

**Episode 44 - What We learned from Gaslighting**  
***Barb Knows Best***  
**Transcripts**

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:12] Hello, everyone. Hello, Friends of the pod. Welcome back to a Barb Knows Best. The most happiest place on earth.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:22] Yes.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:22] Move over, Disney World. Here we are. I am your co-host Michelle Maros. As for always. And I'm here with my mom, Barb.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:32] Hi, everyone. Hi Michelle.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:34] Hello. Hi. We are feeling extra bright eyed and bushy tailed today because we just got back from an actual vacation.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:42] Actually, the voice I just used to say hi, Michelle sounded like Minnie Mouse.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:46] Oh, so we are in Disney World, then?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:47] Maybe. Yes. We had a nice vacation. We had a nice time.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:53] Yeah. And it really goes to show when you hit the pause. Change your scenery. Give yourself a reset. It really changes a lot for the old mental health.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:09] I love what you just said. Change the scenery. Because I think that's...

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:13] I mean, that was huge for us.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:14] I was going to say it was huge for us. Huge for me because we went to Southern California and it's 45 at night and 70 during the day.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:23] We were able to wear a sweater.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:25] Yes.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:26] As Floridians, it was a joy and even just a change in energy, you know, it just it all makes a difference. And we know sometimes you're not able to get away. So just I find a little tiny changes in all of it. Really helps. And I didn't even realize how much I needed that space. But I feel so much more clear minded and of course, grateful for all of it. And it's just it was great.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:57] It is true.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:58] I had so much fun with you, Mom.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:59] I had a great time with you, sweetie. I had a good time. It is true, though. I liked what you just said, Michelle, that sometimes we can't actually travel somewhere, get away to some other distant place. But I remember during the pandemic, especially the beginning of it. I remember I walked a lot. Even though it was hot. It's not always fun to go out for a walk here in South Florida because it's especially in the summertime, it's 85 degrees, 90 degrees with 90% humidity. And that's so. But during the pandemic, I made a point of getting myself out a lot, walking a lot. So it was interesting for me to be away in California. We walked a lot, we hiked a lot, but the weather was so much different and it kind of got me back into the rhythm of, you know, just go outside and go find some other different place to walk, or even if it's just for 15, 20 minutes, because I think what you said is really beautiful. Michelle Just changing the scenery and we could get creative here, you know, locally where we live. Yeah. So it really sparked my interest in expanding scenery.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:59] Change of energy can really remind you of the things that bring you your tiny joys that we talk about and bring you back to some of those things that maybe you'd forgotten about, like your walks or creativity or projects or ideas. So many things, so great.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:03:17] Love it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:03:18] And if you can't get away, I noticed a lot during the pandemic, like, obviously we weren't traveling anywhere, but I would try to find different roads to take to get to places that I would go to, or even just try to find new places that I had never been in our area just to freshen it up a bit, which is fun. Yeah.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:03:41] Yeah. Love it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:03:44] So anyways, we're back now and we're super excited for today's episode. I think that it's very timely and the topic is obviously up for a lot of people. And you'll all understand why when we let her rip. But it's something that you and I have talked about a lot in our work and also in our lives. And it's funny because when you and I were away last week and on a hike, you know, I feel like and my therapist has also confirmed this to be true, but there's something very therapeutic about walking like movement and therapy or movement and like deep life altering conversations oftentimes because a lot of times I talk to my therapist via phone, I'll go for a walk while talking to her. And it's there's something about the physical movement with the mental release that's very powerful. So anyways, we were on a hike and we were having this very. In-depth conversation. And I just felt like, Wow, this should be a podcast. If only we had remotely been recording it because it was so good.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:04:54] So we got into some deep stuff and it was really, really good.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:04:59] So we're going to bring her back to hopefully recreate it today. Are you Ready Mom?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:05:06] Yeah, I am.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:05:08] Let's do it. So many of you might be aware that Merriam Webster's Dictionary. Determined that the word of 2022 is gaslight. And when I saw that, I saw it on Twitter, I immediately sent it to you because I was like, Of course, of course it is. And I think we all, I think most of us would probably have that reaction. The term gaslighting has been. You know, used quite often to describe quite a bit of our lives. You know, on the macro and on the micro level. And you and I have had many conversations. We had a conversation about this on the hike. And I really feel like this is a topic that we can understand intellectually, like I think

and we'll get into what it is and all of that stuff shortly. We can understand with our brains, but how do we really start to understand what gaslighting is and how we can be gaslit, in a more emotional level so that we can. Identify it and protect ourselves from it, but ultimately remind ourselves of it because. Gaslighting is so incredibly dangerous and harmful. In a lot of ways.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:06:56] Yeah. Beautifully said, Michelle. When I when I first heard the term gaslighting, I didn't know. In my relationships, especially with one particular relationship, that it had a name, what was happening to me. But I just knew. When I heard about gaslighting, because you're right, you and I've been talking about this for well over a year, probably two years, with all the with relationships.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:07:15] For a long long time...

