

Episode 85 – What Did Barb Learn from Mud?
Barb Knows Best™
Episode Transcripts

Michelle Maros: [00:00:13] Hello, everyone. Hi, friends. Welcome back to Barb Knows Best podcast. I am your co-host, Michelle Maros, and I am here with my mom, Peaceful Barb, and we are so excited to be continuing a conversation from last week about my mother's 30 day silent retreat. Hi, Mom.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:37] Hi, Michelle. Hi, everyone.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:39] Can I just say something really funny?

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:40] Yes, I'd love it.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:41] As I was opening up the episode, I looked up at you and you were kind of like mouthing my words back to me. It was very cute when I was like, Hello, welcome to Barb Knows Best. You were like, You just did it again.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:53] I was mouthing that back. Wow. Totally unaware.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:57] It was cute.

Barb Schmidt: [00:00:57] That is cute.

Michelle Maros: [00:00:58] We're just mirrors of each other, aren't we?

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:01] Wow. Across the table here.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:03] Um, it was cute. Anyways, like I said, this week's episode will be a continuation of our conversation from last week about your silent retreat. So if you didn't yet listen to last week's episode, you might want to jump back and give that one a listen first so you can get a little taste of the conversation that we will be having today. It's a good one. I'm really loving this so much.

Barb Schmidt: [00:01:33] Me too. I'm so excited. I mean, I just love, you know, I love talking about all of this. I love talking about life. I love being here in conversation with you and all of you listening and Michelle is right. If you want to go back and take a listen. But if you don't have time and you want to listen to this one now, it can also be self contained. But you're right, Michelle, I do recommend strongly because we get into a lot of the early things and it's really kind of cool.

Michelle Maros: [00:01:57] You're so funny. Before we recorded this, you were like, make sure that they know to go back and listen.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:02] I know. But then I thought, but if they're here listening now, they need to just keep listening.

Michelle Maros: [00:02:06] Okay, whatever. Whatever makes you happy and whatever order. You are the boss of your own life. I would say in last week's episode, we really set the scene for why and what was going on for you and what made you feel like you needed to do this and how you came up with where you wanted to go. So if that is more what's resonating for you? Go back if you want to hear about her actual experience, stay. You're the boss of your own life. But either way, both episodes are going to be great.

Barb Schmidt: [00:02:37] Either way, you're in for a good treat.

Michelle Maros: [00:02:39] Yes, Yes. Yes. So as we left off last week, you had talked a lot about your early transition into the retreat, the climate, the weather, all of the external agitations, I would say. And really, I feel like what I would love for this week just to talk about what it was like for you for 30 days to be so disconnected and. What came up from for you and really what were your takeaways and what can you share with us as people who didn't experience this that maybe we can use? From your experience.

Barb Schmidt: [00:03:27] Well, I think as you can imagine, when you're I got into this I think last episode as well. But I think if you can imagine when you're on a silent retreat, no technology, no nothing, no interaction really with the outside world except for the things that we did, you

know, every day, every day, every hour of the day on the retreat, which was mostly meditation, walking, meditation, sitting meditation and listening to some talks, listening to some inspirational talks and some informational talks. So when you're in silence and nothing is coming out of you, you're not sharing anything. Everything is coming in. You you definitely start to uncover, especially if it's quiet and you're in a meditative space of walking and being in the present moment and being where your feet are and all of the things that cause you to be present, It's so you have this little battle going on in your mind. I want to be present because that's what I'm doing and this is what I want to do with my life. I want to make sure that I am. You know, in the present moment as much as possible and not in the past or the future ruminating or being fearful or worrying. So but the mind wants to jump around because the mind is like, what in the heck is going on here? What is happening? Like, And so it just goes crazy.

Barb Schmidt: [00:04:46] It's constantly telling you everything that is wrong or everything that you've been hiding or that you've been stuffing beneath the surface during the outer world experiences. Because sometimes we just don't want to feel those things. We just we don't have time or we don't feel like it or we don't want to know it. So we just say, okay, that's not really happening. Let me just keep working here. Let me just keep doing what I'm doing. But when you're on a silent retreat, you can't do that. There is no way to do that because you have nothing distracting you. So the mind is constantly going. And what I realized in one of my sitting meditations so strongly about, I would say probably around the second week. Was that, Wow, I feel like my life on the outside world is just completely falling apart. You know, the divorce, my dog being really sick and then dying work was so busy from the pandemic and all of the work that we were doing with hospitals and universities and people. It just was so busy. Which I love, but it just felt like everything was so like there was no way to take a breath or no way to feel. Contented. And so I realized in that second week during one of my sitting meditations that I was the problem. Wow. Barbara, all the people that have told you this your whole life, that you're the problem.

Barb Schmidt: [00:06:03] You're the problem. And I was writing all these negative stories. The problem is that when your mom was dying back in 1998, you didn't spend enough time with her and do the things that you really needed to do when getting this divorce and all this stuff, all the things you didn't do, what you needed to do. It was like I was Ellie Wow. I wish I had not let

her jump up on sofas and run down the stairs so much and do a lot of jumping and running around because it caused her hips and her back to give out too soon. Like all these weird things. And none of that was true. None of the things that I'm telling you right now are true. But my mind was throwing everything, including the kitchen sink, at me. Of all the negative things or all the things that I have done wrong and what I got out of that, I mean, it was brutal. I felt like I was in a war, actually. If actually what I. What I. Thought about during this whole meditation when this was all happening. I think I've said this before on this podcast that I spent about a decade or so studying all the traditions and all the great religions of the world. And when I got into Hinduism, the Bhagavad-Gita is really Arjuna and the War. In the outer world and the inner world.

