

**Episode 93 – How We Manage Holiday Stress**  
***Barb Knows Best™***  
**Episode Transcripts**

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:13] Hello, everybody. Hi, friends. Welcome back to Barb Knows Best the podcast. I am your co-host, Michelle Maros, and I am thrilled to be sitting here across the table from my mom, Barb, for another conversation about the wild life that we lead. Hi, mom.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:33] Hi, Michelle. Hi, everyone. Yes. You know, probably one of my favorite quotes is that Mary Oliver quote. Just what will you do with your one wild and precious life? Because life is wild. Life can be very wild and precious. Wild and precious. You know, in the last episode, we talked about some of those. We talked about messy and authentic being together in the same sentence. Wild and precious can be together in the same sentence, which I love. And I just love having these conversations. Here we are just off the bat talking about wild and precious life.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:06] Fabulous. Um, so here we are.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:11] This is a very timely conversation. Since we are in...

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:15] Tis the season.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:16] We are in the holiday season.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:18] It has happened. It has started. Best of times are here. I personally this year was like, I'm ready to just dive in to holiday cheer. I'm usually I try to be more restrained. I wait until post Thanksgiving to really allow myself to be full festive mode. But I don't know. This year just has not been it. It's been really dark and really difficult and really upsetting on a lot of different reasons. There's a lot of sad stuff happening in the world. Difficulty in personal life. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So I'm full Christmas. I'm ready. Or any holiday. I'm festive. Full festive, full festivities commence because I am just leaning in to the tiny joys of happy holiday season.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:02:16] You have. You didn't even let your birthday, which is November 4th. You didn't even let that pass before you started putting up Christmas stuff.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:22] No I usually don't.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:02:24] Hallmark movies and all the joyful things that you love to have up. Actually, our colleague Lauren. Her birthday is October 31st. You didn't even wait for Halloween to be over. so...

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:35] No I was just ready. I just wanted to feel la la la and disassociate from the rest of life.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:02:44] Yeah, it has been a challenging year. It has. I can say that for sure. We've talked about that on several episodes this year, and I think it's up for everyone, as it always is, the holiday season. One of the little caveats here, where we live in South Florida is Florida. not only is it the holiday season, it's it's the beginning of the season. Season where everyone.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:03:06] Like the busy season.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:03:07] Yeah, the busy season where traffic gets a whole lot more. Unmanageable.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:03:13] I wish you could have just seen her face as she was talking about that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:03:15] I didn't even know word to use.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:03:18] You looked like so upset.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:03:20] Well, just everything is just busier. Yeah, everything is busier. Traffic is crazy. Walking around is hard. It's just busier. Grocery stores are really, really crowded. So anyway, we want to talk about the holiday season. And this is always the time of year that we

share some of our insights and some of the personal things that we've been going through and how we've managed some of it, and also year after year, how we can really maintain our presence. During times of stress during the holiday season, and really embody what it means to be where your feet are. Just what we talk about a lot on the episodes, like really being present to the moment, but also being present to whatever it is that we truly desire for this moment in time. And what are some of the things that take us out on a daily basis as we're starting to get ready for the holiday season, or we're in the middle of the holiday season? And I think it's always a good time to talk about how can we preventatively can be more present and be more authentic. And not feel like we have to be something other than who we are and be perfect.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:04:31] Oh, I thought when you said be perfect, I thought that you were making a joke of like, oh, that we all have to be perfect. This this year. But you were saying? We can't be perfect.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:04:42] No. And that was I mean, I think I've really. Move through that over the past, I don't know 15 years.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:04:50] Well you certainly for my whole life, I think you held an expectation for yourself that you had to make the holidays perfect for everybody. And by everybody I mean like our family, but also like the community and extended family and.....

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:05:09] Everybody.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:05:09] Everybody.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:05:10] Yes, everybody.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:05:11] Which is quite a heavy load to bear.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:05:14] It's quite a monumental task that is actually impossible. So I think I've moved through that feeling of needing to do that year after year, and I just really feel I want to share this episode and maybe we'll do a part two of this episode. I just want to share the feeling of just being you and being present and being fully embodied in what it means to end a year,

