

Episode 79 – Cultivating Assertive Communication
Barb Knows Best™
Episode Transcripts

Michelle Maros: [00:00:11] Hi, everyone. Hi, friends. Welcome back to Barb Knows Best, the podcast. It's a great day to be back in the recording studio with you, Mom. Barbara Schmidt.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:25] You're so funny. Hello. I love you so much. You are so cute.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:28] I always try to think of different ways to make the intro sound more appealing because I feel like I just say the same thing over and over again. But I guess also that's kind of what you have to do. Yeah, but hello.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:39] Hello. How are you?

Michelle Maros: [00:00:40] I'm great. How are you?

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:42] Good. Well, we have a we have a very good topic today and I think it's something that people. I mean, I think all the things we talk about are of benefit. But this one in particular, because I think this is at the crux of a lot of misunderstandings for people in life and difficulties. So I'm excited about it.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:58] Well, this one was also a listener request.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:01] Yeah. Oh, that's right. I forgot. Yes. A listener request.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:04] Like you said in our last week's episode. We do read your requests and we try our best to incorporate them all in some way, shape or form. So here we are this week with communication. Assertive communication. Effective communication. How we can really communicate our needs, our wants, our wishes, our boundaries effectively. I personally think that communication is like the glue that holds life together. And if we can learn how to communicate in a way that's aligned with who we are and what we want, and that's clear, concise, but also kind, it can help us move through life in such a not easier way. But. In a better way.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:52] Agreed. Communication is everything. It's what, I mean, I think we're in this life with relationships where in relationship with everything and especially people but when relationship with everything. So if we have difficulties communicating our needs or our wants or our desires or our thoughts or opinions, it can be a roadblock. I think it has been for me. And so the idea that we that you don't have to be born a good communicator or someone that can have effective, assertive communication, that you can actually cultivate this tool, you can actually cultivate this skill. It really is a skill and become a strong, confident communicator. And that's what we're going to put forth today.

Michelle Maros: [00:02:37] That's what we can't communicate what we're trying to say, but we're going to talk about communication today.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:42] No, it's good. It's all good. And, you know, everything that we talk about doesn't mean that you can do this like step one, two, three, four and be done and never have to look at it again because communication can be difficult. I mean, I think sometimes we fall back into passive or aggressive or not so sure of ourselves or unconfident communications because it's hard. Communicating an effective way is hard.

Michelle Maros: [00:03:09] It is hard and I think it has a lot of layers to it and levels to it. And we're going to go into that today. But I just want everybody to know who's listening that. You know, some things in life were born with, and it's an innate skill that we can just tap into. But some things I really do feel like we can cultivate and build upon with our conscious awareness and practice. And I think that communication is one of those skills that we can cultivate through practicing it in a way that we learn how to do it really well. Like practice makes not perfect, but practice makes us better. And I know when I think back to myself when I was younger, high school student, teenager, young adult, even in college, maybe even after like a little bit post college like I would. Always think that I was a bad communicator and that I couldn't speak up for what I wanted. And I think it also went hand in hand with my difficulty that I had in making decisions. You know, when you don't necessarily or aren't tapping into what you want, how can you communicate from that place? And so I always thought I was a bad communicator. I thought that, like, that's just. An attribute to who I am. And now that I'm a little bit older, I have realized that. That's not true. And if you're someone who can relate to that thinking that you're

not a good communicator, like strike that from your vocabulary because it really is something that we all can work on and cultivate for ourselves. And I've noticed how much better I feel about myself and my life and my choices and even the difficult aspects of life when I communicate in a strong, assertive, kind, clear way.

Barb Schmidt: [00:05:23] I love that and I love that you said strike that....

Michelle Maros: [00:05:27] Like you always say.

Barb Schmidt: [00:05:28] Strike that from your vocabulary. Yes. I mean, don't allow the mind to tell you that you're not a good communicator or you don't know how to communicate. That made me think of this episode today as like a little class. You know, you're in school at a little class because we can learn and we can know all the little tricks or all the little tools or all the little skills that we maybe hadn't thought about that are going to help you, that are going to be like, Oh yeah, that makes sense. Oh, that makes sense. Because I what I love about assertive, effective communication is when I'm actually doing it. What I love about it so much is it's the one thing we have control over. We have very little control over anything in this life. We already know that everything on the outside world is out of our control, trying to change other people out of our control. What life sends our way out of our control. But we have total control on how we're going to communicate, what we're going to say, what we want, how we want things to go. We have all that control. So I believe if you if you can start to learn to be assertive in your communication, you can. That is power. For me, it is power. When I when I feel like I'm in control, we can be control. We are in control of ourselves. It is a place that we can assert our control. And we're also being honest. I believe it's the one place we're being honest with ourselves and with others. So for me, this is such a beautiful way to live life. And one of my highest ideals is that I can show up with some assertive, as you said, Michelle assertive, kind, confident, strong conversation or communication. Doesn't always go that way, but it is one of my ideals. So I think this is going to be really fascinating to move through the idea of how do we... What are some of the tips to become an assertive communicator who is strong and confident?

Michelle Maros: [00:07:25] Yeah, and I think even just the word assertive was always kind of triggering for me. I think as someone who was very shy as a kid and very quiet and, you know, a

people pleaser of sorts. I remember. I don't even know if you know this, but I remember, like, my dad would always say, like, you need to be more assertive and present yourself in a more assertive way because I was very, you know.

Barb Schmidt: [00:07:59] Reserved.

Michelle Maros: [00:08:00] Reserved. And I remember when he would tell like I can, you know, you just some things in your brain are just they stick out. And I think it was like coming home from tennis or something in the car. He would say that to me. And in my mind I'm like, No, assertive means mean and bad and too strong and forceful and people aren't going to like me. Like, I kind of resented him in that moment for suggesting I be that way because I'm like, No, that's not who I am. But. Now that I really can digest what it really means and the power that comes from it. Like, I don't know. I guess I'm kind of grateful that he planted that seed all those years ago about being assertive. Like when I hear the word assertive, I think of him, which is kind of funny and random and also kind of weird because I don't necessarily think that he was the most assertive person on the planet. Maybe. I guess those who can't do teach.

