for me. So if you can say that and I get it when you say that to me, because I can feel it coming from your heart. And so I love you. So when you say that to me, like, okay, Michelle, what does work? So two things that I'm going to repeat again, coming from your heart, Mom. This just doesn't work for me. I am exhausted. I really need a break. Can you help me resolve this? How can we come up with a compromise? Or how can we come up with another solution? Instead of me getting on the plane or the driving or whatever it is. And coming. And a possible resolution to it. Well, I know the holidays mean a lot. I love to be able to just take a break this holiday. Could I come see you in January? Mom, You pick a date, and I will come see you in January. You know, like, it's always a give and a take, but it always works better if you have the other person be part of the solution and you give them some other options instead of I'm tired, I'm overworked.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:34:04] I'm not coming. I mean, you can do that. We're allowed to do whatever we want to do. This is this is our own life. This is our one precious life. We can choose to do whatever we want, but if you want it to go down well. Come from the heart. Express your feelings and then offer another option. And I know let's say you always celebrate Christmas together. I know we always celebrate Christmas together. And this is our tradition. I really need a break this year. I'm not up for it. I mean, I've said this to you recently with all the turmoil that's happening in my life right now. I said it to you, Michelle....I just.... I'm not up for whatever it was we were going to do the other day. I am not up for it. And you could feel it in me that I was not up for it. And so that it's like my heart is talking to your heart. And so you felt it. And I said, Look, could we do it next Friday or whatever it was we were talking about? I'll be all in and I'll be great on Friday. So I hope this makes sense. It's. It's really. It truly is about what is it that you want? And as long as what you want isn't trying to change the other person, it's truly trying to connect with the other person so that everyone's needs can be met to some extent. The chances of it coming out on a positive note are really good.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:35:29] And I think to just thinking about. You know, the language that we use about it. You know, when you said this is something that we always do every year. And just even saying that, it puts so much pressure that because we do something every year, we have to do it every year or this is what we've always done. That automatically makes puts me in an a

pressure cooker of having to conform. So just thinking about, yes, perhaps every year up until now we've done X, Y or Z. But, you know, each year you can choose something differently for what's appropriate in the present moment and kind of release that. I don't know, innate need to constantly do the same thing for tradition sake and and kind of step away from that. That language that excludes any possibility of something new. You know, instead of saying like, well, we do this every year, and I can't say no because then I'll break the cycle, you know, be a cycle breaker and say, look, I know we do this every year, but I'd love to do this. Or, you know, this Christmas I'm going to stay at home and and watch some Christmas movies and recharge. But I'd love to do like a day after Christmas family event, you know, or just. Like we've said, I think for every question, communication, but just like getting creative with what works because I think sometimes we get so ingrained in the tradition that we go into autopilot and it's like, does anybody like the tradition? Like thinking about what actually do people want? We get so caught up in like, well, because it's always been this way. It always has to be this way. And that's just not true. And life changes every day, every month, every year. And we can change to our our traditions can change, our holidays can change. So just like be open to new opportunities, new possibilities, new traditions, new people, you know, it doesn't always have to look the same.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:37:47] And being creative, I like.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:37:49] I mean.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:37:50] I like that you use the word creative, being creative of how you express that to your family, being creative, saying, you know what, I really want to add this to the family dinner, to the family gathering, to whatever it is. I'd like to add this to it this year. It's really feeling like it would be fun and different. I would like to be able to do that. We can still do some of the other older traditions that we do, but I would love to be able to add something new. And then seeing how the receptivity to that is. And if there's some pushback, just saying, you know, I know it's different and I know it might not feel like it's something that you want to do. Just give me a chance. Just let me try it. We don't like it. We won't do it next year. You know, really using it matters how your tone of voice is. It matters what your intention behind the message is. If your intention behind the message is, I don't like doing this every single year. I want to change it all. It's not going to be received very well. But if your intention is, look, I want to try something different. I want to do this. Let me have a shot at doing this. So I think it really