what it means to be in a holiday season. Like, how can we find the tiny joys Michelle that you talk about so often, just to find the tiny joys and the fun and the relaxation into the moment. Like just to take a breath. And how can I just really be relaxed in this moment without any of the pressures? And I know we have the pressures, but how can we manage them mean because they're going to come. I mean, trying to think, thinking that we're not going to have the feelings of overwhelm or pressure or perfectionism or whatever it is, is not realistic. So we do have all of this, that actually just it just magically happens during the holiday season where we feel like all these things have to get done, but how can we manage them in a way that we're being more present than usual, and we're just feeling some of the tiny joys, and we go to bed at night feeling like, okay, this is actually a good day. You know, I had some ups and downs. But tomorrow is a new day. Let me let this day go. And I really can feel in this moment and present to what matters most to me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:06:45] Yeah. And so many feelings come up during the holiday season. So many expectations. So many. Ideals. So many, so much pressure. And I think we get I know we always turn to you, all our lovely listeners for topic requests. And hands down, without a question, one of our most requested topic requests is dealing with family, dealing with in-laws, dealing with expectations from family. And that is true year round. But then of course, we get into the holiday time where I feel like all of those feelings and expectations are like kicked into overdrive. It's like on steroids. So. We wanted to take this episode and maybe next week's episode if it goes into two parts to. Share some of our insights about managing family and managing our own expectations for the holiday season. And really. Being in our power and having a choice as far as how we participate, how we show up, how we engage and feeling really like grounded and confident within ourselves to really go through the holiday season. Because I used to feel like I said at the beginning, I love the holiday season. I'm like a. Super freak about the holiday season. I always have since I was a kid. I love the hallmark movies. I love the cheesy happiness. I love the festivities, I love the treats, I love all of it. And for a lot of my life, I would have such a. Excitement and expectation for the holiday season that a lot of times I would let myself get let down because it didn't necessarily meet my expectations. And I feel like at this stage in my life, I've sort of managed to. Let go of expectations, but also choose how I want to engage so that it can be what I want it to be. And that's been a really great part of my life and how I approach the holidays. And lots of other things that we're going to talk about.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:09:16] Well, you always say, I love this. You say it all. You say it often, actually. How do I want to feel? You know, ask yourself, how do I want to feel? And then take the actions and do the things that. You know, present the best scenario of you being able to feel that way. So I love that. How do you want to feel this holiday season. So I just throw that out there, you know, take a moment just to pause for just a just a moment here as we're talking. How do you want to feel? What are some of the feelings that you would love to feel during this season? And it's very powerful to name how you want to feel. And allowing that intention to direct. What thoughts you're going to allow to remain in your mind that are going to bring up the pressure or the overwhelm or the expectations. How do I want to feel? And I just want to repeat again. I am so hooked into our message from the previous episode on journaling. When you said that messy and authentic can be the same.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:10:22] They are the same and.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:10:23] They are the same. There you go.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:10:25] I know you don't want to fully commit.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:10:28] It's hard for me to fully believe that. I think that's going to be what I'm going to embrace for the rest of the season. Because let's face it, you and I, your birthday's November 4th. Mine is this week. I mean, whenever this episode airs. But your birthday's in November. Mine is the middle of November. November 17th. And then we click right into in the United States, Thanksgiving. And then we click into Hanukkah. Then we click into Christmas. Then we click into New Years. So it's like where we have to be able to be the author and the creator and the owner and the boss of our own lives to be able to take a breath. And oftentimes, if I get so caught up in the celebrations of all of the birthdays and the Thanksgivings and Hanukkah and Christmas and New Year's, I can even feel myself right now, you know, a little bit breathless in talking about it all. So I really want to feel I really want to allow myself to be messy. If I want to cry, if I want to feel disappointed, if I want to feel this is really hard, or and I also want to be because that is going to be my authentic self. So I won't have this unrealistic expectation of how do I want to show up here for the next few months? And I could actually just show up. With the intention of feeling authentic, feeling joyful, feeling that I am the best version of me in this moment right now. And I want to honor that.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:11:59] And also thinking about showing up authentically and it being okay that it doesn't look like what other people think that it should should with like quotation marks around it. Because I think one of the biggest pressures that we all feel when it comes to the holidays is like, what do our holidays look like from the outside? And do we have the big family together celebrating? Everybody's happy, everyone's cheery and festive and just cute, you know, stereotypical holiday cheer. I think when our lives don't match up to those like societal expectations, we think that there's something wrong with us. And. It's just not true. Our lives and our holidays and our celebrations can look however we want them to. And I feel like this was true for my birthday this year. Like much like Christmas, I love birthdays, I love fun, I love celebrations, I love feeling like childlike joy and it being. You know, totally allowed. And usually I have a lot of high expectations for my birthday of like, doing something fun and exciting and totally out of the norm of like what I would usually do in my day to day life to make it feel special. And this year I didn't really want to make any plans. I had been traveling, so that was a great way to celebrate too. But um, honestly, all I really wanted was to just like, have a quiet day at home, hang out. Like maybe some friends could come over if they wanted to. I wanted to put on hallmark. I wanted to do a puzzle that someone gave me a Charlotte puzzle. So that was like, my day is set. And I remember saying to someone like, you know, I think I'm good with just like hanging out at home and just relaxing.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:13:51] That someone was me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:13:52] I said it to a lot of people, you.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:13:53] Know, I was like, shocked, but.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:13:57] The someone that I was talking to was like, well, no, like, you can't do that on your birthday. You have to like, go out and do something fun and, and really celebrate. And, you know, you can always be at home or whatever. And, you know, that's kind of those expectations. And truly what made me happy was, was doing what I said that I wanted to do. And it doesn't matter that it didn't look like a huge party with lots of people or special thing, you know, out of the ordinary. It was honoring my wants and desires for like the