Barb Schmidt: [00:09:01] Yeah, we teach what we need to do for ourselves.

Michelle Maros: [00:09:06] Anyways, so I think if you're someone who is a people pleaser or shy or more reserved or not necessarily used to speaking up for yourself, this concept or topic of speaking and communicating in an assertive way can be like, Wait, you know, I'm just going to skip this one because that's not who I am and I'm not going to be that way and I don't need to be that way. But I promise this is for you because I can relate to that. And I think we're going to break this down in a way that can help you to understand that being assertive isn't bad. It's confident, it's strong.

Barb Schmidt: [00:09:39] It's being yourself, being your true self, being honest with yourself.

Michelle Maros: [00:09:42] Being in your power, and then also adding on to that, knowing that. If someone doesn't like your assertiveness, that's not really your problem. Which is also something that I struggled with.

Barb Schmidt: [00:09:55] Well, because I think sometimes assertive. I agree with you, Michelle It gets a little bit of a bad rap sometimes because I think some people interpret assertive as being aggressive.

Michelle Maros: [00:10:04] And like unlikable and like, oh, you're too assertive, you're unlikable.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:08] And those are two separate. There's assertive, there's passive, there's aggressive, we're talking assertive, which means most people love other assertive people. Those are the people that are successful. Because people love people. People are drawn to other people that know what they want,

Michelle Maros: [00:10:27] Clarity,

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:27] Clarity. Able to say, Oh, wow, you know, I really love that you invited me to do that, but I can't make it. Thank you so much. People love that because we all want to do that. We all want to be able to say no in the kindest way possible. But it's not. We get so caught up in the brain and we think that we're not going to be liked or we're not worthy or we have to be more we have to come up with some kind of an excuse and be a little bit aggressive so they don't push back at us and none of that works as effectively as just being exactly who you are, being honest, saying, I'm really sorry. I'm happy that you invited me, but I can't go. No excuses, no explanations. I mean, I said somebody that you're really, really, really close and you want to. Yeah. So it's very interesting. And I think I think these are all really helpful reminders and ways to start establishing yourself as a very confident, kind, strong, as you said, Michelle communicator, and you'll start to see the benefits of that. The biggest two biggest benefits for me of that is one other people. It's a conversation that you can have and other people don't feel attacked or don't feel that they need to put their guard up for the most part in an assertive kind conversation. And the other thing is that it builds your capacity to feel good about yourself, to like yourself, to understand that, Wow, I can do this. This really feels good. I'm owning my power, but I'm also being kind at the same time. I'm taking care of me, but I'm also wishing others well, too. It's that whole thing the way we. I think we all really want to live that way.

Michelle Maros: [00:12:08] Yeah. I mean, like we always say, it's simple, but not always easy. You're like, Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:12:15] Life is hard.

Michelle Maros: [00:12:16] Yeah. So what I want to do in this episode is kind of go over some simple, helpful, hopefully tips to help us all become a better communicator and also, like, how we can deal with. Maybe the people in our lives that would push back on the communication because it's like it's all well and good when I can like go up to you and say, Hey, mom, I don't like it when you text me at 11:00 at night on a Saturday about work stuff. I would really love it if you could possibly hold that until a working hour, which is something that happened very early on in our working relationship. And you can say, Hey, Michelle. Wow. I had no idea. I didn't even think about it. Thanks so much for bringing that to my attention. I will work on that and that's relatively easy. But I think sometimes when you go to someone and say, Hey, this doesn't work for me and they say, Too bad, sorry, I don't care, then what do you do?

Barb Schmidt: [00:13:25] Yeah, well, I think you just let into one of the first tips or one of the first skills you can develop is your body language and your intonation and the words that you're choosing. Those three all kind of go together with what you just said when you called me.

Michelle Maros: [00:13:38] We'll get to that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:13:39] Oh, I thought you were into the tips right now. I know. Okay. Anyway, you were very I know you were just saying it right now, but you were very kind. You go, you know, Mom, this this doesn't work for me. This you're calling me at 10:00 because I had no awareness.

Michelle Maros: [00:13:53] Well, I just meant, like it's easy when you're talking to someone. Like you're an easy person. I think for me to set boundaries with, I mean, obviously, boundaries are communicating. Your needs isn't always easy if you're not used to doing it. But I didn't have a lot of fear of blowback from you because you're my mom. You're understanding. You're a kind person. Like you said, you just truly had no idea. And I didn't necessarily think that you were trying to be. Acting that way to annoy me. You just didn't know. But I mean, so I said all that to

say that. You know, it can be easy to practice with people who are like that. But we all have people in our lives and in our work and in our spaces that are not going to be that way. So I love to give people some extra tips to manage some of those more challenging conversations with communication.

Barb Schmidt: [00:14:48] And you just said the key word, I love what you just said, practice. Yeah, that's my whole life. So I think that is key. You you practice with me and I practice with you. So it's key to have someone in your life that you what you just said is just so beautiful that you don't feel that you'll get that pushback and you feel confident that I can say and I'm doing it in a way that's kind and that's, you know, my intonation. All the things are right and I'm just letting me know. And so all of that matters. So the other person is not taking it personally as an attack or I did something wrong or internalizing it. I just said, Well, I had no idea. So it's really good to practice. It's good to have someone in your life that you can practice with in communication.

Michelle Maros: [00:15:33] Absolutely.

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:33] I think it's actually key.

Michelle Maros: [00:15:36] Yeah, Lots of thoughts on this. Let's take a quick break. And we're back. So I have some helpful tips of becoming a better communicator that have really helped me personally. So I thought we could go through them and kind of digest and pick apart and talk about it. Sound good?

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:57] Sounds great. This is one of those conversations where I actually wish we had a live audience where we could we could interact with a live audience because this would be one that would be so fun to do role playing or to do. I think there would be a lots and lots of questions and okay, that sounds good. But then what about this? I just feel like this would be one that would be so interesting and so fun to have a live audience.