Barb Schmidt: [00:07:16] And Arjuna gets on the battlefield in the very beginning of the of the war. And Krishna says, you need to go. You need to go fight your enemies. And basically the enemies are family because the enemies are the thoughts in our mind. And so I thought I was Arjuna on the battlefield. I can't succumb to all of this negativity and these lies and this untruth. But I don't know what to do. It's all inside of me. I feel like I am the problem I was starting to take on and embody what the mind was saying to me. So I started to cry in the meditation I just said, But I know that this is not true. And so just having this battle back and forth and back and forth and back and forth and I remembered Michelle you had said to me like months before when it was really getting difficult with the divorce, you had said to me, Mom, you're writing so many negative stories, you're so hard on yourself, you're beating yourself up. You're everything coming out of your mouth is just like everything is wrong with you. You're taking on all of the responsibility for everything. And I'd kind of forgotten that. So I came up and you said, So if you're going to write stories and really not be in the present moment, but you're going to write stories if your mind is so out of control right now and you're going to write stories, why don't you write some stories of good things that can happen and how things can go right? And so that came up in my meditation.

Barb Schmidt: [00:08:34] I thought, Wow, but I can't do that. Michelle So I'm having a conversation with you in my meditation, in my mind, because look at all these things that are going wrong. So everything that I'd been trying to stuff away and feel like I could white knuckle it through all of these traumas and all of these things that were happening during this major universal trauma of a pandemic started coming to the surface. And I felt. Like. I was stuck. I felt

not stuck, but I felt like I didn't know what to do. I was just like crying. Crying, crying, crying. And what came to me then with all of this unpleasantness, all of this suffering, all of the things like Barb heard his voice. Barb, the issue is that you have really abandoned yourself and the relationship that you have with yourself. You are so mean and so unkind to yourself. It is loving kindness that you need to start sharing with yourself and offering yourself and being with yourself. You are causing yourself to suffer more. And it was interesting how I just kind of stopped crying. I was thinking, okay. Because in studying all the different meditation practices that I've done, in studying all the things that I've studied, one of the things I know for sure, especially in the Buddhist tradition, which I love very, very much, this saying in the Buddhist tradition is that there are two kinds of suffering.

Barb Schmidt: [00:10:05] Suffering that leads to more suffering. Or suffering that leads to the end of suffering. And I remember when I first heard that decades ago, I was trying to figure out how the heck do you end suffering? I mean, the outside world is crazy. The outside world is dysfunctional. The outside world is chaotic. It's just always going to be difficult. How do you end suffering? Because we're human beings and we're meant to feel our feelings deeply. But in that moment, it really all came together for me. Wow. I am suffering. I am feeling lost because I'm getting divorced after 33 years. I am feeling hurt. I am feeling sad. I am feeling despair. I'm feeling all these things. Then I felt great sadness when Ellie died, my dog like she. I felt like she was my companion in life for 15 years and the pandemic feeling all the feelings and working with all of the health care workers and all of the work that we were doing and just feeling such great empathy and sadness, I thought, I am suffering, I am feeling all of these feelings, but I'm actually not feeling the feelings. I'm pushing them away and I'm thinking that there's something wrong with me. So I say all of this and share it all with you, shall I? No going on and on to say that we have to feel our feelings deeply.

Barb Schmidt: [00:11:20] We have to acknowledge them. We know that. But to say that we cause our own suffering, we do suffer in the world, but we are the cause. We collectively, we individually are the cause because we are beating ourselves up. We have lost. If you've lost the relationship that you have with yourself, if you can't treat yourself with as much kindness and love and caring that you treat your best friend or the deepest people that you love. Then there's going to be a disconnect. There's going to be more suffering because the mind is going to tell you all the things that aren't true about you and your life. So what I realized is I had really

stopped or I didn't even know that I had stopped. If someone asked me, Do you care about yourself, I'd say, yeah, deeply. The relationship I have with myself is the most important thing in my life. And I knew all that in my head, but I'd kind of lost track of it in my heart. And so that meditation really brought me back to the reality of, wow, what you need to do here for the next few weeks is really develop that relationship that you have with yourself and start loving yourself and being kind to yourself and understanding that what the mind is saying is not true.

Michelle Maros: [00:12:31] Okay. Thank you so much. I was trying to keep track of. All of the things that I wanted to circle back on with all of that information that you just. Shared, but. To. To kind of summarize, it sounds like the first week or few days of your retreat was a lot about worrying about what was happening back at home, external world, kind of that outward projection of did I do the right thing? Is everyone okay? Am I being selfish? What am I, kind of that and then this all came up in your second week, is that correct?

Barb Schmidt: [00:13:18] I would say after the first week of settling in, it takes it takes a little bit of time.

Michelle Maros: [00:13:23] It's interesting to think that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:13:24] Yes, that is correct.

Michelle Maros: [00:13:25] First your mind goes to the worries of the external world and like your responsibilities and all of that. And then it seems like once upon settling in, it's like you kind of unearthed all of those things that were sitting right beneath the surface that you said you hadn't let yourself really feel. And it's all the stuff that's kind of been waiting to come out. So it's interesting to see that when you give yourself the time to really open up those things that are being that are begging to be noticed or processed or felt are right beneath the surface. So that was you know, I mean, if you've been listening to this podcast at all, you talk all the time about one of the things that people have said to you forever is that you're the problem. So it's not shocking to me to hear that. That was like the first thing that came up that you really had to work through. But it's like all of these things that had happened over the past few years in your life were also these things that were like reinforcing that for you. And it's like your mind, I

guess, at the beginning was also reinforcing that, like when you were saying that you had started to blame yourself for Lee's illnesses.