celebration and letting myself have it and being content with it. And it's okay that it doesn't necessarily look like what other people think that it should.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:14:41] And I do have to say, you were you were living your life that day, in that moment to moment, from the inside out. You were in pure joy. You were so happy the whole day. And I could just feel your energy was content. You were so content, so happy being with the people that you love. And it was. It was really a magical feeling. I'm using that word magical a lot, because it just feels like if we can tap into the magic of our lives, that's actually there in any given moment when we're present to what it is we truly want. And I think you were. You were this is how you wanted to feel. And it was it was really joyful. It was really and I, I don't I think you're right because I always have these expectations too. So it was really interesting for me to settle into. Wait, this is what she wants. Stop trying to make it something other than what she wants. Thinking that you have to impose a certain expectation of what it used to be. Because I know that your birthday is and holidays are really important to you. So it was really wonderful and I think it was a good teaching. It was a very good teaching moment, and I think we can carry that into the rest of the year. It's a beautiful thing to be able to just be content into what is.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:00] Yeah. And I say that, as you know, tying it back into a holiday season with there's something really freeing with giving yourself the permission to choose how you want to celebrate things and not being so in the habit of things like I know in. Different chapters of our lives like. Holiday would come, we would do this, this would come, we would do this. And there was no thought or question of like, what do we want to do? It was just, this is what we do. And I know sometimes it can be hard because there's probably lots of dynamics at play within family and and all of that. But just asking yourself how you want to celebrate and how you want to spend the next few weeks, the last few weeks of this year and just seeing like what is up for you and what are your actual desires? Like, it's been a hard year. There's a lot of really. Intense things happening. Maybe you don't want to travel for the holidays, and you just want to be at home and and feel comfortable and just, you know, in your own space. Maybe you want to go visit a friend who is going to be extra, you know, like ask yourself what you want and maybe let yourself be open to different possibilities than you usually do because you think you have to.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:17:31] And I think that can start with I love what you're saying, Michelle, because I feel like that can start with having a conversation with yourself and sitting with yourself. We talk a lot about meditation and mindfulness, just being with yourself in the moment and tapping into what do I really want? How do I want to feel? What are my desires for this moment? What are my desires for the next few weeks? What would bring me the most happiness and joy and love? Of the people that I'm going to be with. Of the holidays and of the present moment. So I think it starts with you being able to tap into yourself and understanding and having a conversation with yourself, just sitting in some quiet time. Noticing your breath and engaging with yourself. You know, how do I want to feel? What do I want this holiday season or these moments to look like? Right. And then when you're done with that, when you actually are able to tap into that. But of course, if we're with family members and stuff, we have to compromise. We have to actually. Be a part of the family dynamic, if that's what's what's happening for you. And during the holiday season, then you then you communicate that to the people that you usually spend the holidays with. Look, this is I've been giving this a lot of thought and let's have a little conversation.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:18:45] I just want to I want to know how you feel. How would you like for this to. And just start gently with a conversation about collectively, how would you want the holidays to go and be honest and and share? You know, usually you and I've talked about this a lot Michelle I've said usually I want to I want it to be perfect. I want it to be exactly this way. And I think one of the things that I've really noticed about myself is that I had so many expectations of what it what it is. And you're right, you said this a few minutes ago, Michelle, that it was like automatic pilot. Okay, we do this and we do this and we do this, and we do this and like checking the boxes off of what do we do for the holiday season. So maybe. Stick your foot into something a little bit different this year. And just what could what could you do a little bit differently that could bring about a feeling of contentment or bring about a feeling of togetherness in this present moment?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:19:47] Yeah.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:19:48] I think that's how I've really been looking at it. What do I what do I really want? And how can I communicate that my needs to those that I love and how together, collectively, can we share in this moment of joy and of presence? Because there is so much



