

Episode 63 – Living Drama Free with Nedra Glover Tawwab
Barb Knows Best
Episode Transcripts

Michelle Maros: [00:00:13] Hello, everyone. Hi, friends. Welcome back to Barb Knows Best, the podcast. It is such a great day to be here. I'm so excited. I can hardly contain myself for this week's episode. What a time. I'm Michelle Maros your co-host. And I'm here with my mom, Barb, who is jumping off of her seat for today's show.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:35] This has been such a wonderful week in preparation for our really, really special guests, so I'm very, very excited, really happy to be here today.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:43] And if you've been listening to our recent episodes, we've been teasing this week's guest. We have a guest this week. As you know, we've only had quite a few and we have, you know, we. We pick our guests because we know that we want to bring you the information that you all want. And this week's guest is one of our favorite people. But as I was starting to prepare for this conversation, I was putting the pieces together and realized that so much of what you all ask us and the questions that you all have about life, and particularly family and relationships are the perfect things for our guests to speak about because she is the epitome of the expert on all of these things. So it's perfect timing, perfect everything. And I'm just thrilled,

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:32] Especially congratulations to Nedra On her recent book that just came out as a is a bestseller because I think that's why everything that Nedra talks about or all the things that we go through, as you just said, Michelle And I think for me in particular Nedra answers the questions that I think I've had for like 50 years, you know, and how do we deal with drama and trauma and dysfunction? So I think this episode is going to be very informational and enlightening and fun. I'm so excited.

Michelle Maros: [00:02:03] Yeah. So my mom spilled the beans a bit about this week's episode. We will have the fabulous.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:10] That's what I do.

Michelle Maros: [00:02:11] Yep. Nedra Glover Tawwab friend of both of ours and just a fabulous human being. If you aren't following her already on Instagram, you absolutely should. But Nedra is the author, The New York Times bestselling author, of Drama Free, which is her newest book that we're going to dive into in today's episode. You must get that. It's...I love it so much. But of course, also the book Set Boundaries Find Peace, which when that came out a few years ago, I think you were just like passing that book out on the streets.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:43] Everyone, like everyone,

Michelle Maros: [00:02:44] Literally everywhere we go, she's like, Have you read Set Boundaries, Find Peace because you need to. It's amazing. But Nedra is a licensed therapist and a sought after relationship expert and has practiced relationship therapy for more than 15 years. She's appeared as an expert on Red Table Talk, The Breakfast Club, Good Morning America CBS Morning Show. You know all of those amazing outlets and has been highlighted in The New York Times, The Guardian Vice etcetera. Nedra runs a popular Instagram account where she shares practices, tools and reflections for mental health and relationships. And, you know, I know that the online social media space gets crowded and confusing, and sometimes you don't know who to trust or what to look to when you're looking for insight and inspiration and advice. But even speaking from a personal experience, whenever I go to Nedra's page, it's always the information that I need. I can trust it. And it's so clear, concise and tangible for anyone's life that it's just, it's such a tool and a gift and a resource for all of us to have. So cannot say more about the Instagram page. But with all that being said, welcome to the podcast, Nedra.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:04:02] Thank you for having me. Such a warm welcome. I felt like a mystery. I'm like, Who's coming on? Is it me? Um, thank you for that.

Michelle Maros: [00:04:12] I wanted to tease it and then my mom just dropped the ball.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:04:15] She just said it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:04:16] I just said it.

Michelle Maros: [00:04:17] She's like, she goes right in.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:04:18] It's Nedra, stop this.

Barb Schmidt: [00:04:20] Yes. So excited because Michelle, you're so What a beautiful introduction. I agree. I just cannot say enough about Nedra's work. You're so right. Because it's. Well, first of all, Set Boundaries Find peace. Two things that I care deeply about peace. And then the boundaries are how to get to the peace. So I was literally handing that book out like candy. It was you have to read this book. But I also do want also to say your Instagram truly, it gives me goosebumps just to say it truly, when you're looking for just the answers or the things that you're looking for as a human, like I am going to your page, you are so... It's just so amazing how deep that you get with the answers or the things that you say, but also so heartfelt and so accessible and usable. It really is really the therapist or the help that you've always longed for as a human being, looking for the things, trying to live this really difficult life at many, many junctures and looking for ways to, Oh, I could apply this. Oh, this makes perfect sense what she's saying. I didn't think of it this way. So we're really, really thrilled to have you here and really grateful for you in our lives and in the lives of millions and millions of people. So thank you, Nedra.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:05:34] You're welcome. Thank you.

Michelle Maros: [00:05:37] So your new book, Drama Free, is all about family and dysfunction and trauma and drama. And it's the book that you wrote after Set Boundaries, Find Peace. And I'm just curious, how did you know that this was the topic that you wanted to write about next after speaking so extensively about boundaries? Because it feels like you have the pulse of what everybody needs, like when you even announced your book before it even came out, before we had read it, I was like, oh my gosh, how did she know that that's what I wanted, what you wanted, but like, what the people want. So what was that process for you to know that this was the next topic that you wanted to write about? Because it just feels so up for people right now?

Nedra Tawwab: [00:06:27] After set boundaries, find peace. I saw that so many people still had questions about boundaries with family. So at work, with our friends, even with our partners, our children, we were able to, you know, get better with boundaries. But it was still those

family relationships that were really hard. There was an exception being made. You know, I understand that I should say this, but it's my mom. I understand I should say this, but it's my sister. I understand this is unhealthy, but it's my dad. And in many instances, we give those exceptions because we are taught to believe that with family, we should endure everything that is a part of being in a family system. And I have heard so many people share very horrible stories about families where they should be loved and cherished and respected. I'm not talking about, Oh, you got a spanking or, oh, you know, your parents yelled at you. I'm talking about family members stealing. I'm talking about substance abuse that led to parents being abusive. I'm talking about, you know, parents having difficult breakups and making the child decide all sorts of things. And people don't know that that's not okay because they're taught in those families that it's okay because it's us.