Michelle Maros: [00:14:43] I mean, I tried. Obviously I didn't I really did not want to interrupt you, but I really wanted to because that's crazy talk And. It's interesting to see the workings of your mind, of all of the things that you blamed yourself for and were reinforcing to kind of watch it as a movie, I guess. And then to come to that ending conclusion of this isn't true. So I think that's super interesting. And obviously these are all your experiences, but how cool to see. Um, I guess what we talk about so often on this show of feeling, letting your feelings process so that you can be a witness to them and then having a conversation with them to understand what's true and what's not so that you can move forward in truth. So I guess at the end of this period of the retreat, you could say to yourself, that's not true. I'm not the problem. I'm not at fault or whatever the words were, which I guess would lead you to the next phase of this retreat. Right?

Barb Schmidt: [00:15:54] That's so beautifully said. Michelle. I can't even. I could never have said it. I could never have said it better. Absolutely. All the things you and I practice and all the things we talk about and all the things that we try to share is all about feeling your feelings and understanding deeply how you feel. Because remember the Jill Bolte Taylor, it takes 90s for a feeling to go through the body unless we start fueling the feelings with thoughts. And so it all came together for me in that one meditation. That suffering that leads to more suffering is because we fuel the suffering with thoughts. I was already suffering. I was fueling my suffering with thoughts, and I was getting deeper and deeper into the suffering. And given all the trauma and all of the things that I've been through in my life, to have all this other trauma happening, it just the the default basically set was to beat myself up. Well, you're the problem. And I'd heard that before. So in the next meditation, actually, it was a walking meditation because I was so like this was so up for the surface. And it was so you're right, it is so profound. This whole suffering that leads to more suffering is because we are fueling it. We are giving it thoughts that are making it worse and suffering that leads to no more suffering is that we feel the feelings without writing stories or letting the mind comment on all the sufferings and have a say that aren't true. So in the next meditation, which was a walking meditation, there was kind of a continuation of this.

Barb Schmidt: [00:17:29] And what happened was that I had such a revelation of I am not the problem. None of this is true. Exactly what you just said. None of this is true. I've done my best and I've done everything that I can. I need to give all of this back to anyone in my life that has said you are the problem. This is their opinion in whatever way that it was making them feel better or letting them off the hook, whatever it was, and not to beat them up or anything, but I am not the problem. And I need to give it back. And I can't tell you the release that that made me feel to let that go. And I did do enough. I have done the best that I can. And I think what what happened then in that whole walking meditation, it was about 35, 40 minutes. It was just like, wow, such a release came over me and a relief came over me because I, I truly, in every moment we as humans try to do the best that we can. And sometimes it's not great. And I'm not talking about the evil or any of that kind of stuff. I'm just talking about General trying to live life, doing the best you can, really not trying to do harm to other people. So when we're done with the walking meditation, as I said in the last episode, we sit down then and do a sitting meditation. So we went into the sitting meditation and I remember sitting in this meditation thinking, I want to start doing a compassion meditation for myself. And one of the teachers had shared some loving kindness meditations with us as I spoke about last episode.

Barb Schmidt: [00:19:06] So I want to start doing a compassion meditation for myself. So I did this meditation every single day, at least for one of my sitting meditations for the rest of the retreat. So about three weeks. And I would just sit down and and talk to myself in a way of. I care about your suffering, Barb. I care about your pain. I care about you. May you be free from your fears and may you be peaceful and live with ease. Repeated that, repeated that over and over for the whole 40 minutes. Sometimes I didn't have to repeat it because it was just settling into just the feeling of caring about my pain, caring about myself, caring about my suffering, caring about me. So in that in one of those meditations. I had the most amazing feeling that I want to share with everyone, but I just want to wrap up this piece of compassion meditation. This is profound. When you can say to yourself, you know, like. You're in your meditation, talking to yourself within in in the heart. So you're talking to you're talking to yourself but not in the eye. You're talking to yourself in the you. It's like you are coming together, like you would talk to a friend or like you would talk to the person that you love the most in your life. I care about you like putting your arms around yourself. I care about your suffering. I care about your pain. I care about you. May you be free from your fears. May you be peaceful and live with ease.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:39] So many things. Let's take a quick break first. And we're back. I know you have lots you have something that you want to share, and I know where you're going and I'm excited about it. I just have a couple questions before you continue.

Barb Schmidt: [00:20:54] Definitely.

Michelle Maros: [00:20:55] Because you say so much in the best way possible. And an interesting question came up for me when you were talking about all of this. Do you think that you know how often you say that the mind is a tricky customer? And. And that you've been practicing meditation and mindfulness for 38, 39 years, and you always say that you, you know, you never perfect it. You do these practices to reinforce and strengthen. But it's not like one day you wake up and you're perfect. And it's so interesting to hear that even after all of these years, you go on a retreat and all of this comes up. And it was obviously really painful for you. And you had noticed that you had even though, you know, like you said, that the relationship that you have with yourself is the most important thing in the world. But you had been so cruel to yourself for so long.

Michelle Maros: [00:21:58] Do you think that there's an aspect of, you know how they say, I hope this makes sense. You know how they say sometimes in therapy when you take a partner to therapy and maybe they're not there for the purest of reasons and they're a little bit more narcissistic, they learn the tools to use against you. So that it can they can it can see like they're trying, but then they just use their therapy language back at you in a kind of toxic way. I'm wondering if because you're so, for lack of a better word, advanced in your practice, do you think that your mind was maybe that tricky of a customer Where. You know, it was noticing that you were suffering and being so cruel to yourself. But, Barb, you know that the relationship that you have with yourself is so important. So you're fine. You know, like, do you like you always say that there's two thoughts, two voices in the mind. And I'm just wondering if because your practice is so strong, your mind might have been saying to you. You're not suffering because you're. You're taking care of yourself with your practice. Does that make sense?