heartache in the world today, so much heartache. And so I really want to make a point of being present. You know, you see that quote, your presence is my present. It's so true. I feel like for you and I, Michelle like being present with each other. We were on this trip to celebrate our birthdays and all of that. I think my most joyful time was we were so present with each other. We had no expectations of each other. We had no expectations of the trip. We just really flowed with the moment. We flowed with whatever life put in our path. And if we could do a semblance of that during this holiday time, it would be so beautiful. And so as we share this with all of you, where is a moment that you could create that feeling of whatever it is that you want to feel? There has to be a moment or a place. And I think if you engage the people that you're celebrating with and the people that you love, you could collectively come up with with a way to make your presence, the present of the holiday, of the holiday time.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:21:13] I love that. Let's take a quick break. And we're back. I do. I do really love what you were just saying about your presence and you know, sometimes I think that we forget how much our presence and our energy influences the situation and how much power we actually have to. Change a dynamic or to shift the energy with our presence and. And so thinking about that and how do you want to show up for. You know, these next few weeks. And being really intentional with how you're spending your time and your energy is a really important practice. And also allowing yourself to have boundaries and to say no to things. I think one of the biggest feelings of overwhelm that so many of us feel during this time is we're asked to do a million things. We get all of these invites. We're asked to be at all of these places, to show up to all of these events, to host for our families or to. Whatever it might be for school, for work. There's just so many different avenues that we're being asked to show up for. And maybe if it's even right now, as we're kind of at the beginning of this chapter of the season, like getting clear with like what you do and don't want to do and letting giving yourself permission to say no to some things that maybe you're just not interested in this year and being okay with setting boundaries. Or maybe you. You know, say yes to certain things, but you say, I can only stay for an hour or just kind of pre preparing yourself for the onslaught of invitations so that you know how to handle them when they come. Because I think once you get into the swing of things and once everything starts coming in and you're already overwhelmed. We have a tendency to just like, pile on and say yes without even really thinking about if it's something that we actually want to do.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:23:28] And I think in alignment with what you talked about with boundaries. Boundaries can be a a tricky word sometimes, especially during the holiday season, because how do you set boundaries in the holiday season? Everybody just wants to do whatever they want to do. There's that that mindset. I think that this is what we always do, so we do it and we just try to make the best of it. And so instead of having that mindset, the idea of having the conversation ahead of time, I'm really I think that's you and I have been doing this a lot. We're really sharing our feelings. And we went on this trip. We were in alignment. We didn't really want to have a lot of things planned. We didn't really want to feel like our days were packed. We really wanted to enjoy each moment. I let you be you. You let me be me. And it was just very amazing. And so I think to try to find a little version of that for all of you listening, think about the conversations that you don't want to engage. While we're during the holidays, because I think that's for me, that has always been a huge trigger.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:24:26] So with everything that's happening in life and everything that's happening in the world and everything that happens in general all the time. Think of the things that you really those awkward conversations or those invasive life questions, or those uncomfortable political disagreements, or the frustrating small talk. Think of the things that you want to have a hard line on, that you don't want to have conversations about during the holiday time. The holiday time is not the time to talk about politics, not the time to talk about. Uh, when are you going to get married or whatever? All those pesky questions that come up are those intimate questions. It's the time to be light. For me, this is my own opinion. Holiday time is the time to be light. To feel free, to enjoy the present moment. It's not the time to try to change anyone's beliefs. It's not the time to try to challenge anyone's beliefs. This is my own opinion. It's that there are, there are, you know what? Nine, ten more months. 11 more months in the year that we can talk about all those things.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:25:32] I was like no.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:25:33] Why would we want to talk about those things during a holiday? Dinner or during a gathering. So I think those are those are the things that used to bring me a lot of anxiety trying to be because I'm always wanting to I'm always want to be the interceptor, you know? Okay, what am I going to do if this comes up? How am I going to handle this? What am I going to do about this? How do I how do I move the conversation into something

different? So maybe up front, let the people, your loved ones know, let's really try to be present in this holiday and stay happy and joyful. Giving gratitude for everything that we have. Sending gratitude and love and prayers to all those that are suffering. And let's not try to have our own personal conversations about what we think is right and wrong. I don't know if I said that. I don't know if that came out the way I was hoping that it would, but I just feel like there's always a guardedness. Or for me, it's always been a lot of anxiety of trying to manage conversations or manage the talk or manage the mood or manage the responses or manage the energy. I'm the fixer and I'm the manager, so I don't know.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:26:46] The only way that I know to do that is just to be up front in the most kind and loving way and let people know what I need or what I think or how I feel.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:26:56] Right.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:26:56] You know, if somebody doesn't agree with me or doesn't agree with you, if you want to set a boundary about not talking about politics, let's say then that's a whole different story. I think I can remember one episode once with my family where that whole conversation came up and I said, you know what? I'm just not comfortable talking. I just want to have fun. I just want to. And I remember somebody saying to me, what? You just never want to have the difficult conversations. And I said, I do. I just don't want to do it right now. And they there were other people that wanted to engage in that. So I remember just saying, you know what, it's fine. I'll come back when you guys are done. Or I mean, it's really difficult and I think that's what causes us so much anxiety. So having the conversation ahead of time can be an actual help and a resource that you can have in your back pocket. So maybe you don't have to face that situation.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:27:47] And I think, like you said, coming up with some sort of line that you can say to people that you have in your back pocket of how you want to respond to some of those questions that you were talking about that are so uncomfortable, whether it's talking about politics. But for me, you know, the questions of, oh, are you seeing someone? When are you going to get married? Are you going to have kids? What's work like? Like you know. Well, the work question's fine, but it's more the personal stuff. Um. Is people talking about your weight, your appearance, you know, all those things that are kind of stereotypes for