Michelle Maros: [00:16:24] Well thanks for throwing that out into the universe, listeners. Should we have live shows? Yeah, let us know. And if you want live shows, let us know where we should come. Yeah, you know, we're ready to hit the road. Okay, but I agree. That would be

cool. So the first thing that I think is really important for communicating clearly and assertively and in a way that serves you is knowing who you are and what you want. I feel like this is like. The first thing in everything that we talk about. But I know for myself, when I lived in a realm of self doubt and uncertainty and confusion and overwhelm and really like chameleon lifestyle, which I really want to talk about in an episode that I just, that just came to me like I really was a chameleon for a lot of my 20s. Like I just blended into whatever situation I was in and did not give any care to whether or not that was actually who I was or what I wanted, which all of those things lead to. Like, how can you communicate from that place, really, if you think about it, I mean, obviously we're human beings who can. Many of us can speak and use our words, but if you don't know who you are, what you want, what matters to you, you know, all those questions that we talk about, the importance of asking yourself on a regular basis. How can you really share in a way that's like deeply rooted within yourself what matters to you? I know how impossible it is.

Barb Schmidt: [00:18:01] It is impossible. It's also hard to discover who you are, and it's a lot of times difficult and challenging to figure out what you want. So it's not it's a very complex process, I think, to know who you are and what you want, but knowing that that's what you need to do, that's what you need in order to be able to have good, effective communication. So I think sometimes for me, it really is about looking at what you value. What do you feel is right for you or what feels like it's something that is important for you. And then figuring once you figure that out, like, what do I value? What am I trying to get here? What do I want here in this conversation? Then you can start to learn. Then the the skill would be to learn how to voice your needs, as you're saying. Michelle. What do you what do you need? What do you want? Know who you are and wants confidently. And I think that's for me has been the whole key. What am I trying to get out of this conversation that I'm going to have, especially if it's a difficult one? What do I need? What do I want? You know, who am I, what are my what do I value in myself? And then not expecting the other person to have those same needs, wants and values. And so really being your tone of voice, I think the body language, all the things have to matter a lot. Being able to be confident and knowing that you're expressing yourself in a very more positive, confident way and not expecting the other person to understand what you're saying and not expecting the other person to agree with what you're saying.

Michelle Maros: [00:19:33] Yeah, I think that's a key word is expectation. You can communicate clearly and assertively, but don't have an expectation of how the other person is going to receive something. Because like you said, we can't control anything. We can't control how people react or respond. So releasing any expectation like I guess that is also something that I'm working on for myself is like, I think just because I'm working on being a better communicator, that means that all conversations are going to go well and having that like high expectation that because I've done all of these tips that we're going to talk about, that means that conversations are just going to be seamless. And that's not realistic because, yeah, I can work on my side of the street, but that doesn't mean that the other side of the street. Is going to match or it's going to go the way that I think that it should. So expectations is a big thing with communication.

Barb Schmidt: [00:20:31] Definitely, And it can. I think when we have those expectations or if things aren't going the way we would like for them to go. And not staying calm or not staying rooted in what it is that we're needing from this conversation. It can get aggressive. It can get more difficult than possibly that it needed to get or it was already going to be a difficult conversation. Then it got even worse. So one of the things that's helped me the most, I would have to say expectations, absolutely. Top of the list and also top of the list is using "I" whenever I say you, I always can get a little cringe inside of me like, oh my goodness, this is not going to go well. Because when someone says you did this, you did that, it an affront. It's kind of attacking. You start to feel our our energy gets risen and I start, okay, what I did what I can't wait to hear what it is you're going to say that I did. You know, it's kind of like that whole everything. I believe everything shifts and I get a little wall up or I get a little gate up. So I feel this way or I need this or I need that, or I would love for us to be able to do this.

Michelle Maros: [00:21:45] Or this does not work for me.

Barb Schmidt: [00:21:45] Or I can't. And I was going to just say this. I about a few months ago, I had a very I knew it was going to be a very difficult work conversation with with an organization. And I knew that what I needed and I knew what I wanted. And it was a very they knew what they needed and they knew what they wanted. And at the end of the day, that's exactly what I said. I can't do it. I don't really want to do it. I want to take a break or I want to take a pause. So I think that staying grounded in in yourself, as you were saying,

Michelle is so it's really critical. What do I want? What do I need and what can I actually do so that you're not agreeing to something at the end of the day? And then you drive home. I've done this many times and you drive home and say, What did I just do? I don't want to do this anymore or I can't, you know, I just not I can't. It's just I don't want this one more thing in my life.

Barb Schmidt: [00:22:41] It's time for me to take a break, or it's time for me to take a pause.

Michelle Maros: [00:22:44] Out of alignment.

Barb Schmidt: [00:22:44] Out of alignment. Very good. So I think all that kind of goes together. Yeah. And understanding you can't control other people. And I think in this conversation we both learned that they couldn't control me, I couldn't control them. And so we had to agree to what the resolution was at the end. And I walked away from there feeling good. They didn't agree. I didn't agree. It just was it's so nice when it doesn't get heated. So really trying to stay with I knowing what you want, what you need, speaking for yourself and not having the expectation you can walk away with something, agreeing to disagree or being okay and feeling good. Yeah. And feeling like, yeah, other people might be disappointed or you might be disappointed if you didn't get what you want, but at least, it was a good conversation and you know. Yeah. You didn't walk away from there. Still not knowing or dirty. Yes, you got it. I love it. Michelle.

Michelle Maros: [00:23:42] Well, because that goes into the next piece is like to really say what you mean from that clarity and like don't play games or don't be wishy washy or don't try and, you know, soften a blow with with different words than what you actually mean. Because I've found this whole list is again, stuff that I've really struggled with. But when I'm not clear or when I try and say something. That's not totally. What? I mean, like softening the blow or using a word that maybe won't be so. Harsh. It makes it worse because it's not clear. So you have to keep going back and forth. And I remember. For for much of my life. But in situations where, like, maybe I got invited to do something and I didn't necessarily want to do it, And it would be kind of my instinct to just make up some sort of excuse like, Oh, I would I would always use you. Like, Oh, my mom needs me to do something or whatever. But when I wasn't being totally clear and kind of using like wishy washy. Reasons that opened the door for the people to be like, Oh,

well, I could do another day, you know, or, Oh, if you don't want to do this, let's do this, you know? So instead of really getting to the root of what's clear and true for you, it opens the door to like. You know, all these side conversations that aren't really addressing what is happening for you. So when you say what you mean and don't play games and don't try and sugarcoat a situation, obviously be kind.