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:07:15] Situations for a really long time. And so to name it gaslighting. When I heard that when I saw the definition of gaslighting, it was as profound for me as it was back in 1985 for me to learn about codependency.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:07:30] Hmm.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:07:31] So that Melody Beattie wrote Codependent No More, and that is one of my all time favorite books. I've read it so many times. And so when I learned about Codependency, it opened up a whole treasure trove of aha moments and truths within me. Oh, that's what's happening with me with relationships. So gaslighting did this same thing for me. It was like, Wow, there's actually a name for what's happening to me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:07:53] Like we say name it to tame it. And when we can finally put words to things that we were feeling that we didn't think had a name. It gives us that space that you're talking about.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:08:04] Well, I think that this is actually a thing.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:08:06] It's real.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:08:07] There's nothing wrong with me. There's, you know, because one of the main things of gaslighting when someone is gaslighting you is that they try to make you think that you're crazy, that the reality that you're feeling is not true, that you are the problem. And we'll get into that, as you said, Michelle, as we move into this episode. So if this is for you, if you're the first time you're hearing the word gaslighting or is this if this is the first time you're starting to really deeply. Well, there's nothing really, really isn't anything wrong with me like this is happening from you. If you're starting to relate to what I'm saying, this is going to be huge for you because it's been life altering for me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:08:46] Absolutely. Well, with everything we say, the first step for changes is awareness. And having this awareness that it's real, that it's not just like you said, we're not crazy. We're not making things up or not. There's not something wrong with us. We're not the problem. This is a very real manipulation technique that happens in abusive relationships or with narcissistic people or abusers. And. You know, if you haven't heard this term before, Merriam-Webster, since they named this word of the year, defines gaslighting as a psychological manipulation of a person usually over an extended period of time that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality or memories, and typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self esteem. Uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability and a dependency on the perpetrator.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:09:48] Wow.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:09:50] That's like huge. 700 things packed into one that is awful.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:09:55] It's major. And I guess you can see why they named it the word of the year, because if you are in a relationship with someone who is gaslighting you, it's severe, it's traumatizing, it's really life altering and can really keep you. No wonder maybe you don't feel happy or overwhelmed or stressed or tired or not good enough. All the things that we talk about in this podcast, all the episodes unworthiness, all those things, if this resonates for you, this is worth looking at. Am I in a relationship with someone who is gaslighting me? Which which basically for me, it as I've looked at this and really thought about this for several years now, you and I have really been talking about gaslighting a lot. It's really when someone lies and twists the truth to make you question your own memories, as you said, Michelle, but really

basically want you to doubt yourself like you don't have the capability of knowing who you are. You don't have the capability of understanding that what's happening to you is real and really trying what what's what why this is so charged for me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:11:02] She's really heated.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:11:03] Because It's really trying this person or these people are trying to change your sense of reality of what is real for you.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:11:12] Well, and interestingly, because you talked about the first aha moment of your life was learning about codependency, and then the second was learning about gaslighting. But I think Gaslighter is ultimately want to make their victims co dependent on them.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:11:26] Perfect.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:11:27] So it is a very tangled web of abuse and manipulation and. All of it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:11:36] Yeah.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:11:37] Which it's kind of even. Hard to wrap my mind around it because. It's so all encompassing, but it's also so it flies under the radar like it's so big and it's so small, it's so harsh, but it's also so subtle. And I think that's why it's so easy for so many of us to be gaslit, to be manipulated and then feel like we're so far down the rabbit hole. It's like, How did I get here? How did I? And then again, we gaslight ourselves, which we're going to get into in part two of this episode next week. Subtlety is gaslighting ourselves. Like, how did I let myself? Fall into this. And it's just, I think the first thing to start off with when getting into some of the nitty gritty of this is let yourself give yourself so much self compassion if you're relating to this. This tendency or this abuse or manipulation, because if you feel like, wow, this is something that's happened to me, or I can identify a relationship that was with a gaslighter or I've been gaslit in a situation or circumstance like Please, please, please don't make yourself feel like you did something wrong or that you allowed it or that. You were the problem. You know, gaslighting is emotional abuse, but it's a covert emotional abuse. So it's so. You know, it's so it

toes the line so closely to. You know, things that we find to be normal, that it's so easy to let it become ingrained in our relationships and our day to day activities that it's it's not anyone's fault or it's not anyone's worth to be in those kinds of relationships. So first things first. Just as always, be gentle with yourself. If you're relating to this.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:13:35] Yeah, have some compassion. I think for me, Michel, what happened was for years and we've talked about this on many other episodes for years, I always felt like I wasn't good enough, I wasn't smart enough, I wasn't pretty enough. And then it's hard to trust yourself when you don't think you're enough. And it's really hard then to make decisions. So, Michelle, if you think about all the episodes we've had up into this one, we've had a whole episode on not being able to make decisions. We've had a whole episode on not being good enough and your worthiness. We've had a whole episode on trusting yourself and making yourself, making yourself your own best friend so that you can trust you. Confidence. Do you think those....