how we envision those awkward family conversations. I think they're stereotypes for a reason, because they actually happen. And I know I used to hate getting caught off guard, even though I knew it was going to happen. Getting asked some of those questions, and I found it's really helpful for me to think about how I want to respond when they come up beforehand, so I can not feel caught off guard. I can say what I want to say or shut it down if I want to shut it down and not be so reactive to it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:29:01] Well, because let's face it, not only is the holiday time not a time to talk about controversial questions or conversations, it's not we're not at our ultimate energy levels. You know, the holidays bring up, bring about where we try to pack in even more than a 24 hour day than we normally do. I know for me, I feel like I'm on overdrive or I was trying to do everything, so my 24 hour day felt more tiring, more overwhelming at times because we're trying to pack it all in. We got to we got to get it all done before, you know, the Hanukkah gets here before Christmas gets here before the New Year gets here. And I think that we are not at our best to have a conversation that is that possibly that explosive or possibly that difficult. So I think in the spirit of fun or ease or joy or happiness or lightheartedness, I think it's really important to make sure that we're not trying to do too many things and have the conversations that are going to possibly upset the whole day and really set that intention of the joy, the ease, the fun, the lightheartedness, because these are the people that we love, right? I mean, these are the people that we love or these are the people that are in our lives. And can we, for this one moment, put aside all the differences and just be it's a very interesting situation. I think that we all find ourselves in at certain times during the holidays.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:30:34] And I think the only way that I can do that is by also taking care of myself on the back end, not packing my day in every little thing that has to get done. Not being a perfectionist, giving myself some downtime, making sure that I'm doing my practices in the day, having my meditations and doing the things that I need to do to fortify myself, and making sure I'm not trying to go above and beyond what I'm capable of. Yeah. I don't know if that made any sense either. Is this an interesting time? I think we have this conversation a lot during the holidays because it's it's really interesting what it brings up, I think, for all of us. And I would ask this question of everyone. We tend to kind of abandon some of the things that we know that we need or the practices that we do, thinking that we don't have the resources, we don't have the time because we have to do all these other things for everybody else. But it's so

important for us to do the things for ourselves as well. I think that's how I'm feeling, like I have to take care of myself, and I love to take care of other people. I love to fix things, I love to help the world, but I really want to make sure that I'm taking care of myself so that I can be that lighthearted or easy, joyful person that I'm talking about.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:31:49] Yeah, I think oftentimes in the past with holidays, you would get so stressed and overwhelmed that it. Sometimes could take away your joy.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:32:01] But, you know, think about it. Do we just want to get through it?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:32:04] Right.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:32:05] I think in life, that's where I feel like this year. Has brought about a sense in me. I don't want to just get through things anymore. I used to sometimes it was so hard and especially the past few years, but I think I made it through the day and sometimes that's good. I mean, sometimes that's fine. Making it through the day. Wow. I made it through another day. And which is I'm not saying anything is wrong with that. And that is certainly how we're going to feel from time to time. But for the majority of the time, to feel like you're making it through the day, it's given me a sense of pause, like, wow, I really don't want to just make it through the day. I want to make the day the best possible day it can be in the present moment, given how I'm feeling or given what's happening. And if I need to take a break, I'll take a break. So it's interesting to move that into the holiday time as well. And I think you said it earlier, saying no to things that I don't want to do. I said no to so many things the past couple of months, and I think even more so. Not feeling like. My time has to be spent. Doing things not necessarily that I don't want to do, but doing things even if I do want to do them. Maybe I don't need to, or maybe it's not in my best interest, or really looking at what is. Asking yourself what is in my best interest right now and what can I do and what do I not need to do? You know, to show up as my present self and being where my feet are, getting enough food, getting enough sleep, getting all the things that we need to do, and relying on the practices that you do do to fortify you. And don't abandon those, especially during the holidays.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:33:42] I agree, the practices are so important and taking time for ourselves are so important. And excuse me, reconnecting with ourselves throughout. Like taking

temperature checks of ourselves so that we can say like, okay, how am I doing here? How am I feeling here is so important because that can really guide us and help us to make choices and set boundaries and. Engage in conversations in a way that's aligned and authentic to who we are.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:34:12] So I think the biggest tip that we could pass along is to remember your power. Is an being, allowing yourself to be messy. Because messiness is authenticity. According to Michelle Maros. Yes. And doing what you need to do. Feeling your feelings. Feeling your emotions. And if you're feeling lonely, or if you're feeling disappointed if you're feeling a lot of grief. Grief has been coming up a lot for me in the past few months as well. Is this interesting how holidays just bring up a lot of stuff? But grief has been coming up a lot for me, and the whole idea of the holidays don't have to be wrapped with merriment and cheer and all of that. They need to be wrapped with authenticity, continuing to feel the feelings and emotions that are coming up in every moment. And if you're feeling sad, it's okay to be sad. Allowing yourself to feel sad. Allowing yourself to even feel lonely if you're feeling lonely. I think that's how I'm trying to live, as I'm coming out of this really difficult year of 2023, what do I need and what feelings am I having and what is what is going to serve me, which will ultimately serve the whole because my life is all about. Giving and helping and loving and all of the things. So it's very it's very. Reflective. I'm feeling very reflective.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:35:45] I can see that I like it. Let's take another quick break. And we're back. So I think ultimately what we wanted to share with you all this week, talking about the holidays and the thing that really keeps coming up for me when I'm thinking about this is. Really remembering that you have a choice. I think so often we think that we don't have a choice, that we can't choose who we want to be with, how we want to spend our time that we have to. Do things because this is how we always do them, that we have to go certain places, because that's where we always go, that we have to show up to all the places because that's what we've always done in the past. And I think the more we can start to. Break down that mindset that we have to do things the same because it's how we've always done it. And committing to checking in with yourself and your family, or your kids or your partner or your friends to seeing, like, what do you really want out of this season? And maybe it's something totally different than what you're used to. And being open to that and being open to choosing something different, because that's where you are in this moment in time and choosing something that's authentic