Barb Schmidt: [00:07:55] Yeah, it's okay because it's us and we're almost not allowed to share the family business. I know as someone who was raised with a lot of dysfunction, it's the first time I spoke up when I went into treatment for bulimia. Everyone practically disowned me. How dare you go into treatment? And I was in treatment in a almost like solitary confinement. I mean, we weren't engaging in the outside world. And that was not okay. It's never okay to talk to other people about what's happening in the family unit.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:08:26] Well, anytime we talk about ourselves with people, we are sharing who we are and it makes them think about who they are. And so if you're talking to a sibling and you say, our mom, the alcoholic, and they're not in that same space, they're like, whoa, wait, so what? What are you talking about? That she didn't drink that much, It wasn't that bad. Or sometimes, you know, I've experienced with some sibling relationships where one person likes to have this hierarchy of pain, that my pain was worse than your pain. They didn't like me more. And I think everyone suffers in different ways. I think it's hard to even be the favorite because you know that someone is not the favorite. So isn't there some guilt to that as well, even if it's not expressed? So there are times, you know, in sibling relationships and the parent dynamic where things are happening and talking about them is the ultimate betrayal of a dysfunctional family.

Barb Schmidt: [00:09:30] So true. And even when you're trying to better yourself, no matter what you're doing, any kind of self-help or any kind of thing that you're trying to, you know,

become the best version of yourself. I noticed that they tend to take it personally, that something that we're almost attacking the family unit because and really, all we're trying to do maybe is better ourselves or live a better, more happy or heal or whatever it is. It's pretty interesting what you mentioned in the book. This piece really was important for me because I'd been there and I've done exactly this, that we know that we can't change other people. So like all of us listening, I feel like I've spent 50 years learning that, Oh, I can only change myself, I can only change my own behaviors. But then when it comes to, oh, this is the only choice, really, this is the only way for me to move forward in my life. Sometimes I remember so clearly and even today, sometimes I'll have to really talk to myself. Wait, Barb, you. If you want something to change, you have to do it. We go with the flow because for whatever reason the mind is saying, Oh, that's too hard to change yourself. Just. Just go with it anyway, you know, it's just too difficult. If you could help, walk us through maybe some of the stages of change and how that would look, how would it look to start to change ourselves and not really listen to the mind say, oh, just go with the flow. This is the family unit. You know, they're not going to listen to you anyway or all the things that'll mind will say to keep you from really living your best life or doing the things that are really in your best interest.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:11:01] Yeah, going with the flow is always tough because it means that you're not in control of anything. Really. Everything is outside of you. In actuality, everything is inside of you and you have the ability to change a lot just by changing yourself when you grow up in dysfunction or even, you know, if dysfunctional relationships develop in adulthood because it's so hard to change, we often start to work with that other person first, right? If I can just get them to do this thing, I won't really have to do any work if they can figure out how not to speak to me a certain way, then my life will be better because I don't want to get to the point where I have to get up and leave when they start to curse me out.

Barb Schmidt: [00:11:52] It's so true.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:11:52] So it's like, Hey, stop doing that so I don't have to do anything.

Barb Schmidt: [00:11:57] That's so good.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:11:59] Which is, you know, it's so wholesome to want people to stop that. But on a deeper level, people don't change because sometimes they don't really have an issue with their behavior. They don't have an issue with their behavior. You have an issue with their behavior. And the thing you're wanting them to change is something that they may not even see or they may think it's your fault. You know, sometimes I've seen, you know, parents yell at children and say, well, you made me do it. You weren't listening.

Barb Schmidt: [00:12:33] Wow, this is so important, Nedra. I can't even tell you how much you are speaking to my heart because what of you and I talked about lately? Because we've been talking a lot about our own family dysfunction. The thing that I heard as a child and even as an adult in all in some of my adult relationships that you are the problem. If you don't like what's happening to me, it's your fault or you are the problem. Change how you are. I'm just fine with who I am and the way that I act.

Michelle Maros: [00:13:01] But then you spend so much energy trying to convince and explain to the other person why what they're doing is wrong. But they don't even they didn't ask to be convinced. So it never gets to the point where they understand your issue and want to make a change.

Barb Schmidt: [00:13:18] And so many people write into us, they'll say, well, I've been told I'm too sensitive. You know, you're too sensitive. That's why. You feel hurt by what I'm doing or that's why you're not healing? Because you're just too sensitive. You take everything...

Nedra Tawwab: [00:13:31] How Manipulative.

Barb Schmidt: [00:13:31] Yeah, exactly.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:13:35] It's such a manipulation to tell something. We all feel stuff. You know, I think most humans are sensitive. Yeah, Healthy humans are sensitive, right? We're in tune to what we feel about things. We speak to those things. Even if we don't speak to them, we feel them. We feel upset, offended, afraid, sad. That's not too sensitive to say to someone, Hey, the way you said that really hurt my feelings. Or, you know, I wanted you to be there for me and you weren't. Wow. That was a below the belt comment. That's not being too sensitive.