**Michelle Maros:** [00:14:13] Clarity.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:14:13] Clarity, all the things we've had episodes on up until this point could all be at the foundation of all of those things. If you've got someone in your life who is gaslighting you. Just for you to take a pause for a moment. I mean, this is huge for me because when I actually put this all together, no wonder I was doubting myself. No, I was being gaslit for for much of my life, but definitely for the past 30 plus years all the time. And it is, as you said, Michelle, it is so subtle. It is so.... They try to these people try to make you think that. I didn't say that. What do you.... What do you mean? You can't take a joke. Everyone can take a joke. What's the matter with you? Why can't you take this simple joke? So the things, it's not a big deal. Why are you overreacting? Maybe. Do you think something's wrong with you? Because you're too sensitive. I mean, those are all the things, and we can talk about more of those as we move along. But it's so there are things that will make you question yourself because you think, well, maybe why am I so sensitive? Why am I crying when he does a joke like that? I'm at a table at dinner with a bunch of other people and they're thinking, it's funny, they're all laughing.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:15:27] Maybe there is something wrong with me. So it's very subtle. So I love that you name that, Michelle in the beginning here, that we must, we must have compassion and we must start to really understand that nothing is wrong with us so that we can start to piece together what is actually happening. So for little by little, I started to get my sense of reality back. Wait a minute. When I was told recently by this person, You are the problem. It woke me up. I was like, Wow, this is gaslighting. I am the problem. And now we're not talking about extremes if you're suffering from addiction. When I had was suffering from my bulimia, it was a whole different story. Yes. The bulimia was causing me to have reactions which were, you know, I don't want to use the word normal because there is no such thing in my mind. But we're having me to have reactions because then I was caught up in the disease. But how did I get into the bulimia to begin with? It's a very interesting.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:24] Well it's a what comes first, the chicken or the egg?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:16:26] It's just very interesting for you to put yourself, as you just said, Michelle, beautifully. Be compassionate. Be open to really starting to look at your life as a clean slate and look at how things are happening without having judgments or comparisons.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:41] Right.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:16:41] Or trying to fix anything. Just try to look at it like a scientist, which is what we talk about a lot. Just really try to say, wait a minute, what's happening here? So when the joke one is a huge one for me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:52] Yeah. And we're going to get into all of the different ways. But I think it's interesting what you just said that. I think it is such a fine line between, you know. Us taking responsibility for our own demons and traumas and difficulties and life circumstances, and having people in our lives who like to blame us for the things happening in life. And it was so interesting to hear you talk about, you know, if you're an addict and you're struggling with addiction or bulimia or eating disorder, you do have reactions and beliefs and behaviors that are off. And so I think people who do struggle tend to be also become more victimized by abusers because they're already set up. Well, you're so crazy. You did all this anyways. Know. So I think it's it Is that what comes first? Were you a victim of gaslighting or have you just



struggled? And then people gaslight you because they find you weak or whatever? It's just very interesting. And I think what's also important to note about gaslighting. There's a lot of interest I loved, like, going down the gaslighting rabbit hole in the Internet, even more so than all of our other topics, because it's the layers of it is just mind blowing to me. But in Psychology Today. They talk about gaslighting and they use the word insidious. It's an insidious form of manipulation and psychological control and abuse.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:18:33] I love that you use that word earlier. Abuse. Psychological abuse.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:18:37] Yeah. Victims of gaslighting are deliberately and systematically fed false information that leads them to question what we know to be true, which is what we said, often about themselves. They may end up doubting their memory, their perception, and even their sanity. And this is the point that I was wanting to make. Overtime a gaslighter is manipulation can grow more complex and potent, making it increasingly difficult for the victim to see the truth. So it's like the longer it goes on, the more entrenched in a relationship. Like you said you were in a circumstance for 30 plus years. The more it goes on, the more normalized it becomes, the harder it is for the person to see, Wait, this isn't right because you normalize, it becomes a normalized behavior. You normalized the abuse because of the abuser, obviously. But it's just I think that's such a huge piece of it that it can go on for so long that it makes it almost impossible to get out of. And I think, you know, so often we talk about the macro and the micro of life micro being our own personal relationships and circumstances, but also in our world. Like I think the reason that gaslight was such a big word for the times that we're living is, is because we're often felt. We feel gaslit by. Things happening in our world by major figures and facts and. Politics and everything like that. I mean, not getting political, but it's just. I think that the world that we've been living in. For the past decade probably has been a big example of gaslighting and how easy it is for us to fall into a gaslighting relationship.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:20:39] Yeah. So instead of saying, How did this happen to me, I would love for everyone out there listening to this to say, Wow, I'm so excited that now I understand a little bit more because one of the things that as I've I didn't go deep into the rabbit hole of the Internet, but I've gone deep into my own self to see, oh my gosh, what are some of the things that have actually happened to me over the course of, let's just say, this 30 plus year gaslighting relationship? And one of the things that I discovered and then I actually did see that someone

had written about this, I can't remember who because I was reading a couple of things. Is that one of the one of the very, very serious important side effects of gaslighting, especially if it's gone on and on and on and on for years and years and years, is that it starts to affect your memory that you have actual this actual thing that I read said you actually have blackouts, you know, after a fight or after a traumatic experience because my brain was trying to protect me from the abuse.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:21:43] Didn't you say your therapist told you that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:21:45] It might have been my therapist? Yes, I think it was, actually. Thank you. My brain was actually in a mode now, because I had been in it for so long, my brain was actually trying to protect me from the cruelty actually.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:22:00] Yeah.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:22:01] Of the abuse which, which what would happen to me is that I would forget like why did we even fight to begin with or what, what even happened. How did this even start. So if you're relating to this I would get like, how did this even start? And then what would happen because it was happening for so long. What would happen then is I would blame myself. Oh, you are the problem, Barbara. You started this fight for nothing, right? You started this whole argument for nothing. So I started internalizing like I'm there's something wrong with me. I can't even remember how this started. And then when you don't remember how this started, then the person can really get you. Well, that's the problem. You don't even remember that it was nothing. You remember that you just got irate or you just got irritated over nothing. And so we start to realize, and what I started to realize was that I'm the one that provokes all the situations. I am the problem. And why is that? Because I was constantly being beaten down. And then what happens when you're beaten down or when you start to forget because the brain's trying to protect you and help you. You get confused. I remember I did a whole workshop once on confusion. How do we how do we keep ourselves from being confused?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:23:12] Well, it makes you question your reality. If you watch something happen, you say and you go to say to someone else, This just happened and the person that was with you said, No, it didn't. And that happens over and over and over again. You start to