to you. Like you were saying, even if it's messy. You know, I think I remember one time when I was younger, I think we chose not to go somewhere for a holiday. And it felt a little messy and I remember giving you a hard time about it. But, that's what was the right thing to do. And even if it's messy, if you're honoring yourself in a way that's kind, obviously. That's what you need to do for yourself, I think. Life is overwhelming enough and we always feel so much pressure and stress. And if we can start to speak up for ourselves in a way that's aligned and that's kind, but that's also. In alignment with how we want to feel, we can relieve some of the stress that the holidays can bring.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:38:09] And I think this, all of you listening, I think this may sound like, oh yeah, sure. We can't. How do we do this? We can't. We have to do this or we have to do that. Or family members are expecting this. Family members are expecting that. So really, what Michelle and I are suggesting as well is just find one way. Just find one way this holiday season that you're honoring yourself. Find one way that you really feel like this is who I am. This is. This is how I feel. This is what I want. So we said this at the end of the last episode. Michelle received a birthday greeting this year that that basically said Happy Birthday Michelle. I hope one day you will get over this silliness. And the silliness meaning her feelings. And so it enraged me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:39:00] As we can tell, she's putting it on blast.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:39:02] Well, because I think I want to share it. We our whole point of the podcast, our whole point of our existence with the work that we do, is to share our personal experiences and what we feel and how we move through them to live the best life that we can possibly live. Because it's hard, and I don't want people to ever think that our lives aren't as hard as the next person. So we all lived difficult, hard lives to the extent. I mean, certainly on a different scale. You know, every person is different. I'm not trying to say that that my life is any worse or any better. It's just that life is hard. And so what I took out of that message is your feelings are silly. How you're acting is silly, how you're behaving is silly. Your emotions are silly. Silly. What a condescending, deplorable word to use. And so I'm bringing this up because is there one one small thing that you can do this holiday season that honors your feelings, that honors your emotions, that you are not silly? We are not silly. Our feelings are not silly. We matter. Everything that happens to us matters. We matter as human beings. We are worthy.

And you're not alone. If you're feeling like your feelings and your emotions and the ways that you want to live your life are not honored, right? Or they're not being met. You're not alone out there. We all have certain areas. So if you can just find one way.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:40:40] I keep harping on this. If you can just find one way to honor yourself this holiday season. I believe you will find that it nourishes you a lot. It gives you that when we talk about own your power. Use your power, use your voice, or find the calming practices that you have that will help you feel in the moment. All of that will start to come into play when you honor yourself with one way that you feel seen, or you feel heard, or you feel present. My message for this year is be present, be present. Be where your feet are. Honoring yourself in this moment of being present. And we can really honor ourselves, I believe. For me, everything that I share is about me. I've been telling you my own experiences is that when I can be present in the moment. I have to actually, what am I trying to say? So I can be present in the moment when I'm honoring myself. It's hard to be in the present moment if we're not caring and honoring ourselves, I guess is what I'm trying to say. Yeah, it's hard to be present if I'm not thinking that I matter, or if I'm not thinking that I'm worthy, or if I'm thinking my feelings are silly. It's it's so absurd. And so I just want all of you listening to know that you matter and find that one way. That you can feel comfortable and present in the moment.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:42:09] I agree, and I think. You know, life is an interesting journey and. Sometimes things don't go as you want for them to. And sometimes things are uncomfortable. But I think the more that we get into the habit and the practice of advocating for ourselves and our needs, even when it's uncomfortable, and keep planting the seeds. For that, you can create a situation that is more in alignment with who you are and what you want. And I think so often, like I said before, I would have such high expectations for holiday season and would oftentimes be let down mostly because of family dysfunction, I mean, right.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:43:04] And families can be dysfunctional. Absolutely. I don't want.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:43:07] To say something that you were like, what?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:43:09] Oh, of course you don't think I know our family's dysfunctional. I mean, I would imagine everybody out there could raise their hand to some sort of dysfunction