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:16] It makes perfect sense. Michelle. It makes perfect sense. I understand exactly what you're saying.

Michelle Maros: [00:23:20] Like maybe less kind mind. Was like that narcissistic partner that was using the therapy language to tell you that everything was fine because it didn't. Probably a safety mechanism of allowing yourself to stop. But it was saying, you know, all this stuff so clearly you're fine. You are your own best friend because you've known that that's what you need to do for years. And not actually it was telling it to you rather than giving you the space to realize that you actually weren't being that way. Does that make sense.

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:53] It makes perfect sense.

Michelle Maros: [00:23:55] Do you think that that's true?

Barb Schmidt: [00:23:55] I do. I love what you just said. I feel like the mind wants to keep the status quo and the status quo. Yeah. And the status quo is I'm the boss, the mind is the boss. And we just kind of go along with whatever the mind says. It doesn't want to ruffle feathers, it doesn't want anything. So, yes. And that's what it has been doing for the past few years, right? Yes. I have to say that meditation in this retreat was probably ten years worth of therapy. And that's what can happen when you really start to understand that the inner world, the life that we live on the inside is as real as the life that we live on the outside. And we've got. For me, it is so crucial for me to have that deep relationship with the inner world so that I can make sense of the outer world and not get tricked or not get carried away like I had been carried away. I think it's not an accident that death my dog died. Pandemic. So much death, so much heartbreak. And I am. Empath like you are an empath. It it really it really caused you and I a lot of suffering. And the work we were doing with with it just was a lot. And then coupled with not an accident that divorce is one of.

Michelle Maros: [00:25:09] Divorce is a death.

Barb Schmidt: [00:25:10] Divorce and death are one of the top five things I think it is that caused the most disruption in life. So all of this was like a perfect storm. Those three things came together as a perfect storm. So, yes, I also think that there's I am such a strong person.

Michelle Maros: [00:25:25] Yes.

Barb Schmidt: [00:25:26] From the inside out. I think there is a part of me like, hold it together, hold it. You got this, hold it together. And the mind was agreeing with me because it wasn't causing any ruffling any feathers and everything just kind of started to fall apart from the inside out on this retreat. And I think what's so beautiful about it is that it's all real. Everything that I was going through and everything that's happening is real because how you know, it's real. After crying, after having the mind tell me that I'm the problem. And after hearing all this for so many years, especially from my ex-husband, after all of this, I came out of that next meditation. Happy. How do you get happy? You know, you get happy because I actually got it. That. I know that I have to suffer because we all suffer. And I know that life is difficult. And I know that it's been a lot of suffering for the past few years. But I don't want to suffer more by allowing my mind and allowing all these untrue, destructive stories to mess with my life and to mess with the joy that I can find in my life. Once I start to deal with what's going on from the inside out. And I think one of the things that. So that makes sense. What you just said was beautiful. You encapsulated it perfectly.

Michelle Maros: [00:26:44] Well I think what's interesting, because I think I've fallen into this place and I'm sure many of us listening to. Where we all fall into. Oh, my gosh. What's the word? Autopilot. And, you know, we're doing our practices and doing all of our things. And I think sometimes the autopilot of our life and our practice can kind of glaze over maybe some of the feelings that we're that are coming up or just life is a lot. So. Sometimes we don't have the, you know, mental space or capacity to deal with it and. I kind of feel like there's a fine line between your practice, grounding you in what's real in this moment and kind of your practice maybe glazing over it. And keeping things at bay. Does that make sense? Like I'm thinking about the one of the biggest questions or concerns or inquiries about affirmations, if you repeat an affirmation and it's really not true for you, are you just reinforcing something to kind of bypass what's happening? And I think sometimes we can kind of go through the motions of a practice, go through the motions of meditation, of affirmation, of even therapy, and sometimes even all of that can still glaze over what's just beneath the surface because you're kind of going through the motions and maybe not getting to that deeper place. Like, I can affirm my way out of a bad space, but that doesn't mean that I'm really dealing with the problem.

Barb Schmidt: [00:28:38] There's two answers I have for you. One, Yes, I think nothing is absolute. That's what I want to say.

Michelle Maros: [00:28:44] I think it's interesting to see it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:28:45] And I want to say that can be true, which it can be true, and the reverse can be true. And here's the reverse that I learned on this retreat. I mean, let's face it. I go on these retreats to learn and to grow, period. That's it. I want to keep learning. I want to keep growing. I want to keep knowing myself better. And so what came out of this and really a lot of it got my attention when you asked the question before, because you really encapsulated that so brilliantly. Is that you really talk a lot in our work about it's not rejection, it's redirection and protection. And so what I really got out of all of this was maybe those three years. It wasn't rejection so much because I do have a practice and I do sit with myself and quiet and all of those things. It's not rejection, it's redirection. And so maybe the redirection and then protection, maybe I was being protective for the three years because it was such a you know, a really hard, difficult time and being led to go on this 30 day silent retreat, opened it all up.

Michelle Maros: [00:29:51] I believe that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:29:52] Exactly. So we're all it's kind of what you said is so true. And it's kind of what I'm saying is so true. So what I want to say, what's the truest truth right now is this that you really have to get to know yourself. You have to know. And so in that moment, I knew that I was, I practice and I sit with myself and quiet. And so it took this 30 day retreat in silence to unleash all of this. And so now, I mean, I kind of knew I don't know if that makes any sense, but you just have to kind of get to know yourself. You just have to know. And the only way that you can know is truly by sitting in quiet and just listening to what's happening from the inside. And I agree with you not I think affirmations and passages and all of the things that we do in meditation are so important. But understanding that you have to also listen to that voice within.