Barb Schmidt: [00:25:38] Or don't try to manipulate.

Michelle Maros: [00:25:39] Or yeah, don't try to manipulate. It saves everyone's time. And. It's just people appreciate that more. Yeah, people might be disappointed, especially if you're saying like, you can't do something or you're not able to attend something or whatever the thing might be, the disappointment might be there, but the confusion and like, I don't know where I stand with you or I don't really know what you meant is a way worse feeling for me than being disappointed in a moment.

Barb Schmidt: [00:26:13] Well, and I also think I'm thinking about some of those experiences that you were talking about when you were when you were a little child or a young child. And I remember one of your friends saying to me, I don't think Michelle likes me.

Michelle Maros: [00:26:28] That happened.

Barb Schmidt: [00:26:30] Yeah. I think I told you that. I don't think Michelle likes me. And I think it goes to what you're saying if you're wishy washy or you're not really taking or if people aren't clear or not feeling well, what does she think or what does she feel or what is happening? I think that and I think that happens as adults, too. Yeah. I mean, I have a friend several years ago that came up to me and said, I don't think so-and-so likes me. She never invites me to any of her things, blah, blah, blah, all those things. We had this long conversation and I think a lot of it. Was really kind of about the friends, the way she presented herself in terms of speaking. And I think people were very tentative because they weren't sure that she would be okay with it or whatever the situation was. So it is really important to, you know, be clear with your words and say what you mean and not not try to manipulate the situation feeling like you have to say things that don't really mean anything. But maybe they'll if I say this, they'll do it for me or they'll be okay with it or they'll understand what I'm saying. Really, being clear is so important. I

agree with you and understanding that. I think that idea of of staying in a calm tone and staying truthful.

Michelle Maros: [00:27:42] And being intentional with what you're saying.

Barb Schmidt: [00:27:44] And being intentional. That's one of the things you talk about a lot too, being intentional with your words. You know, words matter.

Michelle Maros: [00:27:51] I really feel like the words that we use are incredibly important and. I have tried really hard in this chapter of my life to be very specific with the words that I choose because. They matter.

Barb Schmidt: [00:28:10] You have been.

Michelle Maros: [00:28:12] I think that's why maybe I speak slowly on this podcast, too, because, like, I'm always trying to make sure that I'm saying what I actually mean and what I'm actually trying to say instead of just I don't know. Sometimes it's easy to speak on autopilot where you just like word vomit. Things come out and it can be misconstrued or maybe not really what I'm trying to say, but I feel so much better when I'm intentional with my words, like I know where I was coming from with that and what I was trying to say, and I can stand by it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:28:43] I think one of the other things that you do that's very important and you've helped me with this a lot is when when the conversation has taken a more energetic tone where it's it's really it's gotten heightened in the the energy and and not in a positive way where it's gotten a little bit where the feelings are running a little bit rampant and where things are starting to heat up and all of that, you will say, let's, you know, I want to pause this conversation. I don't want to talk about this anymore. Let's come back to it. And for someone like me who's always wanting to get to the end of something, sometimes I would say, no, come on. I'm we're fine. We're fine. And you say, nope, let's come back to it. Please, let's just come back to it. And I think that's important to be able to do that and to understand if something's getting escalated. It's not really the time or the place where you could actually have some kind of a good. Assertive, effective conversation. And I think, too, the other thing I was going to say

with being intentional with your words. I we just had this conversation yesterday, I think. One of the things as I have grown into an adult, one of the things that.

Michelle Maros: [00:29:53] Adult?

Barb Schmidt: [00:29:55] As I'm an adult now. I mean, all my 66 years, one of the things that really bothers me that has bothered me so much, I think doing this work, talking about effective and assertive communication, is that adage that so many people have used. I don't know if the young generation knows this or not, but certainly it was my generation. Maybe yours too. Michelle sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.

Michelle Maros: [00:30:21] Oh, yeah, You were just talking about that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:30:22] Yeah, I think that. I think that's a double edged sword. I get it when you're saying that, don't take the words of people personally. It's their own opinions and it's their own stuff. But words can hurt us.

Michelle Maros: [00:30:37] Yeah. Words are powerful.

Barb Schmidt: [00:30:38] Words are powerful. So if you've heard that before, try to take that out of your brain. Take that out of your vocabulary because it's not true. Words can hurt us. And as much as we try to give people a pass and say, oh, well, it's not about me, it's about them. That's their opinion. It's not mine. I'm not going to take it personally. We do get hurt by it. We get very hurt by it. So I, I think take that out. If you grew up with that or if you've heard that because words matter, words are a big deal.

Michelle Maros: [00:31:07] They are. They really are. And I think that's a good thing to. Bring up because I hadn't heard that in a long time. But that was something that. We always said as kids. Yeah. The next thing I think is really important when you're communicating is to be present. Obviously we talk about this in every aspect of of life, but especially if you're having a conversation that you might feel uneasy about or it's a difficult conversation or whatever might be going on. Being present for it and showing up for it in that way of honoring the time and

space of you and the person that you're talking to can really make a big difference in a conversation and it can really help mitigate miscommunication.