What the other person is doing is trying not to be accountable. So they want to make it seem like you're the problem because they don't want any accountability. I'm thinking of a family member who has terrible relationships with most people, and if you talk to them about it, they feel like it's everybody else. You cannot convince this person that anything that all of these people collectively say have any value. And so it's it's interesting because this family member asked me, do you think I need therapy? I said, well, what do you think.

Barb Schmidt: [00:14:42] I love it.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:14:42] And they said, well, I think I'm fine. You know, what matters most is what you think. Me seeing your relationships in shambles and things not going well in your life, that would be a problem for me.

Michelle Maros: [00:14:57] Right.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:14:58] That's not a problem for you. So if you say you're okay, then I've got to believe that you believe that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:07] That's revolutionary.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:15:08] That wouldn't be okay for me. But it seems to be okay for you.

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:13] Revolutionary. I mean, seriously, that's why you are such a genius in this realm, because that is the truth. But most of us have difficulty being able to say that and even seeing it that way, because, I don't know, you kind of get enmeshed in.

Michelle Maros: [00:15:29] That's Controlling.

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:29] Yes. And you try to get enmeshed in with can't you see this? Do you see how dysfunctional we. It's yes. Really trying to control and change behavior. Just what you just said is so incredible.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:15:40] Yeah. Yeah. It's you know, I think I spent some years trying to do that. I remember, you know, being the kid that would write letters to my parents or to my mother. Really? Oh, this happened today. I'm going to run away. You made me feel this. And you know all these things.

Michelle Maros: [00:15:58] Yeah.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:15:58] And. I don't think anything was done about it, you know, because it was like, okay, these are the issues you have.

Barb Schmidt: [00:16:08] It's true.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:16:09] These aren't you know, I don't have a problem. This other person doesn't have a problem. These are the issues you have. And I said, oh, okay, they're right. And so, you know, I think a real freedom is becoming an adult. It is freeing to be able to say, I don't want a relationship with this person, with that person. With this person, with that person. No, thank you. I feel like, you know, so much of childhood is your parents putting you in situations that you may or may not want to be in? And once you become an adult, you get to decide which relationships you want to be in, with which grandparents, with which aunts, uncles, cousins or whoever. You get to decide. And I think unfortunately many of us don't evaluate. We just continue to go with the flow, even if the water is murky.

Michelle Maros: [00:17:02] That's so interesting because in the book you talk about the concept of being a cycle breaker, too, and I hadn't heard that term until recently. But going off of what you just said about choosing the people you want to have relationships with, I think that I don't even think I knew that I could choose, you know, as I became an adult, that I could say, oh, that that person in our family, I don't want a relationship with them. And so I think most of us don't even know that we have a choice that we can, like you talk about so often, set boundaries with people and maybe go no contact with people who aren't healthy for us. And I think that that is how we continue to perpetuate these dysfunctional cycles because we don't even think we have a choice.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:17:48] Mm hmm. You know, every year around the holidays, my practice gets pretty busy because I do a lot of, you know, work with folks and people have family issues. And so as they're going home for Thanksgiving or having people come visit them, there is weeks before or months before very high levels of stress because you will be in a situation where your parent is favoring this other sibling. You will be in the situation where your dad gets too drunk and, you know, starts saying inappropriate things. And people, you know, they don't know how to get out of this. They start to see that as what they have to experience during the holidays, that this is a part of it, that you have to be at these situations. And it's not until we talk about options that they start to see, hey, you know, when you go home for the holidays, do you even have to stay with your mom? Is that a choice? That's a choice. Do you have to stay until the point where the drinking gets heavy or do you go for dinner and then leave? Do you want them to stay at your house? Do you even want to host? Do you want to just go to a restaurant and say, okay, guys, bye. So like, there's so there's so many options, but when you're. You know.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:19:16] I can't recall if I put this in a book, but I thought maybe it would be a little too heavy. But I'll say it here. Um, I think some family systems are like cults.

Michelle Maros: [00:19:28] Yes.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:19:30] And they will indoctrinate you to be this really unhealthy being because it is to their benefit. It is to the benefit of codependency, addiction, enmeshment, or whatever those unhealthy things are. It's to their benefit. And so anytime you try to step outside of the cult, they try to make you look like the person who's like, Oh my gosh, it's not our cult. It's not that we have these weird beliefs and we're doing all this unhealthy stuff. It's that person.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:06] Well, It's because we're also trained that blood is thicker than water, which is, you know, the cult that's that you can't do anything that's against the family because. The family is everything.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:20:20] You know, I think family is everything. And I think you get to choose your family.

Barb Schmidt: [00:20:26] Yes.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:20:28] And everything. Family is important. It's really important. It helps you thrive as a person, but your family can be, you know, biological or it can be chosen. There are some people, unfortunately, and think about the LGBTQ community who often have to thrive in relationships with chosen family. And those relationships are so rich there is someone who takes on the role of mother. There is someone who takes on the role of your sister. It is such a rich experience. I remember being in college and there would be people who wouldn't go home for holidays and you would see those people collect collectively, get together and host the holiday celebration or, you know, that's that's family to.

Barb Schmidt: [00:21:25] Nedra that is so. Oh my gosh, this is such a beautiful conversation because I think it goes to the root of who has the right to determine what the definition of family is. And does society in a collective out there of who knows, who know just because family is only this one way? And I think Michelle and I a lot of times on this podcast and so much in our work, we're trying to help people redefine words because that's not really what the word necessarily has to mean. It's not written in stone somewhere. That family is only blood. We can talk about family being chosen family, and I think when people get locked into that rigidity of, Oh, this is what family means, because I know sometimes when I share my story, people will come up to me and say, How can you not talk to some of your family members? And I said, Because it doesn't work for either one of us, but I love them. Well, how can you love them if you're not with them? And I said, because love doesn't mean you have to physically be with the person.