matters where you're coming from and always coming from your heart, coming from that intention of love, of caring, of wanting to. Have the best possible outcome and then also asking other people's opinions and then coming to some kind of a solution that works for all. And I think that's what we could say when we're doing same old thing every year. Let's let's try something different and let's see if this can't work for everyone.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:39:24] Yeah. Creativity. That's what our holidays are looking like this year. A lot of different and new things, but that's exciting. And yeah, you can if you're doing something new or if you're experiencing grief or loss and things don't feel the same. Of course, like we always say, feel the feelings and mourn. You know, that older version of what holidays or family or ideals looked like for you. Because like we said, we're always changing and evolving and things are always in a state of flux. So. Mourn what was because of course, at one point that was what was for you and that was your reality. But be creative with what you can do for your present of what would bring you the most joy or make you feel the most complete or seen or understood or at peace. Because ultimately it's also, you know, your peace, your wellness, your mental health is worth more than you know a holiday dinner. Or living up to someone else's expectations. You know, it's your life. And like you say all the time, no one gets to name who you are. No one gets nothing defines who you are. And so you can choose. It's hard. Going against the grain or choosing something differently is really hard. But you do have that power in the ability.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:40:57] And I think it is really, really, really hard. It's not none of this is easy. But so many of the questions were, you know, I have a horrible family situation and I can't leave advice. How do I detach from the humiliation? And it's hard. So if you truly feel that you can't leave. So I think you just have to sit with yourself for a minute and say, okay, I'm making the decision because it's not like we can't do something. We're making the choice and that's fine. But if you're truly making the choice that you cannot leave. My advice is to find all the practices that you can of being able to come into yourself, having the confidence, having the strength. If this is if you've already made this choice, being confident in the choice that you've made, and really putting a shield around yourself like this invisible shield and knowing that and knowing that whatever people are saying or whatever people are doing, it is not a reflection of who you are. So if you're making the decision to stay, you're going to have to make the choice of understanding that everything that's happening out there in the outside world is not a

reflection of you. And if you can do that, that's incredible. That is really hard to do. But that's incredible. And if you can't do that, then you're going to have to think of what could another choice be that I could make, because this is going to destroy me.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:42:14] As you said, Michelle, our mental wellness is everything. This is going to destroy me. So we do always have a choice. Someone else said, My dad's forcing me to attend his family's reunion on Christmas. We're never really forced. They have the language to tell us that we have to or you're going to destroy my life, or they're going to give you all the things. And you could calmly say, Okay, Dad. I can't do this. This does not work for me. But what could I do instead? It doesn't work for me. So it kind of put the onus back on the other person. I love you and I'm willing to do things for you, but I promise you, this doesn't work for me. I can't. I'm not going to this reunion and not to say I'm sorry or anything like that, just being really confident I'm not going to this reunion, but I really want to do something for you. I really want to do something special for you that I can do. Can we talk about that? And then maybe have a couple few little ideas that, you know, your father that might spark his interest or that might make him feel happy? And someone else said, I'm at a point where I say no more. Can I just cut someone off because I can't deal anymore? Absolutely.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:43:22] Now. It depends on how you cut them off. It depends on who it is. But absolutely, I use this phrase a lot. This doesn't work for me. I know that I have been doing it for many, many, many years. But I've come to the realization that this doesn't work for me. Could we have a conversation of what could work? And then if they're refusing to have any kind of compromise with you, then of course, if you can't deal anymore. But always remember when you make that choice, which I have done in my life with family members, when you make that choice, you have to be confident and live with that choice and it has to be okay with you. You have to understand this is a choice that I'm making for my well being. It doesn't mean that I don't love them anymore. It doesn't mean that I don't care about them anymore. It just means that I can't be in this same situation anymore. This is how I look at it. I love my family dearly. There are some situations I cannot be in. It is not good for my well being. And actually I've been able to look at it. It's not good for their well-being either. So you can still love people, but not have not be in the same vicinity with them or not be in the same room with them.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:44:31] So you can love people from afar.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:44:33] Yeah. Wish them well. I think if you can be. Here's what I've learned for me. If I can detach when I'm. When I'm taking care of my mental health, when I'm taking care of my wellness and I realize they're not going to change and it's hurting me, I can't do this anymore, then I have to make a decision. And if I'm making the decision to not be in the same room with the people, it doesn't mean that I hate them or it doesn't mean that I wish them ill will or it doesn't mean that they're so bad, why couldn't they change for me? Or if they really love me, they would have done what I want. I don't have any of those feelings. I have feelings of. I wish you well. I love you. And I hope that your life is happy. Because when we can actually look at it that way, because it is the only way to look at it, because we cannot change other people. So when you can flip the script and really look at it, that I wish you well. But I can't be a part of this anymore.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:45:31] That's powerful. And of course, it's not always easy.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:45:35] None of it is easy. None of it is easy. And I we share Michelle and I share our experiences because we've been through almost all these things that are on these questions.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:45:44] I was going to say we got a lot of questions about in-laws, which I was like, I can't speak to to in-law questions, but I can't personally speak to in-law questions, but I can speak to a lot of other family dynamics and so, so often there's so many similar family dynamics.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:46:00] Like yours feel obligated to get together with family, but it's not good for my mental health. Should I go? These are If it's not good for your mental health, then get creative. As you said, Michelle, get creative of how could I be okay to go? And if truly the conversations being had that you're not okay to go, it is absolutely okay not to go and decline from your heart. I wish you well. This I just can't. I don't know of anyone that would come to me with an incredibly heartfelt and said, Barb, I, I wish that I could, but I can't. It doesn't. It doesn't work for me. It's. It's hurting me. I wouldn't take it personally that they think that I'm hurting them. I would say, Oh my gosh, I don't want you to hurt. What do you need? So I think maybe that's something to Michelle. We could just. What do you need? What do you need?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:46:54] And on the flip side, too, when it comes to in-laws, how do you handle when in-laws or family exclude you? You know, we talk about not wanting to be involved or included, but what happens when family that you would like to be included doesn't doesn't bring you in.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:12] You have to have the conversation.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:47:14] With the same thing.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:15] You have to well, you have to you have to have an ally. You have to have an ally there. If you're in a marriage and there are in-laws there and there are other kids there, and there's all kinds of different dynamics when you're in a marriage, If you are in a marriage, you have to have an ally. So your partner, your husband, wife, your partner has to give a little bit and you have to give a little bit. So you have to find a compromise. You have to find a way where it's not all one sided or it's not all the the mother in law or the father in law's fault, or it's not all the son or the daughter or the child's fault. There has to be a way to find common ground. There has to be a find a way to find some sort of a small even if it's small, teeny tiny, some small way to have a compromise or a middle ground where both people are feeling like their needs are being met, period. There's no other way because there will be a lot of animosity, a lot of aggravation, a lot of ill will. And it won't be fun and it won't be pleasant and it will certainly not be a loving, caring wonderful relationship or wonderful time.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:48:23] Yeah.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:48:24] I do want to handle the grief comment, too. Michelle, I think you and I were talking about that for a second earlier.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:48:30] Go for it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:48:31] Someone asked how to handle grief when someone wants to talk about a lost relative and you aren't ready. When that has come up for me and I know it's come up for you, too, Michelle. You know, I've done this with each other before. When someone