Barb Schmidt: [00:32:02] And I think that also goes to what is your body language? I mean, are you actually open and receptive to the conversation? All these kind of intertwined together in my mind for how I look at conversations, if I'm looking at my watch or I've got my phone sitting in my lap or a phone call comes in and I interrupt the conversation and take the call, I've got the television on or whatever is happening with the computer in front of me. Yeah, being present, showing the person, especially, you know, easy conversations are easy conversations. We think you should be present at every conversation. Like that's the really be in, be where your feet are and do what you're doing right now. Don't be doing anything else. Do what you're doing. If it's an important thing that you're doing or don't do it at all. It's really that is kind of the way that I work as an ideal in my life. I don't always practice it. I fall short sometimes, but it really is important. And especially if you're having a conversation that's going to be difficult. Don't have all those distractions around you. If you're sending the message that it doesn't matter, you're sending the message to let the other person just, okay, this doesn't really matter that much. It's not that important. So whatever she's saying or whatever he's saying, I can take it with a grain of salt. Maybe we'll just have another conversation like this. It just it really does. You talk a lot Michelle about we save so much time and energy when we do the conversation and be in the present moment. So it's really, really, really important to show up with your presence, with your full presence and show up, you know, looking at your tone of voice, looking at, you know, are you looking around the room, are you distracted, Are you interrupting the person? You know, be present and be graceful, I think really is the word that came to me because I know.

Michelle Maros: [00:33:45] Sometimes being present in conversations can be difficult because, you know, a phone or a distraction can kind of feel like a security blanket. Like, oh, I'll just look down at this if I feel uncomfortable or I'll check my email as a buffer or whatever. But it really makes a huge difference if you can just really practice not doing that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:34:07] Well, I'll give you a tip. When I'm in a really important conversation, I mean one where I really want to make sure that the person has my full attention. If they're looking at their phone or if they're on their watch or if they're just kind of wandering around, I'll

say, Oh, is this not a good time? I can reschedule. Especially conversations that could go south or could be really heated. Oh, if this isn't a good time, let's reschedule. Oh, and 100% of the time. Oh, no, no, no. It's okay. And then if it happens again, I'll say it really seems like you're busy. And maybe this isn't a good time. I'd like to reschedule, because I think what we have to talk about is really, really important. So I understand. Instead of What's the matter with you? Why are you on your phone? Why are you on the computer? Whatever it is, just say, Oh, okay. You know, giving the person the benefit of the doubt, but also.

Michelle Maros: [00:34:59] Speaking up about it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:35:01] Yeah. And saying what you need. Yeah. Because not being there is never a good thing. It's never. It can't go well if you're not all there or if the other person's not all there. It can't. Something's going to get lost in communication or fall through the cracks. It's just the way it is. So speak up and say.

Michelle Maros: [00:35:16] I think it's a respect thing, too. I mean, I know that society is has changed a lot with technology, but I remember growing up. Uh, we weren't allowed to have phones at the table for dinner or for meals or, you know, there was more of that expectation. Like if you're with someone, you're with them. And I know now we're like, you know, connected to technology 24/7. So it's a little bit harder to unplug when having conversations like that. But I do think that people can feel. That underlying respect when you're just like, I'm with you. Whatever is happening on my phone can wait until we're done.

Barb Schmidt: [00:35:57] That's why I love my tip. Don't say to the person I'm feeling disrespected. I know you're not saying that, but I just wanted to clarify that it is disrespectful. You're absolutely right. And we feel disrespected.

Michelle Maros: [00:36:12] But sometimes people don't know, because I even think maybe like the younger generation didn't grow up in that era of like, knowing that that that my generation, your generation might take that as disrespect because things have changed so much. Yeah. Sorry.

Barb Schmidt: [00:36:26] No, no, no. You're right.

Michelle Maros: [00:36:27] I just think it's interesting to see as society changes, what is actually considered respectful or not, I think has also changed.

Barb Schmidt: [00:36:35] I agree completely.

Michelle Maros: [00:36:37] Anyways, being present really, really makes a big difference. But I think also the next thing too is being responsible for your communication. Like I take my side of the street seriously. You take your side of the street seriously and really taking responsibility and not being passive. I think passive communication is where things really go south and being responsible for showing up for your part of whatever the conversation may be is really powerful as well. And not just sitting there being like, okay, okay. Whatever by you know.

Barb Schmidt: [00:37:10] Yeah. Know for sur. You're having a conversation for a reason. So really understanding what's the reason, what's the outcome that I would like to have. How do I feel about this? What do I want to say about this? It's all about I going back to the I. It's all about I. I think we should put kind of those little short ones in the show notes. Actually, now that I'm saying it just if you can. Sure. If you can stay in the eye and stay calm and not be attacking. It I believe I would say probably 90% of my communications when I when I am in that space. Work out? Well, I don't always get what I want. As I said before, they don't always go with their want, but it works out. We have an understanding. We have maybe an agreement.

Michelle Maros: [00:37:53] Yeah. And I personally feel so much better when I'm being responsible for taking responsibility for my actions. I don't know. I just like. I like. I like that dynamic.

Barb Schmidt: [00:38:04] Well, yeah, taking responsibility is how you're going to show up. How am I going to show up for this? Yeah. What are. Really. That's why we talk so much about transition times and pause times. If you're going, you're getting ready to go into a into a conversation. I would say any conversation. But if you're getting ready to go into a conversation, that might be a little bit difficult. Sit with yourself for a minute and ask yourself these questions. Now what do I want? What do I believe? What do I feel? What? What can happen here? And just stay calm. Just try to eliminate some of the uncertainty and certainly

don't go into it feeling like I have to have my way here in this moment. You can start to express your feelings about something, especially if it's something that you absolutely have to have or need. And it may take a few conversations for that to happen. Not all of a sudden in that moment, the person's going to say, Oh my gosh, I mean, it can happen, but the person's going to say, Oh my gosh, I can't believe that's happening. I can't believe you feel this way. I will change right now.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:02] Yeah. And like not making excuses too. I think for me, what I mean when being responsible is if someone says to me. You said this, and this is how I felt. Being responsible for what I said, even if it's not what I intended to make them feel and not making excuses for it again, even if it's not what I intended, even if I didn't mean it or whatever, I can say, okay. Uh, yeah, I did say that. And I'm really sorry. It just is so much cleaner. Like, I don't know. I just appreciate it so much more as I've gotten older.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:40] And I think that's something to practice with someone that you can trust, like you. And I feel like I say that to you all the time. You'll say...., Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:46] Yeah. You'll say things that were coming to my mind were all the conversations.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:50] You'll say something and I'll say, Well, that isn't what I meant at all. I'm sorry. Okay? Sorry. Because you spoke up and told me how you took it. Yeah. I think if you just stay silent, the other person's not going to know exactly. You will speak up and say, Wow, that really hurt my feelings. And I can tell if you're kidding or you're just being funny because we we have that kind of that kind of relationship as well. And I can tell when it actually hurt your feelings or I said it in a way that you didn't understand it at all. So don't this leads into the next one. So ask questions, I think, which is what you do sometimes with me or I do with you. When you say that really hurt my feelings, I'll ask you. Oh, my gosh, what what exactly did I say? Because sometimes people are unaware. Sometimes I'm unaware. We're unaware sometimes. Oh, my gosh, what did I say? And sometimes you'll repeat it back to me and I won't have a clue. I will say I didn't say that.