really think, Well, wait. Did that really happen? Did I see something wrong? Did I hear something wrong? And I can think in myself. There are so many even small instances throughout life where I'm like, Wait, did I remember that wrong? Am I not? Did that really happen because we're so used to being questioned in that way.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:23:52] Exactly. And I think so what I think it's important to remember that if you're in a relationship with someone who is gaslighting you, it is always your fault, because that is their that is their M.O.. Their M.O. is that it is never my fault. It is always your fault. So it's really important if you're starting to feel like, wow, this is I'm always feeling like something's wrong with me. I'm always feeling like I'm to blame. I'm always starting fights where I shouldn't be starting a fight. I'm always feeling negative and the other person is just so happy. Go lucky and positive. If you're in a relationship like that, remember the M.O. of the Gaslighter is it's everyone else's fault. It is never my fault.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:24:32] Well, that's that quote that we had from Stephanie Moulton. Sarkis, it's always someone else's fault. This is the gas ladders mantra. Yes. So think about that. Is there someone who can never take responsibility or always blames other people? I'm laughing because I have a major figure in my mind. But can you picture someone in your mind who's like that? That is their mantra. And again, going back to Psychology Today because. Thinking about the type of people who are gas lighters. It's a tactic where. Quite often people who gaslight are narcissists or psychopaths or have personality disorders who are abusers. So they have a tendency to pick up these tactics to victimize people. And it's very common today in domestic abuse and cults. We've heard a lot about cults lately. You know. Abusive relationships with narcissists. Thinking about those kinds of people and how it impacts the victims and the situation. I just think it's important to to recognize that. There might be certain situations where maybe we unintentionally gaslight someone in a benign way. But I think that these truly insidious, to use that word again tendencies and manipulations by people who gaslight as a habit and as a joy and as an everyday occurrence are actual tend to contain these psychological issues and have these disorders and are abusers. Like it's not just like we're all gaslighting each other for the funsies and some people are worse than others. Like these are people who do it as a sport to create chaos and to create control over other people. It is it is never just a. Oh, it was just for fun, you know? You know what I'm saying?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:26:59] Yeah, I know exactly what you are saying.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:26:59] I think it's just important to know, like, you can gaslight yourself, which is what we're going to talk about next week. But I don't want anyone to be sitting being like, Oh, my God, am I this like, Gaslighter? And I didn't even know it. And am I a bad person like most of us aren't. We're gaslit by these kinds of people who hold positions of power or who are very, you know. What's the word? Not suave. What's that other word?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:27:28] Suave. I know what you're trying to say, but I can't think of it either.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:27:32] Like, just, you know, Charming.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:27:34] Charming. Charming is the best word, I think. Charming.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:27:36] Powerful. I'm still not thinking of the word that I'm wanting to use, but, you know, there are people in those positions who use all of those attributes to gain power over you.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:27:48] And it can it could also be I agree, it could also be people that are not necessarily in power that want to be. I think it's really important to look at what you just said, that it's people that want to have power over other people. And I think.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:28:01] That why no one would want power over other people unless you're very unwell.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:28:06] Right. Well, that's what I was just going to say.

[00:28:07] Sorry.

[00:28:08] You started this whole. No, it was. It was perfect. You started this by saying, you know, all the things that people that do gaslighting. I think one of the things that you said was a personality disorder. I think it's really important to to understand that and know that that it definitely is a personality disorder. It is someone that wants to have power over another

person. It's someone that cannot take responsibility for their own actions and for their own. They cannot say, Wow, I did that. I am really sorry. What can we do to how can how can I change myself? How can how can I make it better? How can I change myself? It really is a personality disorder. And what I love, what I love a lot is Where did this come from? Where did the word gaslight come from?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:28:56] Tell us, Mom.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:28:57] Well I think it's so funny because.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:28:59] She loves it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:28:59] Well, because when I really had this aha moment, I remember in 1985 reading Codependent No More Wondering. I wonder. I never heard that word before. Codependent. But then when Melody Beatty discusses what codependency is, I'm like, Oh my gosh, this is my life. And I think any of you that it is a must read Codependent Know More by Melody Beatty, for sure. But then when I read about gaslighting, I thought, Whoa, this is my life, This is it. As I said when we first started this episode. So the term Gaslight actually comes from a play which I found extraordinary.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:29:33] 1938 play.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:29:34] Called Gaslight. The play is called Gaslight, in which a husband. So I think this really articulates really beautifully, Michelle, what you were saying in which a husband tries to drive his wife crazy by dimming the lights in their home, and then when she notices it, he denies it. I'm not doing that. I don't. I don't see the lights being dimmed. Wow. What's up with you? You see the lights being dimmed? I don't notice that at all. You think that I'm doing that? Of course I'm not doing that. Why would I do that to you? I love you. You're my wife.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:30:14] Well, yeah. Sorry.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:30:17] No, no, it's. It's powerful. It's powerful.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:30:19] Well, I think because some of you might be thinking like, well, of course, if someone is going to be awful to me, how would I fall into that? But the also key aspect of this is a lot of gaslighting starts with overly nice kind behavior with love bombing of, you know. All of the behaviors that you would want to experience for someone. So from a husband, you know, I love you. You're so special. All of that stuff. I love you. Why would I lie to you? Because they want to establish that trust. Which is why it's so insidious, because it's so conscientious of I'm establishing trust with you. I'm saying all of the things and now I'm getting more into, like our own personal experiences. But I can hear or see in my mind people saying to us the things that we know. They know that we would want to hear because they know us, they know our weaknesses, they know our desires, they know us. So they know the things that we would want to hear. So a gaslighter or a manipulator or an emotional abuser will start by saying those things. You know, you're so important to me. I'll do anything for you. You're the most important person in the world to me. I love you more than anything. Whatever those things might be, that in your mind you're like, Wow, they really get me and understand me because they're saying these things that I've always wanted to hear from someone.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:31:46] And could I just interject? And the most the trickiest line then after those that you just said that they might weave in from time to time, as I would do anything to help you. What can I do?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:31:57] Whatever it is.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:31:57] But let's think about that for a minute, because I remember hearing that a lot. I will do anything to help you. Like we we might think of that. Oh, that's so sweet of you. You would do anything to help me. Oh, my. gosh.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:32:10] You didn't ask for help.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:32:11] You're my soulmate. Well, it's already assuming something's wrong with me. It's so insidious. Michelle, I love that you keep using that word. It's so insidious, because as someone said to you, I would do anything to help you. Just name it right. Well, then you start thinking, Okay, what do I need? What? What do I. How can you help me? You know,