brings it up, I will say, You know what? I'm not ready to be part of this conversation, especially if it's a table or if there's a lot of other people. If it's one on one, I just say, look, Michelle, I'm not ready to talk about that right now. When I'm ready, I'll have a conversation with you, but it's too soon. I'm really not ready. I'd appreciate it if we not talk about it. If you're at a group table. Excuse yourself. And you can be honest, come from your heart. That could be the title of this episode.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:49:11] And be vulnerable. You know it's okay.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:49:12] And be vulnerable....

**Michelle Maros:** [00:49:14] to be emotional.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:49:15] Yeah. You know what? I'm not ready for this conversation. I'll be back, you know, in a few minutes. Truly it's you don't you don't have control over stopping the conversation. Especially if it's a group and someone wants to talk about it. I'm not thinking that it's for me, it doesn't feel okay to say, Hey, all of you guys, I'm not ready, Don't talk about this. But it's 100% okay for you to take care of yourself and say, I'm not ready. I'm going to excuse myself and I'll be back.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:49:46] Yeah.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:49:46] And there is nothing wrong with you for doing that. If they judge you or if they think less of you, that's their problem, not yours.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:49:54] That is great. Feel like these are some really heavy lifting. But I mean, like we've said, it's hard. The holidays bring up so much. There's so many feelings, so many dynamics. We've all gone through so much over these past few years on top of everything else in life. And I think ultimately we just want to feel happy and joyful and seen, heard and understood. And sometimes the holidays don't. Bring that out for us. So we wanted to thank you all for submitting your questions. I hope that we've been able to answer them in a way that make you feel like you can go into this season with some tools and equip with some answers and some boundaries and some deeper understanding of what you need to do. Like