Michelle Maros: [00:40:40] Yeah, If you're not clear, ask questions because that's one of the biggest. Ways that the wires get crossed and feelings get hurt and miscommunication happens is, you know, you say something and maybe I don't want to ask a question because I'm like, oh, I'll figure it out or whatever. Asking the question in the moment also saves everyone's time, saves hurt feelings, and also remembering, too, that it's okay to be vulnerable to ask a question. Like, for me, I would always avoid asking questions because like, I just wanted the situation to be over. I didn't want to be viewed as like. Annoying or a problem or like prolonging a situation. But if you're feeling unclear or you need more information or you're feeling like things aren't quite good for you, like complete with the conversation, you can be vulnerable and you can ask questions to get that clarity. You know, those are things that are normal and okay. And again, I really respect when people show up for themselves that way.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:51] Totally Michelle because I think it's that's one of the things that I used to struggle with a lot. I didn't want to be thought of as not knowing something or stupid. And I remember being in a serious conversation with, in a relationship and the person saying to me, How do you not understand what I'm saying? You know, or I said it pretty clearly, What's wrong with you? Kind of where I think I've said this in other where I'm the problem. So you're right, it can be very uncomfortable. It can be very uncomfortable to be vulnerable sometimes. So it's important, though, that you stand up for yourself, as you said, and be confident and not take it personally. If the other person says, hey, how do you not know that? Well, so what I say now is, well, I don't know how I don't know it, but I don't know it. So could you explain it again? You know, I kind of make light of it, even though it's disrespectful and it's not okay when people do that. It doesn't. I mean, sometimes things aren't worth the battle of. How do you not know that you're disrespecting? Yeah, if it's something very serious, this is not what I'm saying. But most of the time it's not. And I'm just getting my feelings hurt because this person is being whatever. I don't even know what words to use, but it's not worth it. So you have to really understand, is it worth it in this moment for me to, you know, take offense,

Michelle Maros: [00:43:10] Right.

Michelle Maros: [00:43:11] Or to say something, but also being careful. I love what you said. Michelle it being vulnerable is a good way to connect and it really is good. I think people like that when they say, Hey, I don't really understand. Could you explain it a little bit more?

Because it shows the other person that you really care and you want to be able to meet their needs or you want to be able to understand you're not just trying to blow them off and say, okay, we're done. Got it?

Michelle Maros: [00:43:36] Yeah, I really do think vulnerability connects us, of course, with the caveat that we're assuming that in these kinds of conversations you're talking to people that care about you and that have your best interest. Obviously, you know, manipulators or abusers or narcissists, they will prey on the vulnerabilities. So that's a different conversation.

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:57] No conversation is possible. Well, it's hard with the narcissist for sure. And to use Brené Brown's thing, you know, making sure. I love that you said that Michelle making sure that the people are trustworthy. You can be vulnerable because they're trustworthy. They're not going to use it against you or be narcissistic about it.

Michelle Maros: [00:44:16] Yeah. Um, the next important piece is literally the foundation of my life these days is telling the truth. Because I have learned that when I can tell that someone's lying to me, it's a huge trigger. I like cannot I go AWOL? So if I can sense that someone is not being truthful or like a half truth or sugarcoating things. It does not go down well for me. And I also don't like it when I do it to other people. I feel weird about it if I'm like like going back to the situation with friends inviting me over and saying, Oh, making up a story, that's not really true. I just don't like it. It's not in my own integrity. It's not an alignment. It doesn't feel good when you're on the receiving end of it, and it's just a waste of time. There's a way to tell the truth without being harmful and hurtful. And again, there's a difference between being disappointed. And hurt hurtful. And I can I can be okay with disappointment, but I don't think we need to sugarcoat it so that we can avoid hurt feelings.

Barb Schmidt: [00:45:42] I wish I had a recording of a conversation that you had. I think you were out of college. I think you had already graduated college. A conversation you had where you had to have the most difficult conversation, one of the most difficult conversations that you could have with another person. You had to tell this other person a truth that you knew was going to destroy them or you knew that it was going to be really, really, really hard. You are so much always in alignment with truth. And so you. I remember standing in the bedroom with you because I know you were scared. And I remember standing in the bedroom and I started to

leave. You go, No. Could you just stay? And I remember standing in the bedroom, and you were brilliant. I have said this to you so many times, and I wish that I had a recording of it. You were brilliant. You were so calm. You were so truthful. You were so in your in the space. And she the person went off on you. And it was difficult. It was just one of the most difficult conversations you could ever have. As I said before, you were brilliant. She was not having it. You stayed calm. You stayed all the things. It was unbelievable. I had never been able to have a conversation like that where it went so well on your end. And she I mean, she had to take in the information that you were giving and you handled it so beautifully and so calmly, but also so kindly and giving her all the grace and giving her everything and not you didn't feel so attached to you had to do all the things that you did, but you didn't feel attached to the fact that this was probably not going to go well. And ultimately it didn't. And the person, you know, the story goes.

Michelle Maros: [00:47:41] I actually feel like I wrote a blog about communication. Probably after that conversation.

Barb Schmidt: [00:47:46] It was so amazing. And you lost the friend. They never spoke to you again.