Michelle Maros: [00:30:45] I was just really going to say.

Barb Schmidt: [00:30:46] A two way street kind of thing.

Michelle Maros: [00:30:48] I think I figured it out. What you're saying is that your practice was sustaining you during this horrific period of time. I you say this, but I also believe if you didn't have a practice, you would probably be. I don't know. In a wide array of bad shape it was sustaining you, but you also had that relationship with yourself that was saying you need to go take this time away because you knew deep down that you weren't being kind to yourself and you weren't not living with an alignment with yourself, but you weren't being your best friend to a degree that you know is possible. So, yes, the practice sustained you and maybe kept you afloat and maybe kept some of those things beneath the surface because it wasn't really you needed to be in a different space to process. It's just interesting. I think those two levels of like you always say, your practice won't fail you and it'll it'll give you what you need and your practice. You never failed on your practice. You kept doing it even though maybe you felt horrible or when a lot of pain or. A lot of suffering or your mind was going in a bunch of different directions and then your relationship with yourself brought you to this place where, okay, this is the space where you can now unpack it all and process it and come out knowing what's true and what's not and what you've been doing and what you haven't been doing.

Barb Schmidt: [00:32:10] Beautifully said. And I think, Oh, my gosh. Beautifully said, Michelle, because what you just brought up for me is, remember in the last episode, I said I made the decision to go on this retreat back in September of 2022. I thought the divorce would be final by the end of the year. And I thought, okay, this is what I need now, because I you're right. I knew I had this inner knowing. Whoa. I need to go spend some time in quiet with myself. What better way to do it than launch into a 30 day silent retreat? So I was so geared up and so that was kind of my reins. You know, sometimes you look at the end of the rainbow, the pot at the end of the rainbow that was kind of sustaining me. Barb You can get through anything. You know, I'm a recovering eating disorder and a recovering addict. So you can do anything for one day that maybe you can't do for a lifetime. You can do this. You can get through to February of 2023. You can get through to March of 2023 when the retreat started. So you can do this. And so you're right. And I believe then as life will have it, the divorce wasn't final. And I was pleading with my lawyer. Can't this please, can't this please be done by the end of February? I'm leaving for a whole month. And she said, No, it can't. So then to go into this 30 day retreat in silence and then to come out and the divorce didn't become final till August of 2023, but to come out a whole different person really having all of the experiences that I had made it so much. I don't

want to use the word better, but made it so much. I was just a different person handling everything so differently. From April 1st to the end of the divorce. It was just so incredible and I'm so grateful that it all worked out that way, that the divorce hadn't ended before I went on the retreat because who knows how that whole show would have ended so well.

Michelle Maros: [00:33:58] It's true what we say so often that, you know, you can't control the timing of life. And if you had tried to micromanage the timing of that or go to great lengths to, I don't know, do something differently, you wouldn't have had this experience. Which is so interesting that it all worked out that way.

Barb Schmidt: [00:34:19] Yeah, well, you know, it's that saying that you and I use all the time too. You don't always get what you want, but you get what you need. And sometimes it takes hindsight to say, Oh, wow, did I sure need that? And that's, I think, what you always talk about Michelle the the silver linings, the tiny joys, the little blessings that come out of some of the suffering that we experience. We don't always feel it while we're going through it rarely. And we sometimes don't feel it till after the fact. And we're looking back and saying, Wow, that was the best thing that could have happened.o.

Michelle Maros: [00:34:52] And so you, before I asked some of my questions, you were talking about the compassion meditation that you started to do. And I think that we're going to have another episode after this about meditation in general. I know you've been jonesing to do that, so we will be diving into that. But just quickly, I really feel like. That's a great. Dive into. A simple meditation or even an affirmation that you can start to say to yourself, if this topic is resonating for you or if you feel like you've been not so kind to yourself, can you repeat it a little or can you share it again?

Barb Schmidt: [00:35:34] I will. And I also want to share one more thing. I had never done this before. Let me let me clarify. I'm sorry. No, no, no, no. You're right. You're face. I said that. Let me clarify what I mean. I've never done it for myself. Isn't that the oddest thing in the in the planet? I've always done these compassion meditations for others. I've never sat down and said, I care about your pain. I care about your suffering. I've done it with the intention for sending it to someone else. I've done it with the intention of sending it to the planet. I've done it with the intention of sending it to my dog. I've done it with the intention of seeing someone

else that I don't even know suffering in social media or suffering in the news or suffering wherever, you know, a terrible tsunami hits or an earthquake or I've done it with that. And I've sat in my meditation and sent all that energy to another person. I've never sat down in my meditation practice. And done a compassion, loving kindness meditation for myself, which I know you look like you're stunned. I know. It's unbelievable. So I think just me choosing to do that was the crux of getting deeper. Because here's the thing, Shakespeare. Here's the rub.

Barb Schmidt: [00:36:50] I believe that when we start a meditation practice and we start to uncover the world within being as real as the world without, I believe it's like peeling the layers of an onion. We peel one layer, we peel one layer, we peel another layer. We just don't start at the surface and go all the way down to the bottom. I don't think our bodies could take it. No, I don't think I don't think our nervous systems could take it. It's a little bit at a time and a little bit at a time. So that's why patience obtains all things, said Saint Teresa of Avila. Like we have to be patient. We have to know that there is a plan for us to get to the place where we want to go. And we can't just start at the surface and go down deep. We take it, you know, little by little by little. So that's what I believe happened for me in this. That's why I said it was like ten years of therapy. I went deep. I went very deep in this in this 30 day meditation and uncovered all this. And for me to say that I've never done a compassion loving kindness because I think I just always thought, well, you love yourself, kind of like what you were saying.