you said, have an intention for what you want for the rest of the year for this holiday season and really try and stick to it and remember a little bit of what we talked about last week with some simple tips for kind of getting through it. The first being having an escape plan, like you said, Mom. Giving yourself an out when you need it. Saying, I got to go do this at the certain time I'll be back or I'll go run an errand or I'm going to go take a nap. I'm really tired, you know, figuring out what you can do to excuse yourself if you need to. You know, if you're in a situation that you've committed to and you're there and you're you're wishing that you weren't, have an escape plan.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:51:24] Give yourself a break.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:51:26] Give yourself a break. And secondly, remember to honor your boundaries. We talked about boundaries so much already this episode, but, you know. Have that conversation with yourself beforehand and figure out what your needs are. Like, literally, what do I need this holiday? I need to not talk about this or I need to not be involved with this and just figure it out so that you can honor your boundaries and be clear. The third is to give yourself many breaks. Like we talked about. And remember, we always say you can go into a bathroom and take some breaths and close your eyes. And that can that can be everything that you need. And some of these circumstances, sometimes that's enough. Go sit in your car. I love to sit in my car outside when I get somewhere and just take a couple of minutes and just sit in silence and close my eyes and just breathe and gather myself before going in somewhere. So find those little places where you can have a little self care break.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:52:25] Well, remember, we shared that in one of the episodes, The 1% rule. That when you can find 14 minutes throughout the day, a minute here in a minute, they are just to take a break. Just to take a break. Like you said, go out in the car and just, you know, just sit down and close your eyes and breathe for a minute or go take a little walk around the block and breathe for a minute. Just taking a break from the chaos or the trauma or the drama or the irritation that you're feeling inside. So when we say take a break, when you're starting, when you were first starting to feel like, wow, this is a little too much for me right now, take a break. I'll be back. I'll be back in a couple of minutes. See you soon.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:53:01] You don't need to be the superhero of your holidays. You don't have to participate in everything. You don't have to participate in every conversation or every fight that you're invited to. You can say no, no is a complete sentence. And then lastly, remember, you can change a topic of conversation before things get heated. Queen of of changing the topic of conversation is across from me. She does it effortlessly and with ease, and she has no qualms about it. So remember, if someone's pushing the boundary of the no politics at the dinner table conversation. Have that in your back pocket of what you're going to say to pivot the conversation and remind people that, you know, we're not going to talk about this. We're going to talk about this.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:53:45] When people love to talk about themselves. Right? We love to share stuff about ourselves. We love to share stuff about our families or our work or.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:53:53] Our TV shows that we're watching, that we love.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:53:55] Shows that we're watching, that we love to share our experiences in life. So why it's so easy for me to change the topic of conversation. If someone says something that I feel is controversial and it is not going to go well, I will say. Tell me about the trip that you took to Hawaii last year. Your photos were amazing. Share with me some of your experiences. I would love to hear about it. It really matters. And you will be amazed at how the conversation goes in such a different direction of them being lighthearted and fun. And so I think I would like to end this conversation with one more thing, and that is whenever you catch your mind, especially during the holiday season. But I'm saying for the rest of your life, whenever you catch your mind judging. Comparing or trying to fix something, you're judging the other person because they're saying something or you're trying to compare whatever it is that you're trying to compare yourself with others or comparing things that are happening or you're trying to fix something whenever you find your mind having those thoughts of judging, comparing, or fixing, try to stop. Just take a break, take a few deep breaths and say, wait a minute. Judging doesn't help. Comparing doesn't help. And I certainly can't fix anything. I can only just be who I am. Let me speak from my heart and say how I feel or what I need, or ask them what they feel or what they need. Just really being in a place of being in the present moment instead of trying to judge compare effects.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:19] So one of the last things that I want to leave with all of you, if you're making the choice to do the thing during the holidays, the event, the party, the the planning, all of the things, if you're making the choice, remember that you always have a choice. So if you've made the choice that you're going to do it, put all of your intention and all of your focus on all the things that could go right, all the actions that you're going to take, all the all the things that you're going to say. Really focus on the positive. Focus on how this could be fun. It goes right back to what we were talking about, having the intention. So please eavesdrop on your mind and don't allow the mind to take you down the negative path. Oh, it's always this. Oh, it's going to be oh, it's going to be so hard for me to do this. It's going to be hard for me. But no, don't, flip the script. Make this a brand new experience. Even though you've done this many, many times before, this will be the first time that you're going to do it this way and the way that you're going to do it this way is your intention, is whatever that is, to be loving, to be caring, to have fun, to make this the most special moment possible and focus on the positive. I think we spend too much time looking about everything that's going to go wrong. So really spend all of your energy and focus on what's going to go right this year.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:29] Thank you all for listening and thank you all for writing in. These are some very vulnerable questions and very personal questions and very difficult questions. So we see and hear you and understand you and know that it's not always easy. And even if you try and, you know, do some of the things that we talked about and it doesn't go your way or you have difficulty, you know, you're still worthy and loved. And, you know, ultimately, like we said last week, the holidays are just another day. So take try and take some of that pressure off of yourself to make things perfect and just remember to be where your feet are and be present and just see what you can do moment to moment. You know, That's all we can ever really do. So just remember that and remember there's always a tomorrow. So. Thank you. Thank you, Mom, for sharing your insights. Thank you, everyone, for listening to this episode. Please be sure you are liked and subscribe to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts so you can stay up to date on all of the newest episodes happening in the Barb Knows Best Community. Also, please make sure that you are connected to us on social media at Peaceful\_Barb at Michelle Maros at Barb Knows Best Pod. That's the best way to ask us these questions about any new topics you want to hear us talk about, to give us questions, comments, concerns, etc. Social media is where it's at. And if you love this podcast, which we hope you do, please be sure to give us a five star rating on iTunes and to leave us a review. It greatly helps us and it makes us



so happy and appreciative when you do so. So please be sure to head on over and do that. Thank you all again for listening. Thank you for being with us. We're wishing you so much happiness, health and everything in between for the next week and always. We'll chat with you next week because as we know, Barb knows best.