Michelle Maros: [00:47:53] Yeah. That's why it's like you really just have to be clear with yourself and not have the expectation.

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:00] Yeah, you handled it so beautifully. I just. I remember being in awe about that conversation for weeks. I think I said it to you everyday.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:06] Well, we're still talking about it. And that was like ten years ago.

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:09] At least ten years ago, probably. I just I remember every day saying to you because it was just the epitome of what we're talking about today on this episode. So yeah, you just can't you have to be okay with not trying to control the other person's reaction or the other person's behavior or the other person's opinions or the other person's actions. You have to be okay with it. As long as you are in your integrity and kind and saying truth, you have to be okay with what the other side is going to say or do. You can't control it.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:42] Yeah. And I think another big piece of this is to know when it's time to be silent and listen rather than being in that knee jerk reaction. And I think in this conversation that you're talking about, I spent a lot of it just listening to what she had to say and listening to her feelings about what I had told her or how I had handled the situation. And just really knowing, having the discernment to know when it's time to speak, when it's time to listen, not talking over somebody, not being super defensive. I think that. Knowing, having that art of knowing when to do what creates a much more conducive space for conversing.

Barb Schmidt: [00:49:23] Yeah, you weren't defensive and I could hear her. That's how loudly she was speaking on the other end of the phone, because it was very it was a very difficult.

Michelle Maros: [00:49:30] It was a contentious conversation, that's for sure.

Barb Schmidt: [00:49:32] And it was a very difficult truth for her to hear. So you had a lot of empathy and you had a lot of caring and you had a lot of love. And it was a really, really, really close. So it was a difficult truth for to hear. And so she didn't take it very well. But you could hear it. But you did. You weren't defensive. You weren't. It was just the most beautiful conversation that I had the privilege of witnessing. But it's really important, you're right to know when it's time to be just silent and take in the information, take in the stillness. Allow yourself to come back to center, because sometimes conversations can throw us off. Just allow yourself and be okay with saying, Let me just take a minute.

Michelle Maros: [00:50:08] And that's the last thing, know when you need to take space.

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:10] Oh, you know, like I need to take well, even just space in just a minute. Like, let me take a minute and center myself here. This is hard for me to take. Or let me take a deep breath here because I need to think about a couple of things here. Yeah. Allowing yourself to just be in that moment and take in what all is happening. And I love. I think you wrote about this too. Michelle Those in between moments like that can be the most valuable, can be just what is needed to either course correct a conversation that's looking like it might go astray or can deepen and strengthen the conversation or deepen and strengthen the people that are having the conversation. Sometimes those in-between moments gaining the clarity, gaining the strength, gaining the peace or the breath or the calmness or just, okay, let me be

back here in the present moment because we may have left the present moment for a little bit. And let me just begin again here. Let me just take in what's all happened and let me begin again.

Michelle Maros: [00:51:10] Yeah, because that's what also mitigates some of those knee jerk reactions or responses or saying things off the cuff that you don't mean because you're in the heat of the moment or not being intentional with your words or anything like that. I feel like the conversation that you're talking about. I was very intentional with my words because it was a the dynamic of the conversation was very interesting. I had done something wrong. I had made a mistake in how I handled the information that she needed to know. So she was mad at me about that. But I still felt that she needed to know the information. So I had to take responsibility for the way I handled it. But also, like you needed to know and I'm not perfect and. I think because it was like both sides of that coin of I had made a mistake. But I also believed that the conversation needed to be had. There could have been situations where I was where I kind of could have gone off the rails and been like, Well, you know, you're being crazy because you needed to know this anyways. So why can't you just be thankful that this came, you know, whatever, And that wouldn't have helped the situation so well.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:26] And the circumstances also were very.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:28] Yeah. Anyways.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:30] It was a lot more intricate than that. And I think that's why I think you handled it so well because you did own you did own in hindsight, you said, Now looking back, I wish I hadn't done it the way that I did it, but I thought it was in everyone's best interest to do it this way. But I was wrong. You said. But I was wrong. And I just love the way you handled it. You all these things we're talking about. You did. You listened.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:51] I think I made this list after this conversation.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:54] I think you're actually I think you're absolutely right.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:57] And but I think also the the real issue about that situation for me was that I had made all of these mistakes because I had been drinking.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:08] Oh. So I didn't even think about that part of it. I thought it was...

Michelle Maros: [00:53:11] I opened my big mouth when I was drinking and that I communicated things in a way that I wouldn't have as sober Michelle.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:22] Oh I forgot that piece.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:23] So another piece to add to the messes that I made whilst drinking.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:30] I forgot that piece.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:32] All right, we can go into more of that at a later time.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:37] But giving yourself permission to take space. Yes, maybe it's take space and come back to the conversation the next day, the next week. Or maybe it's take space and give yourself a minute just to regroup and take a couple of deep breaths and bring yourself back to the present moment, just allowing yourself whatever it is. I think how I would end it. This Part of the conversation that we're having is, I think for me, when I can be in my body feeling what it is that's happening for me in any given moment during a conversation. Or if I'm starting to feel like I can't breathe or I'm starting to feel like I'm uncomfortable or I'm starting to feel like I need some space or I'm starting to feel like this is not going well, I'm not okay with this. All those things, if you know how you're feeling, you know it's happening for you can really be information for you as to what needs to happen next or what you may need to say next. Because a lot of times for me, what I've noticed about myself when I'm uncomfortable in a conversation and I'm not listening to my body and I'm not taking a little pause or all the things that we're saying, I check out, Yeah, I check out. I'm not even listening anymore. And I don't I'm like, okay, I can't do this anymore. Okay, Let me just let me just get this over. Whatever whatever the person is saying, it's fine. I check, which is which is ridiculous because what's the point of having a conversation if you're not going to be there and you're going to check out? It was a waste of your time, total waste of your time. And you're sending the message to the

other person that, Oh, I am right. Oh, you know, I'm kind of in control or I nothing wrong here. I'm not doing it. I'm not doing anything that we need to have these conversations anymore or whatever it is, it is happening. You have to be there and you can't check out. And so it's really important. Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:55:23] Yeah, sure is. Real quickly, before we wrap up, I just wanted to give those four little comebacks for like the people that give you push back. You know. Real quickly.