Michelle Maros: [00:37:56] That's yeah. I don't need to do that because I love myself.

Barb Schmidt: [00:37:57] You love yourself. You don't care of yourself. You practice. Yeah. You already do love yourself. But not at this deeper level of, oh my gosh, I care about you and I love you. I mean, I've said I love you. I put it on my mirror, but I care about you. I care about your pain. I care about your suffering. So I agree. Michelle, if you're feeling called, this is such a beautiful thing. And be patient with yourself and just. Just allow yourself to feel whatever feelings they are. And your mind might say, Oh, this is ridiculous. Oh, this is. And there may be a little teeny, tiny voice in you that's saying you don't really believe it, but I'm going to say just to do it. If having this kind of love and friendship for yourself and it might take a while.

Michelle Maros: [00:38:38] Well, I think if you're someone who identifies as like a people pleaser or a caregiver like you, you're always caring about other people. And. Yeah. The fact

that you never turn that back around for yourself is wild. So I think a lot of people can relate to that. It's that fill up your cup so that you can fill up the others.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:01] And interesting, I thought I was filling up my cup.

Michelle Maros: [00:39:03] I know.

Barb Schmidt: [00:39:03] And just to interrupt you for one minute, I was going to say to talk about that in a second. I remember in therapy once, one of my therapists said. You know, you're good at giving. Like, I don't know anyone. I've never had any patient that is so good at giving and understanding and the compassion and all the love and the forgiving, all the things she said. But I don't see you being very good at receiving. It really feels to me like there's a little bit of a disconnect and you can't be really the giver that you want to be. Without out receiving and it'll one day catch up with you. You can't sustain it like that. That's just not the way the universe or life or God or any whatever you believe in is working. You've got to have a full circle of giving and receiving and giving and receiving and giving and receiving. And so you really need to take a look at yourself. How can I learn how to be a better receiver? This whole thing in this retreat and this whole meditation is being a better receiver, like giving myself what I give everyone else in my meditation practice.

Michelle Maros: [00:40:12] That's super interesting. I think a lot of us have trouble receiving I mean, even receiving compliments, receiving. Like if someone offers to help, how often do we say, no, I got it. It's so hard to be vulnerable to. You know, be open to receiving in that way. But it is true. I believe in duality of life. You know, you can't have light without dark and good without bad, and you can't have giving without receiving. And it's a balance for sure. And, you know, even. Not to psychoanalyze your life or whatever, but just thinking about all of those issues that you all of the things that were up for you over these past few years that led to going on this retreat. I can think of all of them where you were on one end of the spectrum giving and the receiving was probably pretty minimal. So like just thinking about that balance of life too. Yeah, there's always going to be probably in any dynamic or situation or relationship, one person that might do more at certain times or at less, you know, whatever is going on. But really thinking about in anything, is there an even give and take, giving, receiving effort and

understanding, you know, all of those things. And your giving is like off the charts. And I think now this is like an era of you understanding how to receive, which is great.

Barb Schmidt: [00:41:39] Yeah, beautifully said. And I do think this three years, what really has stuck out for me in looking back on it from the perspective of going through this retreat and all the things that are happening now and, you know, the feelings of satisfaction and content, contentedness and happiness and all that I'm feeling today is that idea. If I look at my practice and I think you've really helped me see this today, just so all of you know, listening Michelle and I really didn't talk about this in detail, all of her questions of me are coming from me talking to you, all right. Now, we really didn't. I mean, I gave her little snippets here and there throughout the past few months, but we really didn't go into any detail about this. So I love this so much. Your questions are organic from right now today. And what I want to say about that is I really feel like my practice kept me afloat. All of my all the 38 years of practice. Because if you're faithful to your practice, your practice will be faithful to you. My practice was faithful to me. It kept me afloat, but it could not sustain in the way that it was doing for the long haul. And I scheduled this retreat. And what you just said is so beautifully perfect that I had to I had to start looking at where was I going to start receiving, where was I going to start taking care of myself? Where was I going to start seeing, Wait a minute, this can't be sustained. You got it for a few years, but it can't be something that can last a lifetime. So it's time to start now.

Michelle Maros: [00:43:12] So the mud.

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:14] Mud. We brought this up in the last episode. I used it as a kind of a teaser. Right.

Michelle Maros: [00:43:18] I actually.

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:19] You can't wait.

Michelle Maros: [00:43:20] To Confirm what she just said. Yeah. We have not talked about this. So when she teased mud in the last episode. And in this episode I do not know where it's going, but I do know, I guess, that she has something profound to say about mud. So.

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:37] So in the last episode I talked about the weather and the weather was pouring rain for 28 days, nonstop, pouring rain, 28 days and a lot of mud, a lot of water, a lot of standing water. We were soaked. I didn't have the right clothes. I talked about all of that.

Michelle Maros: [00:43:55] Like I'm uncomfortable thinking about that, just so you know.

Barb Schmidt: [00:43:57] And it was cold. It was, you know, 30, 32, 45 degrees almost every day. So it was it was, you know, it was a trial. But, you know, we settled into it. As you think about the outside world not really mattering, it's because everything was inside. Everything we were doing was inside. So in one of my meditations not too long after this loving kindness, compassion, meditation that I started practicing for myself, I and I said to you just a few minutes ago that peeling the layers of the onion. I. This is the first. This is. This is like the third or this may be the third meditation of the whole maybe two weeks. I went really deep. And so a lot of visions and a lot of visuals and a lot of things that were coming up that were like a movie kind of if you want to look at it that way. So I'm in this meditation, in this sitting meditation. And this homeless man came to me in my meditation.