then we get all locked down a rabbit hole of How can this person help me? This is so sweet. This is so kind. They want to help me when there's nothing wrong with you to begin with. So it's so tricky.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:32:38] Starts off with this very....

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:32:41] Loving.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:32:41] Seemingly solid foundation of love and support and care and being present because they can see the things that you want and understand what you want. It's that quick trust so that you start, you believe them, and then it's like a quick switch. After that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:33:07] I just thought of one. This one really got me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:33:09] She is so excited.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:33:10] Well, nothing hurts me more than to see you hurting. Nothing hurts me more. It pains my heart to see you hurting. What can I do? What can I do to help you? How can I. How can I solve your problem? How can I? So you think. You think that the person really wants to help you, but you don't even know what's wrong with you because you don't really feel like anything's wrong with you. Right. So it gets all twisted around, but by the end of the day, you're feeling like, Yeah, there is something wrong with me. Maybe I need to go get help.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:33:39] Its starts from that trustworthy place. But then the manipulator, the gaslighter will start to then lie about small things. It's like it starts small and then it crescendos.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:33:52] Yes,

**Michelle Maros:** [00:33:52] But. It's just so I mean, I can even picture someone we know who would kind of purposefully embellish or lie about stories with the why ruin a good story with the truth?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:34:10] And everybody thinks that's cute. You're at a table with a bunch of people. Oh, this is really cute. Why? Why ruin, right? Ruin a good story with the truth.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:34:19] But it's those subtle lies. When you start to let the subtle lies come in, then what is reality? And I think that's another big theme of our lives over the past decade of the concept of truth. You know, I think growing up, I always knew the truth. There's the truth, and then there's things that aren't the truth. There's lies, there's falsehoods, and somehow will I know how, but that's probably another conversation on another podcast. But when people start to question what's true and then give alternative truths or alternative facts, we're like, Well, wait, what is true? But Truth is truth.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:34:56] Exactly. And I think that's been happening forever since the beginning of time. But I think we're now just starting to become aware of it. And that's why Webster's Dictionary said gaslighting is the 2022 word. I think this has been going on for eternity. Relationships are number one assignment in life. It is we are in relationship that is the word. We are in relationship with everything and every one. We're in relationship with the Earth. We're in relationship with people. We're in relationship with coworkers. We are in relationship with everything. And so I think this has been going on forever. We are now starting to become aware. As we like to say, awareness is key to life. We are now starting to become aware. And this one in particular, this gaslighting, is so insidious. So people have asked me is as I've shared this with certain people or I've talked about it, they said, Well, what do you do if you're living with a gaslighter? You know, how do you live with someone who is gaslighting you? And for me, the first step was to stop oversharing. To stop sharing really deeply personal things.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:36:05] Yeah. You have to guard your truth.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:36:08] Knowing that.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:36:09] Fiercely

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:36:09] Yeah, knowing that is.



**Michelle Maros:** [00:36:10] Because those people do not honor the truth. They will twist your truth.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:36:13] Well, and yeah, they would change it up. They would change it up and they might use it against me is what I've noticed. If I share really deeply personal things, they're going to turn around somehow, some way and use it against me. So I would just share this with everyone. If you have to engage with a gaslighter, which many of us have to, I'm not saying I don't have gas lighters in my life anymore. I keep the conversations easy breezy. One of my my closest and dearest friend, Mary. I think I've talked about her and one of the other episodes. Yeah, that was her thing. She we would talk and she would say, Oh, be easy breezy, Barb. And so I just try to keep it easy breezy, you know, say as little as possible, keep it very superficial and not, not really getting to the depth of what it is that you might want to talk about or what you used to talk about, really trying to bring it to a very easy, breezy place. This is not at all easy.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:37:07] It's no easy breezy, but you've got to be easy breezy.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:37:10] It's not at all easy. And it takes practice and it takes learning, but it has been very, very important for me and it's been very eye opening for me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:37:20] So I think what's so powerful and when you and I were talking on the mountain in our hike about this is that it's wild to catch it when it's happening and notice it and kind of be the watcher of a situation unfold And luckily you and I had a situation very recently where you were being gaslit, but I was witness to it so I could corroborate the situation for you. But I think and you and I were talking about this, it was such a fascinating example of gaslighting and manipulation and emotional abuse. That I wanted to see if you would share some of that with us as an example. Because it just thank goodness I was there because we both can. You know, tell the tale of it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:38:19] Absolutely. It was wild. It was a really wild ride because what happened.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:38:24] Mr. Toad's Wild Ride.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:38:25] Mr. Toad. Yeah, we're in Disney, right? We started off in Disney World. It was very it was very telling and very emotionally draining. When you're with with someone or with a person that you feel like you can share.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:38:41] Can I interject something?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:38:42] Sure.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:38:43] I just wanted to say this is also a big piece of. Of relationships and understanding this dynamic that you're going to talk about because it it opened my eyes to everything. So just so you know.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:38:53] I love it. Yeah. And help me help me along the way because, you know, it's very interesting when you're with a person that you love deeply that you care about and love deeply. It's a long time, longstanding relationship that I really love this person with all my heart. And it's not a partner, by the way. It's a it's not a partner. It's not a...