Barb Schmidt: [00:55:34] Yes. Important.

Michelle Maros: [00:55:35] Um, you know, people with strong personalities who maybe don't. Take no for an answer. One of the things that you like to say is. I've already said no twice. Could we please talk about something else?

Barb Schmidt: [00:55:50] Yeah. And of course, it matters the tone that you say it. It matters. The body language, all the things that we're saying. But yeah, I've done that before. Look, I've already said no twice. Let's talk about something else. Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:56:03] Reinforcing that. And then also.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:06] And it can be awkward. Sorry to interrupt. It can be awkward. It can. There can be like a lull in the conversation or whatever. It can be awkward, but it's okay. It's okay. And if and if it's feeling awkward, you could be the person that says something joyful or something like, I know I really want to know about the vacation that you just had in Hawaii. What was your favorite part or how did your daughter like it? Or what was the most fun thing that you did? Or how was the weather? Just anything. It's so. Easy. Sometimes if you are just being truthful and your tone is good and it's not abrasive or combative to just say, okay, so, you know, tell me about dinner last night at that new restaurant. Was it any good? Should I go? Yeah.

Michelle Maros: [00:56:54] The next is just to always remember to be reinforcing your boundaries. Because if you don't reinforce the boundaries, people will think that it's okay to cross them. And I know that this is a big thing, but it's huge for communication to reinforce the

boundaries. For example, you hate it when people call you names. That's one of your biggest boundaries that I think anybody in your life knows. So if someone were to say, you know, or in a conversation to call you a name, you would say, look, you know that I do not tolerate name calling. So we can either pause this conversation if or come back to it later when you know, you can not call me names. That's a big one.

Barb Schmidt: [00:57:37] Yes. So which kind of also goes in alignment with gossip or calling other people names.

Michelle Maros: [00:57:41] Whatever the boundaries might be.

Barb Schmidt: [00:57:43] Right. You're really good.

Michelle Maros: [00:57:44] For you that's a big one.

Barb Schmidt: [00:57:44] It is a huge one. And you're really good at reinforcing boundaries. You will say to me, You know, Mom, I'm not comfortable doing that. And of course I know that about you, but I was still trying to do it anyway, or whatever it was. So that's, that's where the practice comes in. But I love that because you've really helped me a lot with with reinforcing my boundaries, because sometimes I can get, I don't know in my head about, oh, I could do it this one time. Oh, this is okay. I could do it this one time.

Michelle Maros: [00:58:13] Um, if someone's always interrupting you, you could just say, Please let me just finish this one thought and then I will give you a chance to speak. That's a big one because people get so frustrated when they're being interrupted. But acknowledging it and saying, look, I'm just going to finish this and then you can go. You use that a lot.

Barb Schmidt: [00:58:33] I do. And I think what what is so beautiful about that is when you do that, people don't really they're not aware. Yeah, we all interrupt people. They're not aware. And when you do that, they become aware. Now they're not perfect and they're going to do it again. But please notice, please try this and please notice the look on the person's face when you say it. I would say almost 100% of the time the person has said to me, Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize I was interrupting you. Please, please keep going. Yeah. And it's made me more

aware when I've interrupted someone. They don't even half the time maybe have to say something. They'll say, Oh my gosh, I'm sorry I interrupted you. Please go. Go ahead. And usually when I do that, they'll say, Oh, no, no, it's okay, it's fine. And I'll go, No, I want to hear what you had to say. It's just a good way to be. And it's it's all practice and teaching you to be more patient and caring about what other people are saying and not interrupting them. And you're also teaching them or showing them. Teaching may not be the right word, but awareness. You're shining a light on the awareness of what we do as humans.

Michelle Maros: [00:59:37] Yep. And lastly, if someone's like trying to wear you down or get you to commit to something coming up with one thing that you can say over and over again as your response, like, I'm not comfortable doing that. Or like you say, quite often that doesn't work for me. So that you don't have to feel like you're over-explaining or giving reasons for why. I think having that one line to say to someone, if you know that they're going to not take no for an answer is really helpful.

Barb Schmidt: [01:00:07] Yeah. Have it in your back pocket. Have it in your toolkit. And it's important to just have that one thing. I love the way you said that Michelle I do. I That doesn't work for me.

Michelle Maros: [01:00:16] Yeah, That's one of your biggest ones that I've seen you use lately. Well, I hope that helps everyone. And I hope this conversation about communication helps. I know it's not always easy, but it's a practice. We can all cultivate it and we're all doing the best we can.

Barb Schmidt: [01:00:33] And I think one other thing that I would add is be open to compliments and criticisms. Be open If someone says to you, You hurt my feelings or anything like that, or you interrupted me or you know that that is not okay for me or that doesn't work for me. Like be open to not taking it personally and be open when someone says, you know, I really love it how you show so much. Humility in the work that you do or something like really taking. It's hard to take compliments sometimes too, so just be open to criticisms and compliments.

Michelle Maros: [01:01:07] Yeah, I love that. Thank you. Thank you, Michelle. Thank you. And thank you, everyone, for listening. I hope that this was helpful. We have lots of other information about communication, and I think we could get into a whole other aspect of it. So we'll certainly keep this bookmarked for next time. But thank you so much to the person who requested this topic. Again, make sure if there's something that you want us to tackle. Send us a message and we'll do our best to hit it on the show. If you're loving the show, which of course we hope that you are, please make sure that you liked and subscribe to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. Apple, Google, Spotify so that you're up to date on all of the new episodes if you haven't yet to make sure that you are following us on social media at Peaceful Barb at Michelle Maros at Barb Knows Best Pod. And lastly, share the show with your friends. If you're loving it, you want to let somebody know The best gift that you can do for us is to share and of course, to give a review. And five stars. Those mean a lot to us as well. Thank you so much again for listening. Thank you, Mom, for sharing all of your wonderful insights and we will chat with you next week because as we know, Barb knows best. Bye.