Michelle Maros: [00:44:55] Like someone you knew or no.

Barb Schmidt: [00:44:57] No just a homeless man came to me in my meditation and asked me, How do you feel about mud? Like. I was confused. I was like, I don't know. And he said, Well, let me introduce you to Mud, he said. Okay. And he said. This is Mud. And Mud why don't you introduce Barb to Mud, to yourself? And so Mud proceeded to tell me a story. He said, what brings me joy in life is rain is water. Because without it, I don't exist. And there was a pause. And I remember thinking. Yeah. You wouldn't. You wouldn't be here talking to me in my meditation. And then he went on to say. This is the truth about life and this is the truth about impermanence. So for me, when there is no rain, I don't exist. But when there is rain, I'm here. Do you understand? And I was like, Yeah, yeah, I get it. I know about impermanence. And he said, I come and I go. I'm impermanent and then I'm permanent. I kind of come and go in and out of life. And he said to me, You know, you're not permanent either. And I said, Yeah, I know that. And he said, So what brings you joy, Barb? And I just started crying. I mean, like almost I almost wanted to get up from the meditation, but I just started crying. Tears were just rolling

down my face because I just kept feeling this sense of impermanence and not being able to answer the question.

Barb Schmidt: [00:46:49] And I went their whole rest of the meditation like that. I couldn't. I kept feeling the sense of impermanence. I'm impermanent, which I know that all sentient beings are impermanent. We are all impermanent. So I got feeling that and I kept feeling like. Oh, my gosh. He is he is impermanent. When there's no rain, he doesn't exist. And so I'm impermanent. But what brings you joy? Aren't you here to experience some joy and happiness and life? So it was just all this was happening, crying like crazy. So I kept feeling this deeper sense of impermanence. So when I walked outside from the meditation, it was storming like no other. The wind was howling, my hat was blowing off, the rain was going sideways. We could hardly walk down to the dining hall. Thunder, lightning pouring, pouring, pouring. Rain pouring. I can't. I can't even describe. It was a huge storm. We lost power for a few minutes. It was a huge storm. And we're trying to do our best to walk down to the dining hall for lunch. And all I kept thinking about and I was actually laughing and smiling about my new friend Mud. Like, okay, he exists right now. And that brought me some joy. Okay. Mud is here right now. So in trying to digest that whole meditation, because obviously meditations or even dreams, so dreams, meditation, you know, when you're in a state of.

Michelle Maros: [00:48:22] Subconscious.

Barb Schmidt: [00:48:22] Subconscious, when you're in a deeper state of subconscious, when you're in a deeper state of knowing and you're just kind of there. I kept thinking, you know what? This. Yes, we are all impermanent. Life is not permanent. Nothing is permanent. So what does bring you, Joy? And I believe this stemmed from my loving compassion meditation for myself and this idea of what brings you joy. What do you want to do with your life? What do you what are you feeling right now? What what matters to you? Stop complaining that it's raining every single day and you're freezing to death. You know, this is just all those things like accepting the present moment as it is, accepting where you are, accepting the being alive and pleasure and pain, equanimity. Stop writing stories about the past. It kind of put a finality. It kind of put a closure to all that I'd been thinking and all that I'd been doing for that past previous week or all the things that were happening in the three years. And it brought me to a new place of impermanence. That's over. You can't do anything with that. You can't change

anything with that. This is your new life. What brings you joy? What do you want to do with yourself? And so I feel like. It's that whole thing that sounds so simple, staying present like, okay, what do I want to do now? And staying present and lack of confidence and anxiety and stress and all that comes from the past and the future. So and I've always had a deep connection with Mother Earth. So the idea that mud would come to my meditation was perfect.

Michelle Maros: [00:49:56] Okay, that's amazing. I have so many questions, but I know that. Okay. Interesting to hear that I have to title this episode, The conversation Barb had with mud or something. Do you think that mud? Mud lives off rain and it was asking you what you do for fun. And so what you do for fun is the rain that sustains you. Is that the point?

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:25] No, I think.

Michelle Maros: [00:50:26] I mean, you don't you were not you couldn't answer. And you needed that fun rain to sustain your life.

Barb Schmidt: [00:50:33] I needed the jolt of, oh, my gosh, walking out there was so scary. It was, like, profound.

Michelle Maros: [00:50:43] I was like, you know, Mud said to you, I can't live without rain. And it's impermanent. But rain is the fuel of it. And then asked you, what do you what brings you joy? And you had no answer. And do you think it was asking you that because what is your rain? What is the thing that fuels you that might be impermanent, but it it gives you life?

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:08] It could be.

Michelle Maros: [00:51:09] That's what I took out of it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:10] It could be that it could be interpreted any way that you feel is right for you.

Michelle Maros: [00:51:16] And so do you talk to Mud still?

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:17] How I interpret it, let me just, how I interpret it and why I was smiling and thinking about my new friend, Mud. What I interpreted was that this new friend called Mud gave me another perspective and a deeper knowing of life's impermanence. And he truly, I think of him as a friend because of the teaching that I got from it. I'm not going to go talk mud.

Michelle Maros: [00:51:42] I think you should.

Barb Schmidt: [00:51:43] I might. I think of him as a friend because of the teaching that I got from it. And I think he was there to show me. And I think the drama of the thunder and the lightning and losing power and the pouring rain and the wind, the wind was you could hear it howling and it was literally ready to knock us down. I think it was that profound so that I could really get the understanding of the deep sense of impermanence. And without rain, he doesn't exist. So if this is what you're saying, what I got out of it was he's my new friend to show me the very deep experience of impermanence from his perspective, which was so easy to see. And so without joy in my life, I don't exist. Like I can't exist. Is that what you're trying to say? Yes. Okay.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:32] And that you hadn't been caring for yourself in a way that you could experience real joy?