**Michelle Maros:** [00:39:16] romantic relationship.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:39:16] Thank you. And so I was really, really, really hurting. And so I decided that I wanted to share with this person. My hurt and my feelings and what was happening. And I don't think I got past the third or fourth or fifth sentence. Until the person literally. Flipped it around and said, I can't believe you're doing this to me. I can't believe you're asking this of me. And really got very, very, very emotional and said, I have to leave. I have to get out of here. I have to not let this happen.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:39:58] Played the victim.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:39:59] And said, I can't believe you're doing this to me. And I said, Wait, wait a minute. I was just telling you how I felt and I wanted to have a conversation about it, to see how you feel. I was not allowed to have any kind of feelings about it, and it got flipped around that I literally said, You are the problem. You're doing this to me. This is not okay and I will never be okay with you sharing your feelings with me basically about this particular situation,

which one day we'll get into maybe when we have more time or who knows when I write my book. But it was very it was so I, shouldn't say I've never because I've been I've been....

**Michelle Maros:** [00:40:37] Gaslit your whole life.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:40:39] Yeah. But I've never been so traumatized in the moment of, oh, my gosh, all I could think about when this person was saying this to me was, What can I do now? I know I can't leave. And Michelle and another person were at the table and they were both silent. I thought, Oh my gosh, what do I do? What do I do? How do I So I, I went into survival mode and I went into fixing mode. If you listen to one of our other episodes before I learned this in my last retreat in August, that I'm a fixer. Well, this was this was fixing 101 this particular day. I went into fixing mode, How can I fix this? How can I make this person okay? How can I make this person feel okay? How can I bring this back to some kind of normalcy? Some kind of This person was literally on the brink. I'm leaving. I'm calling an Uber. I'm getting out of here. You can't do this to me. It was it was very I didn't know what to do. And so I thought, how can I bring this back to some kind of a sense of, wow, it's all okay, wait a minute. Maybe I said something wrong?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:41:42] Well, yeah. It came back to the point where you were apologizing and kind of having to fall on your own sword because it got so twisted. I mean, I think the the wild thing about this whole thing was I don't know if I've ever witnessed and experienced something so seemingly textbook gaslighting where it was like. The set up, the twist, and then the manipulation of the situation to where you're the problem and to where you had to fall on and be wrong for it to be okay in the moment. Because the truth was. As we've talked about a lot lately, we are going through a lot of difficulties in our lives with family and things like that. A lot of changes. And you were approaching a situation to discuss your feelings because you had really been struggling and suffering and having a hard time with some dynamics that were in play and you agonized over even how to approach it or how to say it, because I think you knew it wasn't going to be a conversation that was welcomed, but you really struggled with how to approach it. And I think you did approach it in a way where you said at the get go, this is going to be a really hard conversation. This is going to be really uncomfortable. But I really need to speak to you about how I've been feeling. And you said that. And went into some of the

dynamics that were difficult for you and some of the things that you wished had happened instead of what was happening.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:43:20] And the thing that I think is so poignant about this example is. The people harped on maybe some of the ways that you said something like maybe you said something with a lot of emotion that was too hyperbolic. But they said they harped on that rather than the point that you said that you were hurting. So you said like, I don't know how I can move forward that this because I'm really struggling. And they took that as to we're done, you're done with them. And we're like, I can't believe you would say that to me when that wasn't the point. The point was everything that you said before. But they harped on the one thing that was so extreme that you were being you were the problem again. And so it didn't matter that you had come to them with hurt feelings and difficult emotions. It then became that you had the audacity to come to them and try to change their behavior and and rock the boat. Everything was fine until she opened her mouth, basically. And then for it to go from that to what you were saying, I can't believe you would do this to me. I can't believe you would ask for this for me. Don't you dare. I just remember that. Don't you dare. And I'm like, What? What is this for? It? There wasn't even and this is the point that I wanted to get into.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:44:50] There wasn't even a moment or even a brief period of, Oh, my gosh, I had no idea you were struggling so much or suffering so much. I'm so sorry you've been going through this. I'm so sorry you're feeling that way. There was no. Even if it was small space of empathy, it went straight from. I want to share with you how I've been feeling, because it's been really harming me and hurtful to me to I don't care. Basically don't rock my boat. You're the problem. And that to me was the biggest. Aha. Because I think we can all have like we talk about knee jerk reactions. We don't take the space, we say the things that we don't mean. But I think when the dust settles, we get into that place of, Oh my gosh, I might have said a bunch of things. I was in the heat of the moment. I maybe wasn't as eloquent as I wanted to be, but underneath all of that, I'm so sorry that that this is happening or I love you. I have empathy for you. How can I help? There wasn't that. And instead they let you and guided you into know you're the problem. You need to fix this. Otherwise I'm leaving and we're never going to recover from this. Which is what happened. You did walk it back.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:46:10] I did exactly what you said. I said, Oh, my gosh, how can I fix this? I said something wrong. I walked it all the way back. Walked it all the way back.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:46:17] Yeah, but there was never you walked some of your stuff back and you said, Well, I might have said this and maybe I didn't mean it this way.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:46:25] I realize that I have a tendency sometimes to not use the right words. And I mean, I tried to...