Barb Schmidt: [00:22:22] It means that in my heart I care deeply for them, but also in my heart. I care deeply for the mental well-being of both of us as well. It's like it's so much bigger and so much broader than what I think most of us do in life. We're so narrow and so rigid and so like in this little tiny box. Okay, family means we have to endure this and let's go do it. Because I remember Michelle when you were, I don't know, like ten maybe, or 11. One time you came up to me and said, you know, what are we doing for this holiday, Mom? Do we have to go, you know, to that house or do we have to do that? Or could we try something different? And I remember I think I said to you, We'll just go, honey, it'll be okay. We'll do this. We'll do this.

We'll take a little break here. We'll take a little break there. But then afterwards, we're exhausted and we're like, okay, well, how else could we define this?

Nedra Tawwab: [00:23:08] Oh, my gosh, can we can we spend a few minutes on the exhaustion that happens when you go back to some of these family relationships?

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:19] Yes.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:23:20] All My gosh, it is. It is a level of burnout that you just can't recover from sometimes. I remember we had like a family gathering and I have one aunt who's just, oh, energetically, she is just a drainer. And she was talking. She tried to talk to me and I kind of walked away. I'm like, okay, bye. And she talked to my uncle for like an hour and a half. And when she finished, he said, I got to go. He was like, I gotta. I gotta go.

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:52] It's true.

Michelle Maros: [00:23:53] Even as a kid, I remember too much. I remember after family situations just I could sense in you that you were always bracing yourself to go and then after you were depleted. But like you always talk about so often, you would always find ways to go do stuff. Oh, you need something from the grocery store. I'll go, Oh, you forgot to buy this. I'll go, Oh, you need someone to go run an errand. You are always looking for ways to get out because that was your reprieve.

Barb Schmidt: [00:24:24] Yeah. Remember that year that I went... Nedra, one year I don't know. It was just exceptionally dysfunctional. And one year I said, you know, I'm going to go outside. It was a beautiful day. I'm going to go outside. I'm going to go for a little nap under the tree and I'll be back. And I remember you came out and you said, Mommy, because you were young. Are you sleeping in the grass all day?

Michelle Maros: [00:24:43] I was like you left me in here. I'm still here.

Barb Schmidt: [00:24:47] Are you coming inside ever?

Nedra Tawwab: [00:24:49] Whoa. What's interesting? You know, what I wonder is. Michelle where your relationships. The same as your mom's relationships with those family members, or did you see something different?

Michelle Maros: [00:25:05] As a child, you know, I think I had a worldview that just whoever was in my sphere I had to love. So I don't ever think I ever even contemplated the possibility that someone wasn't aligned for me or healthy for me to be around. And of course, as I got older, I started to tap into, Oh, I'm exhausted after being with that person. Or they were talking and clearly they had too much to drink or whatever the situation might be. But I think as a child. I just felt maybe it was different for me because I think people just wanted me to have fun. So they were always doing fun things. And then you would go take a nap. But certainly I started to notice as as time went on, some of the dysfunction, and I can pinpoint it for myself too, if a family member started to like started drinking at 11 a.m. and I could see that the progression as the day went on of when we got to nighttime, we were having the same conversation we had at the morning and they hadn't remembered it. And me being like, Wait, we just talked about that. What are you talking about? That's weird. Or, you know, a different family member would start drinking and by the end of the night start to try and pick fights with me about, you know, silly things that don't matter. I'm like, why are they so aggressive about this? And that's where I started to notice that, oh, I don't want to have fights with people at holidays or I don't want to feel exhausted talking about the same things over and over again, or why are we even talking about these things anyways? That's when I started to, I think as a teenager, probably, you know, some of the fun light heartedness of, Oh, I'm just going to be cooking in the kitchen with the family.

Michelle Maros: [00:27:02] This is so enjoyable. You start to notice the the underlying maybe tension and drama and dysfunction that's like just beneath the surface. And then you're like, wow, I don't really know if I had fun. And I think you and I just spoke this year going through so many changes in our family again. We talked after the holidays this year and we came to the realization like, I don't even know if we've ever enjoyed a holiday until this year when we decided to. Do something totally different. Do something totally on our own and make up our own new holiday traditions. And we're like, Wow. This is what it means to have fun on a holiday, to not have fight, to not have fights on a holiday, to not feel so tense going into holidays like I don't know what's going to happen. I'm bracing myself. None of that existed

when we. Changed what changed our minds and took ourselves out of these situations. And it was kind of eye opening to be like, Oh, this is possible for us. I don't even think I thought it was possible.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:28:13] Yeah

Barb Schmidt: [00:28:14] I think it's true because we chose what you said. Nedra We chose to redefine family being, you know, friends can be family deep people that we love. Love is family. You can go into a time spending time with family. That's love.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:28:28] Yeah. I think the last family relationship that I disconnected from, I remember telling the person. This doesn't feel like a relationship that I need to have because the people that I have healthy relationships with, they care. They show they care about me. There's some connection, there's respect. There's not any gossiping about each other. There's love, there's communication. And this doesn't feel like that. So this can't be a relationship that I'm in anymore.

Michelle Maros: [00:29:03] So true.