somewhere along the line. So absolutely. Our family. Look, yeah, we have alcoholism. We have all kinds of stuff in our family. So absolutely, it's just.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:43:25] We had a lot of volatile personalities.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:43:27] A lot of volatile personalities, a lot of strong wills.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:43:31] And so I say I'm not piling on to the people, but I'm saying. These past few years for us have been like an unraveling of the dysfunction. And it's like step by step, standing up for yourself and what you want. And like we always say, to trust your timing and you don't know the timing in which your life will unfold. But I think here we are at this place where now we have choice. We can choose how we want to spend our holiday, we can choose who we want to be with, and we can choose things that bring us joy. And we don't have the dysfunction that's like the gray cloud over all of it. But that took time, and it was like a process of year after year just making small little shifts. And so I think don't discount the small actions and steps that you make within your own families of shifting the narrative or shifting the energy or shifting the dynamic, because. You can get to a place where there's peace. It's just. I don't think things resolve themselves overnight.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:44:42] That's really well said, Michelle. That's why I think it takes one little small step. That's what I said. Yeah, exactly. I was, yeah, echoing what you said, like it's one little small thing where you're honoring yourself because I believe during these stressful times, not just holiday season, any time we're feeling stress, what is one of the biggest feelings we have along with that stress or the anger or resentment we're feeling that we're not being seen or heard. We're feeling like we don't have any power. We're feeling like we don't matter. I really can't emphasize this enough that the more you can embody the love and the care. And the specialness of you, the more that does start to shift the narrative, as you said, Michelle, it starts to shift the energy. The more that you really care about yourself. And not in a not in a narcissistic, you know, selfish way of of taking it all in. And, you know, hell with everybody else that's around me. We're not even talking about that at all. You know, sometimes there's dysfunction of family that that has to be unraveled like ours has been. There are many families that aren't like that. So we're not we're not telling you to go in and throw a bomb in

the in the family holiday season. But just to start to find this small little ways that you can honor yourself.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:45:57] I mean, how many times I said that like ten. I think I've said that quite a bit. It really will matter. It will matter. It will matter how you feel. It will matter about your energy and how you show up. It will be. It will help you go a long way in showing up in a way that is in alignment with who you are and how you want to feel and what you want to happen for this season. I just really believe. And I'll end with this, that you can't. You. You can't abandon yourself. You can't. You can't put a costume on and brace yourself for whatever it is you need to do, knowing that it'll all be over January 1st, 2025 or 2024. Well, I just sped up a year.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:46:41] Geez.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:46:43] Life doesn't work that way. It just truly doesn't work that way. Our bodies don't work that way. Our our inner souls don't work that way. We want to be acknowledged. We want to be seen. We want to be felt. We want to be heard. And so if you can start acknowledging and feeling and hearing your inner self and finding that one way. To take care of yourself and honor yourself. It will mean everything. I truly believe it will mean everything. I certainly have felt the presence and I felt the shift in me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:47:14] Definitely. I think when you care about yourself in that way. You can make choices that are in alignment with it, but then show up. And in a festive way.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:27] Well, and I think that the things that the things that the things that really, really, really bother you and I'm not talking about the the things that are offensive or the things that are absolutely no, but some of the little things that bother us that really don't matter with other people, they tend to kind of go by the wayside. You don't because you have your own sense of self. You're strong, you're powerful. And so the little things out there don't penetrate you and bring you down. I just think it's for me, it's been a life changer to start to honor myself in, in any way that I possibly can. But but starting from, you know, small way, start to honor yourself in one small way, that one thing. That will help you feel joy and feel like you matter and make you feel the power that is you.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:48:21] And in that same vein, like, let yourself be creative with the things that you want to participate in that bring you joy. And maybe you start a new tradition or. Bring in a new family favorite. You know, like, I think one of the things that would always. Be a damper for me during the holidays is like doing the the same things the same way. Because we have to because it's the way it's always been done. And we have to do this on this day and this on this day, and eat this on this day and, and do this then, and just never feeling like there was space for being creative with it, or changing it up, or adding in something that's fun for somebody else. And I think having that flexible mindset of we can we can change tradition, we can add in things that bring us joy. We can be open to suggestion or new ideas that we hadn't done in the past. And. I think encouraging, like flexibility and choice in the season has been a huge game changer for me. I remember like one Christmas recently, like I made some random dish because I saw it on a website and it looked fun to make, and you guys were like, why are you making that? That's not really like a holiday dish.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:49:44] I'm like, because I want to. And like you let me, even though everyone thought it was weird and it turned out mediocre, but like, you were open to letting me just, like, play and have fun and do something different. And I think, if nothing else, the season just being flexible in our mindsets, being flexible in our expectations, being open to new things, being open to new experiences and doing things that are intriguing and exciting for you and not questioning it. Allowing yourself to just be playful in that sense, but in a way that's like restorative and taking care of yourself. Like in that same story. When I wanted to make that random dish, it was like really complicated and hard and messy, and you were like, are you sure you want to do that? That seems like a lot of work. And, you know, I just wanted to do it and it brought me joy. And so just allowing yourself to be in that mindset too, of. Optimism, curiosity, flexibility, and really choosing things for you, even if it's something really small, like making some random dish. Um. It really is like those tiny joys that can set the tone.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:51:03] And I think, you know what? I remember that whole episode and one of the things that brought me so much joy in that moment, seeing all of the counter cluttered with a million pans and and bowls and spoons and all of that, and that was was your joy. I really felt you. You had so much fun doing all of that. And as I was watching it all unfold, your joy brought me so much joy.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:51:31] And like it's random. It doesn't necessarily make sense. It's not something that was expected of me. I'm not usually like, oh, I want to be in the kitchen. And it was joyful. And so I think just being open and curious and following the breadcrumbs of the things that excite you and letting yourself just be curious and in the moment. And you know, if you drive past a. Somewhere that looks like fun and you want to stop in, like let yourself do it and just release some of those pressures and expectations and be open to the unexpected. Tiny joys.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:52:13] And I'm going to share something, you know, it just came up for me. And I think this could be maybe the one thing that you do, because it certainly embodies what we were just talking about when I said, your joy, even though the kitchen looked like.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:52:27] It was my kitchen.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:52:28] I don't even know what. No one.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:52:30] Had to clean it up but.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:52:31] Me. But your joy brought me so much joy. So that's that sympathetic joy, or that's that vicarious joy where we feel. Or someone else, even when their positive experience doesn't benefit us at all. And so that whole idea of finding joy in someone else's joy is a wonderful way to look at the holiday season. So it goes. I feel like it goes really in alignment with what you're saying. Michelle allow somebody to do something different. I mean, you know, as long as it's not at the expense of other people and not harming anyone and causing suffering because there is so much joy in seeing, especially if the people are, you really love them a lot. Like, I love you so much. And it was so I was so against what you wanted to do internally, but I thought I could tell you really wanted to do it and I thought, so, who cares? I mean, it's like, why are we so quick to, I think, be in that rigid frame of mind that we have to do what we have to do or we can't do this. We can't. It's just it was an interesting, freeing moment for me saying yes to you last year, but it was also interesting to watch how joyful you were. So think about that as you're going into this season. That idea of sympathetic joy or vicarious joy. That beautiful vicarious joy that we feel for someone. And it doesn't even have to be someone we love. I mean, I've there have been times when I've felt the vicarious joy