**Michelle Maros:** [00:46:30] But they never walked any of their stuff back.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:46:32] Never.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:46:33] It was not an equal walk back. It was you walk it back because you're the problem and you created this situation and you rocked to this boat and you cross the line and you're asking things of me that I would never ask of you and you're being awful and blah da da da. I cannot I never in a million years would have ever expected you to do this to me, kind of commentary.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:46:58] And and you said the three words that were really mind blowing to me. He said, Don't you dare. So I think that that's really interesting that you brought that up, because those it just kind of really hit me in the pit of my stomach right now when you said it. Don't you dare ever ask that of me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:47:19] So I think the thing that we're asking was just to be kind and compassionate and like, just mindful of sensitive dynamics. This wasn't like asking someone to rob a bank.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:30] Well, I think you did a really beautiful job of summing up the whole situation.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:47:34] And I think it's a point of, oh, sorry,

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:36] I was just, you know, get to the hopefully it will be helpful. I that's my whole I'm hoping it will be helpful. Because it's so insidious. And even to this day and this was several weeks ago, even to this day, I still replay it in my mind, trying to figure out how in the heck, how in the hell actually, did this happen? How could how did this deteriorate into such a traumatic incredible conversation situation.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:48:07] Yeah. So two things. The reason why I said thank goodness I was there because I could see how if I hadn't been there, you would have come to me and said, Oh my gosh, I really bombed this conversation that I had been working so hard to in myself to have the confidence to bring up to someone. I messed it up. I blew it up. I said all the wrong things. They didn't understand me. And I ended up having to apologize. And I would have said, Why did you do that? Because you believed that you were wrong. And luckily I was there and I saw. Wait, you didn't. That's not true. So it's so nice when you can have I mean, that's not always the case, but when you can have someone who can bear witness and corroborate your side of the story. Because that is what is true and what happened.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:48:57] And could I just say something? And even if you can, I just want to add this piece because you and I had this conversation on the mountain, even if you don't have someone there to bear witness. It is so incredibly beautiful, helpful, almost necessary to have just one other person in your life. And Michelle is that person for me for sure. One other person in your life that you can tell the whole story to and that they can have the empathy or they can have the connection with you and say, well, that was really messed up. Nothing is wrong with you. You're just saying your feelings, even if you had some words that were said in a way that maybe triggered the other person.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:49:34] Because they're looking for you to be wrong.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:49:36] Exactly. So that's not the point. Just to have another person have your back, to have another person say, look, nothing is wrong with you. Let's sit down and sort this out.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:49:45] Well, that was my second point is and this is what came out of our conversation on the mountain, is that. Are there people in your life who you can open up to

and a vulnerable way and a maybe messy way and an imperfect way to discuss your feelings or your life circumstances where they will be empathetic and understanding rather than jump on it and attacking? And this is this situation that we're referring to is not an isolated situation. We've had many people and many massive family members in our lives who have also emulated similar, similar behaviors. So it was fascinating to. To realize that we've had so many people in our lives who we've trusted with opening up and being vulnerable, who then attacked because of it. And so it's really important to start to discern who are the people who you can share your feelings and be vulnerable and be messy. And they will be understanding and kind and compassionate and be helpful rather than judging and attacking and cruel. And I think and my therapist said this to me one of the first few times that I ever talked to her in high school that. The sad truth of life is there probably won't be that many people who you can trust implicitly like that. And I think our issue, if there were a to drill down into a problem, is we would be too open with people who had not gained trust, who had proven not to be trustworthy. And we can get into that dynamic more in another episode, probably for the sake of trying to establish a stronger connection. But it's really important to discern who you can trust with your vulnerability. So important because not everyone's worthy of your vulnerability.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:51:52] So important, and who's earned your trust and your vulnerability. And I think that's the and you know, it's that Maya Angelou quote, When people show you who they are, believe them the first time. Right. And so if they've earned the trust and your vulnerable vulnerability, then that's great because to have one other person in your life like that is is golden, is a blessing, is a major blessing. And so just to wrap up, I love, love, love this person. And I was really vulnerable. And I think that what you're just saying, Michelle, is so true. And I'm so incredibly grateful that you were there, because I'm not so sure that that person had earned my trust or my vulnerability. And I look at some of the other things that have happened in my life. I need to take a little bit more of Brene Brown's advice. You know, people have to earn your trust. People have to earn it. And if they're showing you that it's not there doesn't mean they're bad people. I think that's the thing.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:52:50] And you don't have to make it okay with the abusers. I think that's the last piece, too, is that they'll create a problem and make you be the person to have to make it okay or make it better. Like leave it in your hands when it's like, no, I don't always have to make a situation. Okay. You can also make the situation, and I think abusers and manipulators

will leave it on your side of the table to fix it because they'll be like, Oh, you didn't care enough to make this better, or you didn't care enough to respond to my text or whatever. It's the continuation of the emotional abuse because you can't fix it. Which is interesting.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:53:29] Yeah.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:53:30] Just something to remember. Sorry. I didn't want to cut you off.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:53:34] No you didn't. You said it beautifully. You're.... I think you being a witness to all this is very, very, very helpful for everyone listening. And it's been extraordinarily helpful for me as I continue to work my way through this whole idea that I'm not the problem. It's just. I just wanted to share what I was feeling. And I wasn't even really looking for an answer. I think that was the other piece of it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:53:56] You just needed to speak it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:53:57] I just needed to say it because I love this person so much.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:54:00] But I remember to me you just kept saying, I just need to speak what's true for me. I need to be able to speak. That was the thing that was the intention. It wasn't even to change a behavior. It was just to speak.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:54:10] No it was because I knew that we couldn't go forward with any kind of relationship if I couldn't speak because we have a close relationship, this person and I.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:54:18] And you felt like you couldn't.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:54:19] And I wanted to so badly and I felt like I could, and I did, but I couldn't. It really wasn't. It wasn't. It's not. And that's what I love. That's what I love about that's what I love about life and all these learnings, even though they're so effing hard. It's so hard. But I love it that you know what? Now I know.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:54:41] Yeah