Barb Schmidt: [00:29:04] It's so true. It. As you brought that up. Michelle Maybe now just speak a little bit in your book you talk about that how the childhood traumas that we all you know, many of us go through childhood traumas, how it impacts our ability to express our emotions. And I think that's, for me, the greatest thing that has been maybe splintering in my family is like talking about emotions is not allowed and no one really knows how to do it. It's just really difficult. So if something comes up that needs to be discussed and if there's one of the brave members like us that will start to talk, it shuts everything down. And I can remember this going back, oh my gosh, so many decades. So there's just that inability for people to take any other emotions that other people are trying to express without being so attached to it and just be open to hearing the process of the feelings and vice versa. I think people just shut down with the emotions and they're just not allowed to discuss them. Emotions are not permitted. If you want to speak that a little bit.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:30:08] And when you are not taught how to express emotions in a family system or when you are not allowed because sometimes kids are not allowed. You know, I've heard a lot. Oh, it's not that bad. You know, I had it worse or this is how you should feel about that or suck it up or, you know, just all of these things that families might do because it's convenient for them, but not necessarily healthy for you. When you become an adult, it can be hard to get back to that space of feeling and being able to talk about it because your experience has been so shut down by people who can you trust? You know, so much of my work is around getting adults to use like a feelings chart to say I felt sad, I felt annoyed. I felt disappointed because they're so disconnected from being able to have the words to describe how they feel about something. But what typically happens is they have a lot of the behavior that describes how they feel about things they have, you know, I think about addiction. Uh.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:31:21] Isn't that a lot of feelings to have to be addicted to something?

Barb Schmidt: [00:31:28] Yes,

Nedra Tawwab: [00:31:28] That's a lot of feelings. There's a lot of feelings and just having an addiction, there's a lot of feelings and being codependent. There's a lot of feelings in being enmeshed. There's a lot of feeling in so many different things. But I think it's if we don't talk about it, it's not a real thing. You know, when I see someone who struggles with alcohol, you usually see depression.

Barb Schmidt: [00:31:56] Totally.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:31:57] You usually see depression. It's a lot of feelings in substance abuse, a lot of guilt, a lot of disappointment, a lot of hopelessness, tons of stuff. And just because we don't talk about it doesn't mean we don't feel it. We're trying not to feel it. We're trying to be distracted. We're trying to move further away from it. And it's really unfortunate because it's still there. It's just unspoken.

Michelle Maros: [00:32:25] I think too, we can have these words to describe it like alcoholism or enmeshment or codependency. And we can just say, Oh, I'm a codependent without and kind of letting ourselves off the hook. And I the way you just described it, that there are so

many feelings underneath these words and these labels that we give ourselves that we so rarely allow to be felt. I know so many people in my life and for myself as well to say, Oh, well, I'm codependent and not want to actually go into the feelings that go along with those labels that we give ourselves. So that's so great.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:33:04] Yeah, I think it's hard to acknowledge that, you know, when you think about codependency that. If I'm not doing this for this person, I don't feel needed. And what I really need to feel is needed and important. And this is one way to get that need met.

Michelle Maros: [00:33:23] Yes.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:33:25] That's a that's a hard thing to be able to say. Or I feel like if I don't help this person, it's going to hurt me even more because I won't be able to control the little bit about their life that I'm able to control by this over giving.

Barb Schmidt: [00:33:41] Genius. Genius. Yes. I think so much of it is about control and even if it's dysfunctional, at least we understand it and we've learned how to navigate it all these years, even though it's not in our best interest or their best interest. We still, you know, kind of maintain that idea. Well, at least I know this. This is this has kind of been dependable. But the uncertainty of the unknown is too scary for me to step into it, I think.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:34:07] Yeah, I think we you know. We think codependency is love. You know, that's how you love a person in a dysfunctional family. You just clean up their messes and you do this stuff with them. You align with them in these unhealthy ways. And it really impacts the other relationships because everyone doesn't need that level of support, but they need some support. And often the people who are outside of that relationship aren't getting any support because so much energy is funneled towards that codependent relationship. So, you know, you'll see this sometimes with with grandparents and your aunts and uncles, or you may see it with your siblings and their kids or, you know, it's just this energy put into the one relationship excessively and not disperse with the other relationships.

Michelle Maros: [00:34:57] So good. Let's take a break. And we're back. I would love for you to talk about a little bit going back to some of the stages of change. Um, you know, I think we

notice that we want to make changes in our lives. We set the boundaries, we start to tap into our feelings, trying to heal all of those stages. But I don't know if people necessarily talk about or are aware of the loneliness that can come when you decide to set a boundary or to go no contact or to, you know, make different choices with who you surround yourself with. And I think that at least for me and us in a lot of the situations that we're going through recently.

Michelle Maros: [00:35:50] You do the brave thing to set the boundary or go no contact. And then this awkward kind of in-between of getting to the other side of feeling healed about it is that loneliness that I think scares a lot of people into going back, being like, Oh, this is I did something wrong because now I'm feeling maybe even worse, or maybe I'm feeling like I did the wrong thing. So I need to go back to the person or the people or the situation because I made a mistake instead of, I guess maybe just knowing that loneliness or maybe regret or remorse or whatever the feeling is that comes up is normal. And allowing that to ride through like it's a normal thing to feel.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:36:33] Yeah, just the discomfort of not being connected to that person. We have to learn to sit with that, you know, when we get ready to leave a relationship because maybe we've tried boundaries, maybe we have, you know, done many things. And it's still not changing. We're still not able to feel better about the relationship and families. It impacts other relationships. You know, if you decide to leave a relationship with your sibling, your parents still has that other child. And they may talk about that child. That child may, you know, be at certain events. You know, if you decide to leave a relationship with your father and your parents are still together, that changes things. So there are times when you decide to leave relationships and it is very uncomfortable because the other people may not want to leave those relationships. They may not have that same issue or they may not be in the same space of change with the stages of change, I think most of us. We we operate in a space of noticing a problem and not necessarily doing anything about it just yet. And we can stay there for a very long time because it is really hard to change meant you have some people who are like, they don't even notice what the issue is, but many of us can get to a point of noticing, Wow, this is an issue, but there may not be a point of progress. It may just stay there. Because when we think about change, we also think about the what ifs. Oh, my gosh, if I did this, then this. And sometimes it can be just easier to say, I'll suck it up and I'll just deal with this person for an hour or I'll accept their phone call and I'll just, you know, put it on mute and I'll just do whatever I do