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:37] Yes, exactly. Michelle. Exactly.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:40] That also just reminded me of, like, Frosty the Snowman, you know, when he melts because it gets hot. Yeah.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:46] So, yes.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:47] Impermanence.

Barb Schmidt: [00:52:48] Exactly. Everything is impermanent. So if we really can get that, we really can change our lives.

Michelle Maros: [00:52:54] And then my other it's interesting that you had this thing with mud, too, because, you know, there's that common mindfulness phrase of no mud, no lotus.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:01] Yes. Yes.

Michelle Maros: [00:53:03] And so is that too. Like mud is messy and thick and gross and. Not ideal, but when you go through it, you get something nice in the outcome.

Barb Schmidt: [00:53:14] Yeah, you get the beautiful lotus. And it's not an accident that I've talked about this a lot in the work that we've done that my favorite thing during the pandemic, when I would walk Ellie every single morning my neighbor didn't have a front yard. Her front yard was all gravel with probably 50 cactus bushes. And now I live in South Florida. I had no idea that cactus survived in south Florida, 50 cactus bushes. And I'd lived there for, you know, maybe about a year before the pandemic. And I'd never seen anyone I didn't even know a cactus bloomed. I really didn't know anything about a cactus. I thought they were from Arizona and all that stuff in the desert. So here I am, walking Ellie one morning during the pandemic, during the very early days, March, April 2020, and it's got the most gorgeous flower that you've ever seen on this cactus. And I was totally raptured. I was in rapture about that. Every single I would call you all the time. Michelle and I would take pictures. I was absorbed in this. And so I loved it. And it bloomed a lot during the pandemic. So. Yes. No mud, No. Mud. No. Lotus. No mud. No acceptance of impermanence. No joy. It's really hard to have joy.

Michelle Maros: [00:54:25] So I guess lastly, to wrap up your experience.

Barb Schmidt: [00:54:30] And we could actually just I was thinking about this because I know that we're going on and on and I talk a lot. We could wrap up. Briefly and then carry it to the next episode.

Michelle Maros: [00:54:42] Okay. Sure you're the boss. Boss Barb.

Barb Schmidt: [00:54:46] The boss.

Michelle Maros: [00:54:47] All right. So. And then, I guess, how was the last week? Few weeks. You know what? Last few weeks. Next episode, we're going to talk about meditation and then, like, reentry, because I think that's a big piece as well.

Barb Schmidt: [00:55:00] I think. Yes, I love that. I love that. So I would wrap up this episode with the next meditation that I had was all about the earth. I do love nature. I love flowers, I love the ocean, I love dirt, I do love it all. And now they're they've been for the past year building a house next door to me. And I have nothing but mud at the bottom of my driveway every single day, no matter what if it rains or not, because they've got water going and flowing over there.

Michelle Maros: [00:55:30] That's so funny.

Barb Schmidt: [00:55:31] It is interesting, isn't it? I have had nothing but mud at the bottom of my driveway for the past year.

Michelle Maros: [00:55:35] You don't like it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:55:36] And.

Michelle Maros: [00:55:37] Be friends with it.

Barb Schmidt: [00:55:39] Yeah I am. He told me he said, we're going to fix all this. I said, It's fine. It's fine. But what I want to say, my next meditation I'll leave with this was about Mother Earth and what happened with that meditation was to get connected more with Mother Earth, especially since it was raining. I needed it. I needed the little tap on the shoulder and the little push to get connected to Mother Earth. Even though it's raining. You know, because it's beautiful. Go walk on the hillside. It's gorgeous there. But it was freezing and it was raining. And as I was closing up the meditation, I just heard this voice say, You are Earth Barb, You are Earth.

Michelle Maros: [00:56:18] You are mother.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:19] You are mother, you are Mother Earth. So go join with it. The world out there, in the world in here needs to come together. So. Yeah, it was it was a beautiful meditation and a beautiful time in the second week to prepare me for the third and the fourth week.

Michelle Maros: [00:56:43] Wow.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:43] So thank you for listening and thank you for being here.`

Michelle Maros: [00:56:46] I love that.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:47] I love being with all of you and love sharing this with you.

Michelle Maros: [00:56:48] This could be my favorite episode.

Barb Schmidt: [00:56:50] I'm so happy Michelle.

Michelle Maros: [00:56:51] Super cool. Thank you for sharing all of that. What a treat. I can't wait to go back and listen to this again. And I guess we shall continue this next week. Um, you said you wanted to have quite a few episodes dedicated to this, and that is what you all are going to get because Barb knows best. Thank you so much for sharing that, Mom. Thank you, everyone, for listening to the show and being so supportive and joining us on this journey of life. We shall continue this episode next or this conversation next week. But in the meantime, please make sure you're liked and subscribed to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. Apple, Google, Spotify so that you are always up to date to these fun conversations. If you have any podcast topic requests or want to stay connected to us elsewhere, make sure you're following us on social media at Peaceful_Barb, at Michelle Maros, at Barb Knows Best Pod. That's the best way to do so. And lastly, if you're loving the show, please share with all of your friends. Word of mouth means so much to us and give us a five star rating on iTunes and Spotify and leave a review. It's really helpful for us. We appreciate it so much. And it goes a long way with our little baby show. Thank you so much again for listening. Thank you, mom. We love you all and we will chat with you next week because as we know, Barb knows best. Bye.