**Barb Schmidt:** [00:54:42] Now I really understand. I understand trust. I understand vulnerability. I understand. You know what your therapist is, right? There's there's probably only going to be one or two people in my entire lifetime that maybe I could be that vulnerable with and have it be about me for that moment and my suffering.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:54:59] Right? My mantra in those situations is good to know.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:04] You do say that.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:06] They show you and I say good to know, good to know about you.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:12] But I. Just it this has been such a.... I love this.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:14] I feel like every time we kind of turn a corner in this aspect of this topic, there's so much more to even say about it. I don't even feel like we've. Dipped into the smallest bucket of this well.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:27] That's why we have part two, because I didn't think that we would. I remember saying to you...

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:31] Oh, you were saying like, we've got a lot and we do. But it's I hope that we've started to give you a sense of what it looks like. And I wanted to just close with some phrases to look out for for. Gaslighting, because I think it's helpful to have. Some tangible takeaways like we like to say of things to look for in gaslighting. And you mentioned it a lot. People who say, I was just joking, You need to learn how to take a joke. That's a huge one. It's not a big deal. You're overreacting. You're too sensitive. Thinking about it. It's always on you. You're the problem. I would never do that. I would never say something like that. That never happened. I'm concerned about your memory. You're crazy. And then the last one that you said, I can never do anything right by you. You're not so perfect either.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:30] Those are really good because those are really.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:32] I think we did... Was that it from a reel that we did?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:35] It might have been actually Michelle I think it might have been on Instagram. Yes. Yeah, link to that. It's because it's so true. And I would just like to I will end with, first of all, thank you all for being here and listening to this, because this is I feel like I was being very vulnerable today. And you were being very vulnerable, Michelle.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:50] You were Thank you.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:51] This is our community of love and caring and empathy and support, and we're always here for you as well. And so I just wanted to share one more thing that if you do have someone in your life that's causing you to doubt your sense of reality, or if you're feeling like you're not enough or it's it's just really what what we've been discussing here for this past hour. Please, please seek help from a professional if you can, if you have one. Or please seek help from someone that you can you can trust completely and be vulnerable with completely. Because what is helped me so much and even today this has helped me. Listening to you today, Michelle, one more time talk about this this situation that we've been in, it is so incredibly helpful to have an outside person hear what has happened and to hear it all and to to be vulnerable with you or to be open to accepting your vulnerability to to share another perspective of what is actually happening. Yeah, because when we've lost our sense of reality, because the gaslighter has been that's been their M.O., is for us to not have a sense of reality. It's really hard to gain perspective. So to have another person that can help you see what's truly happening and what is reality, to have that outside perspective is really, really, really critical and really helpful.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:58:08] And of course, to just piggyback on that, if you. If you if listening to this conversation, you can relate to a lot of what we said or you feel like you've been in a manipulative gaslit relationship or an emotionally, emotionally abusive relationship, we would really suggest seeking a professional to help. Untangle some of that and process that because. It is a lot and it's so many learned behaviors and chipping away at the self-worth and the self confidence and the trust and. You know the self doubt that it brings forward. There's so much and a professional can really help you can help remind you of what's true. And how to move forward. So these are very, very heavy. This is a very heavy topic. And it's a very difficult web to

untangle. And certainly, you know, we hope this podcast can help you identify and become aware. But certainly if you're finding that you need more support. We we definitely would recommend it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:59:14] And if you're looking for more, it's just one more thing that we've talked about. There is a book out by Dr. Robin Stern.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:21] Oh, yes. The gaslighting expert, right?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:59:24] Yes. Go ahead and go ahead and tell him that. Dr. Robert Stern, Robin.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:28] Stern, Dr..

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:59:29] Robin Stern.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:30] The Gaslight Effect is her book. Yes. And the Gaslight Effect, How to Spot and Survive It, The Hidden manipulation Others Use to Control Your Life. A psychologist and a leading authority on gaslighting. So if you're wanting to read more from a psychologist, we would recommend it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:59:50] Yeah. She goes in to talking about three stages of gaslighting. So let's belief defense and depression. So we might talk about that a little bit on the next episode as well.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:58] Perfect way to tee it up, Barb.

**Barb Schmidt:** [01:00:01] Thank you. Thank you, Michelle.

**Michelle Maros:** [01:00:02] Thank you for being vulnerable and sharing some of those difficult moments, but I think it's helpful to give people real life examples. So thank you.

**Barb Schmidt:** [01:00:11] Thank you.

**Michelle Maros:** [01:00:12] And thank you for being here. And thank you for listening, everyone. It's always such a pleasure because you make this community so joyful and trustworthy and lovely and we're so appreciative of that as always. So we we don't none of that goes unnoticed. So thank you so much for listening and for being a part of this community. If you have any questions, comments, concerns or podcast topic requests, please make sure you stay connected with us on social media. Peaceful\_Barb at Barb Knows Best Pod at Michelle Maros. That is the easiest way to stay in touch and please make sure that you are liked and subscribe to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. Apple, Google, Spotify. So you are always up to date with new episodes. Lastly, if you haven't yet, and if you're loving the show, which of course we hope you do, please give us a five star rating on iTunes and leave us a dazzling review that helps us greatly and we would so appreciate it. It means so much to us and it helps us a lot. Thank you so much again for listening. Thank you, Mom. We'll chat to you next week about part two on gaslighting, because as we know, Barb knows best.