in the background. You know, there are many ways that people start to be able to manage those things that are not necessarily healthy, but it's the only way that they know how to function through a relationship.

Barb Schmidt: [00:38:42] Beautifully said, because I think one of the powerful threads that that I felt that was woven through drama free is that you're really talking about that as adults, we have the power or the opportunity to change our own narrative. And I think that's what I was feeling so much because you're right, it's really hard. It's really, really hard. And I think we have to be patient and loving with ourselves to make the decision to take the next step into the unknown. But there's a part of us that knows that this is exactly what we need for our best interest and for our well-being and for the life that we're living. I mean, this is our one wild and precious life. And I could feel that when I first read Drama Free, I read it a couple of times because there's so much there's so much power in that book that empowers us. There's so many things where you're really asking us and telling us that we could actually this is where we have our power. This is where we have our opportunity to use that word opportunity to be the person that we want to be or live the life that we want to live.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:45] And I feel like that was one of the things that came out of it, that as an adult, we have the opportunity to change our narrative, right? We can actually do that. I don't know. It just made me so happy when I was and I kind of know that. But to read that through your book, it was like, whoa. Because hearing your words through the book and knowing that this is my opportunity because I know as I've gotten older, the idea of getting to the end of my life and not living that one precious life in the way that I know my soul or my heart is calling me to do, feels like the most the biggest betrayal I could ever make is not living my life in the way that I know that I came here to live it. And so I really felt just a beautiful invitation that you were giving all of us to take advantage of that opportunity.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:40:34] Yeah. You're beautiful precious life. Love the way you said that this life is. The only one you'll have. And you can decide to show up in it actively or passively.

Barb Schmidt: [00:40:52] Mhm. Mhm. Yes.

Michelle Maros: [00:40:54] I love that.

Michelle Maros: [00:40:57] One of the most common question we get in all the things podcasts, social media, everywhere.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:05] Hands down constantly.

Michelle Maros: [00:41:09] And this is what I was alluding to at the beginning of the episode, is dealing with in-laws. I think that for so many of us, we think about healing with our parents, our friends, siblings. But I think there's so many and this is why I can't really speak to it because I don't have in-laws currently. But so many people seem to really struggle with maintaining healthy relationships, healthy boundaries, being able to speak your feelings and speak your truth in a situation when it comes to in-laws. So do you have any insights for the listeners about what is a step that they can take if they're feeling taken advantage of or if it's not an even balance or not respected when it comes to that complicated dynamic of in-laws?

Barb Schmidt: [00:42:03] And especially I noticed with especially if they have children that are in the mix where the in-laws are trying to tell them how to raise the kids.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:42:13] I notice often with in-laws, there are very high expectations that these people will be kind, that they will be for you, that they want the best for your relationship and all of these wonderful things. And I'm not saying that those aren't great things, but I think what could be helpful sometimes is to lower your expectations of other humans, especially humans, outside of your family. We don't know what our mother in laws will be like. We can hope, but we don't know. So when you meet someone who's not as friendly, accept them as that. I think often there is this idea that we have to try to make them more of this thing. You know, they're not this. They need to be more of this. They're not that. They need to be more of that thing. And that is an impossible task, especially with people you didn't know five years ago. So often when we move into these families, we have to meet people as they are. And even if you notice, like your partner has a wonky relationship, things going on, it may not be best to highlight everything all the time because they've been existing in these relationships and fine with it.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:43:34] So there takes a certain level of trust building to be able to give feedback in that relationship with our partners. But sometimes, you know, I've seen people say it too soon, you know, it's been two months and it's like, Oh my gosh, your mother is overbearing. This person has no problem with it. And so it seems like badmouthing. And this person will go back and tell their mom, oh my God, she said, you're overbearing. And then there it just creates this cycle of, oh, we talk about each other and it's like. Some things are just for us to take note of. She seems overbearing, but, you know, there are other things that maybe we do need to work through. But there is, you know, certainly a time there's a way that we do that. And often we're doing it too soon or we're doing it inappropriately with the wrong energy, with the wrong words. And, you know, I think in-laws will be here to stay. And like any other relationship, we have to learn how to manage our relationships, even with in-laws.

Barb Schmidt: [00:44:41] I love that idea that it's too soon. Because you're right, We tend to forget the fact that we didn't have a relationship with them until right now. And the person that the person that we're with has been living with this person or been with this person for their lifetime. What great advice to really kind of take it very slowly and be kind. I think that for me, having two sets of in-laws at one point in my life, I think that was that was the they were they were really easy. They were really wonderful. Um, but I think that's really good advice that just stay strong in your own power of what it is that you believe and what you feel in the kindest way possible, but don't set out to try to change them right away to be part of what it is that you think it should be is such good advice. Nedra Because it's hard.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:45:30] Thank you.

Michelle Maros: [00:45:30] Yeah I love that. And I think even what you were saying too, that is so important in this instance, but in all of our relationships is the concept of like our language and how the words that we use to bring up an issue or to describe something really matters. And like you were saying, if you're saying, Oh, this person's overbearing, and then you kind of get into a dynamic of talking about each other behind their backs and all of that, maybe they don't even mean to to say it that way, but the language that is used kind of snowballs into that kind of, you know, gossip dynamic or drama dynamic. And I think all of us, even if we're not in in-law situations or whatever, can at least start to take responsibility and be more mindful of

the language that we use when we're describing people and our relationships and our own feelings. I think that is a great way to at least take ownership of ourselves.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:46:29] Yeah, taking ownership of yourselves and not trying to change your in-laws, just not just like you wouldn't try to change, you know, other people and how to really work together. You know, I think in-laws have a dream for their family, just like you have a dream for your family. And what we're usually experiencing is competing dreams. They want to grandparent in a certain way, and that's why boundaries are important when their way is not the way that you'd like to see. And it can be very helpful to work on how we manage our energy when we're offended by people, because when people receive new boundaries, they may be upset at you, They may, you know, give you the silent treatment and all of these things. And it might be offensive to you. How do you sit with being offended? Do you get angry at the person? I think people aren't going to love boundaries. They're not going to be like, oh my gosh, thank you so much for telling me I can't give my grandkids any sugar. That is so wise.

Barb Schmidt: [00:47:32] That's so good.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:47:36] Yeah I think mostly you'll get like, you're being too strict. You're, you know, that's a part of the boundary setting process for them to not immediately agree with everything you're suggesting.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:47:47] I love that. I love that. I love what you just said, that they have dreams for their families, just like we have dreams for our family. It's that is really important to remember that I, I cannot I just have goosebumps all over the place because that's so true. That can kind of soften us in how then we communicate with in-laws or any other family members. They're really just have the dreams, just like we have dreams now. How can we come together and express our desires? They're going to tell us what they want and then come together with a mutual understanding of each other.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:19] I love that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:19] So beautiful. And I.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:20] And I love how do you sit with the energy of being offended? Yeah, that's. I wrote that down because. That's something that I've been working on of. It's like I let that energy kind of take me over sometimes and then it it takes up so much of my mental energy and physical energy and what can we do with ourselves when we feel offended? That's not letting like, taking us out. That was such a I think we get offended by someone and then we we leap into a whole battle about something. And maybe that's not even necessary. I love that.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:48:57] Big aha moment.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:58] Big aha moment. So this has gone by so fast.

Barb Schmidt: [00:49:03] I can't believe it.

Michelle Maros: [00:49:04] Time flies. But I wanted to just ask one more question to kind of close up our conversation together and see if there's anything else you wanted to add. But I know in the podcast and on on social media for all of us, we love to give people, you know, some tangible steps and takeaways to start to put some of these concepts into action. And I can already kind of imagine in my mind people listening right now saying, I agree with all of this, this makes so much sense. I love it. I want to start now. I'm ready to make the change. But like, where do I start? If you're someone that's kind of identified some of the trauma and drama in your family or are ready to start to do things differently, what would you suggest as kind of like step one for someone into starting this new process of making some of these big changes in life?

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:00] Yeah, I'd say step one is to figure out what you can actually do, not what other people are advising, not what you've seen someone else do, but what you actually feel comfortable doing. My boundary may not be your boundary, and I think sometimes we think we have to go like I need to cut them off. That's maybe the ultimate boundary, but maybe what you need to do is the next time that they say something about that embarrassing childhood story, you say, Please don't tell that story anymore. Maybe that's what you need to do. It doesn't need to be cutting them off. Maybe it's the thing that preserves the relationship. I think, you know, we assume that the only way to improve the relationship is to end it. But there are lots of things you can do. You can speak to people less frequently. You can see them less

often. You can shorten the time that you're together. You can make certain requests and give them the ability to honor those things. You can maybe cut back or give more. Maybe there's something that you need to do other than saying this is the only way. There is a whole assortment of ways and it really is unique to what the situation is and what you're willing to withstand in a relationship.

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:19] Can I give a little plug, too, here? I think one of the answers to your question as well, Michelle, is get your workbook Nedra.

Michelle Maros: [00:51:27] Also that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:28] No, because I bought. Of course I meant no. I don't know if people know there's a workbook.

Michelle Maros: [00:51:32] No, I love it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:33] I bought the workbook and it goes so beautifully. You know, a lot of people are doing workbooks today, which I think is genius because especially if it's a book like Drama Free. Now I want what you just said, Michelle. Okay, now give me all the ways to get drama free. And one, two, three, four. But you walk us through so much. So if you want to say a couple of things about the workbook, I have found the workbook necessary. It's especially if you want to take that first step or you want to really start to understand. It's helped me because we're going through so much here this past year. Help me understand how I can actually manage some of my unhealthy relationships and how I could actually take this step and what do I need to do instead of jumping to, okay, we're done, let's move on, because it's not that easy. We're done. Just move on. It's very traumatic actually. So if you just wanted to say what was your what was your intention? I think what because I think it's such a perfect combination. The book and the workbook.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:32] Yes. So Set boundaries, Find Peace has a workbook, the Set Boundaries Workbook and Drama Free will have a workbook coming out at the end of the year. Um, I think as we are reading things, we have to figure out a way to apply them. Sometimes the reading of information is just step one and the practical application is really important when

you're talking about things like boundaries and creating healthier relationships, it takes a little deeper, you know, a little deeper understanding. It's great to read about all of the, you know, characters in my book and how this affected this person. But how does it affect you? What parts of this story really resonate with you? What things do you need to change? How do you go about that when you have hard conversations? Who's the person in your life to that that pushes back? Who is the person in your life that actually receives boundaries? Well, sometimes we don't think about that, and the workbooks really help you get into that second layer of understanding what's happening. Because if it's just like, Oh, I read all of this information, it's really great. We put the book down, we're done. And many things require practice. I can't think of a thing that I do well that has not been practiced walking, talking, reading boundaries, being able to say how I feel about something. It requires practice. It's not like, you know what? I never have to revisit this again and I'll just get better. It's like, no, you have to practice it. And so that practice begins sometimes with workbooks and worksheets where we can really get into the nitty gritty of what we need to do.

Barb Schmidt: [00:54:17] Thank you for clarifying that. I have those three books and doing the Set Boundaries Find Peace workbook was such a great help with drama free. Yes get that one Yeah there isn't the other one yet but you you have it coming out which I think will be very beneficial to have that also with the drama free but it's been helpful.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:54:38] Yeah I think that there were so many books when I was doing a research for creating Drama Free that talk about the problem, right? The parent is narcissistic, the family is dysfunctional. This is you know, these are why you get into fights with your siblings. But there wasn't a lot of, okay, we know the problem. What can you do? Drama free is really about what you can do. Practical things you can do in your relationships have so many listicles around. This is what you say when, when you end the family relationship and people are saying you need to talk to them. This is how you respond to that. When you no longer want to answer your phone and they're pressuring you, this is what you say, you know, because sometimes finding our own words is really challenging when we don't have some ideas around what we can say. So Drama Free is workbooky to me, but it will get even more workbook at the end of the year.

Michelle Maros: [00:55:41] And that's I think the genius behind so much of of your work is that, you know one of the biggest things that people always say is, Oh, I wish I knew what to say in that moment instead of the thing that I said that made it worse. And you give those lists of of this is what you can say so that people can have these things in their back pockets and maybe leave a tense situation feeling a little better than they would have if they had kind of, you know, knee jerk reacted or gone off the rails and made it worse. It's those tangible, oh, instead of doing this like I would have done, I'm going to do this. I'm going to try this instead. And then, look, it's a it's a little better. It's not as bad as it would have been before. And it's just those little pieces that we can do every day from those lists that you give us that are so helpful. So it's such a gift.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:56:32] Thank you.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:34] Yeah. And having the words to say is really important. Yeah, I think that's everything.

Michelle Maros: [00:56:38] So thank you so much, Nedra.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:41] Thank you. Nedra, this is as been so special.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:56:42] You're welcome. Thank you so much for having me. The work you do is incredibly important. And to see a mother daughter duo doing it, that is amazing.

Michelle Maros: [00:56:53] Thank you. We've been on a journey.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:56] Yes. And we love doing it together. And I think it's why it's so important to be able to for us to be able to work together and work through our own family stuff, but be able then to have someone like you. Come on, Nedra, to really talk about the these are the things you can say. These are the things you can do and really validate that family relationships are hard and difficult and that this is not easy. I think, for me, all of my years. But I think many of the messages that I get is we make it seem like it's okay that things are not okay. And, you know, in my generation, way, many years ago, you know, it didn't feel that way. And I think your message is always that almost like this is normal, like what you're going through and

how you're feeling. Not only are you not the only one, you're really being an actual human being. And I think that's been so important. And that's why your work, whenever we talk about it and the work that we do locally and online, it's really that helping people feel like they're part of a community and a family that is okay and that it's normal to have all of these things going on all the time. No one has it all together. Yeah, and your work really helps us feel like that's okay. And then you're one, two, three or the way you, if you encounter this, then say that is really helpful because many times we don't have the words. And I know for me sometimes I don't and it's really helpful. So thank you so much for being you. You are such a bright light in the world today. And with your messages and your energy and your spirit, you're really uplifting a lot of people, especially Michelle and I. Yeah, especially this past year, you've been our lifeline.

Nedra Tawwab: [00:58:38] Your welcome and thank you.

Michelle Maros: [00:58:39] Thank you. So again, if you haven't yet, make sure you are following Nedra on social media. We'll link everything in the show notes to make it easy for you. But truly, her social media presence is a gift. But of course, her books Drama Free, which is available now and Set Boundaries, Find Peace, which has been out for a couple years now. Both are very life changing books. We've given Set Boundaries, Find Peace to our high school students and they love to... It's amazing to watch young people take in the concept of boundaries from a young age. So that's certainly is a wonderful thing to give as a gift as well. So we'll link all of that in the show notes. Thank you so much again, Nedra, for joining us in this conversation. We're so grateful for you. Thank you, Mom, for being a part of this conversation, as always. And thank you all for listening to the show. We're so grateful to our listeners. If you haven't yet, please make sure you're liked and subscribed to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. And if you haven't yet, give us a five star rating on iTunes or Spotify. If you'd like to stay in touch with us, ask us questions, give us future podcast topic ideas. You can connect with us on social media at Peaceful_Barb, at Michelle Maros, at Barb Knows Best Pod. That is the best way to do so. Lastly, if you haven't yet, make sure you go check out our new Barb Knows Best Podcast Merch. Some of the colors are only available for a limited time, so I know we have holidays. Mother's Day coming up. Perfect gift. Cozy gift for all. So we'll also link that in the show notes. Thank you so much again for listening. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful community and we will chat with you next week because as we know, Barb Knows Best. Bye.