of, you know, two people sitting on a park bench looking like they're having the most wonderful, funny conversation. So tap into that joy that you can feel for other people, because we know that we feel it, the joy that we feel, you know, when we see someone feeding a squirrel. I know when I see, you know, just seeing stuff like that, I saw that recently.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:54:23] So I get vicarious joy through hallmark movies.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:54:26] Yes.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:54:26] I think that's why everyone loves them so much, because they're happy and they're joyful and they're pleasant, and we want to feel that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:54:35] So think about that. I mean, really put that in your consciousness, that the vicarious joy. What what vicarious joy do you feel start to identify places where you you felt that because you have maybe just we just haven't named it, but you have the vicarious joy that you can feel for someone else, even when their positive experience, their joy, does not involve or benefit you at all directly. You know, sometimes there's an ancillary benefit, but mostly it doesn't benefit you. It just brings you that smile to your face. It brings you that overwhelming joy that you just can't really put your finger on it, but you can feel it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:19] I love it. Tiny joys.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:22] Tiny joys.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:22] Tiny vicarious joys.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:24] I hope this has helped a little bit. And next week we are going to get.....

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:30] We'll dive into more of the feelings of it all.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:32] Yeah, there's four particular feelings that we think comes up for a lot of people during the holidays that we'll go in depth, and what has helped us in the experiences that we've had. We hope that this is the beginning of joy for you in the holiday season.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:48] Yes. And remember, you have a choice.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:50] It's sometimes hard to remember that. We think we have to. So, you know, maybe take and....

[00:55:57] Make small choices for yourself.

[00:55:58] You know what I am going to end with this take, you know, life can have three buckets. What we should do.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:04] I think we talked about this before.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:05] I know. So go back to the bucket episode, whatever that was, what we should do, what we have to do and what we want to do. So those are the three buckets. And certainly during the holiday times there are things we have to do. We know that.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:18] Right.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:19] And we don't really have to. We don't. We don't need a bucket that says what we should do. What the heck does that even mean? Let's focus on what we have to do, not what we should do, and really put the emphasis on what we want to do. So if you can find that one thing that you want to do, and then maybe let the other things that you have to do maybe try to find that vicarious joy. Try to find the joy that you have in seeing other people's joy. It wouldn't be what you would choose to do, but you have to do it and get rid of the should bucket.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:53] Amen.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:54] Well, maybe we should have started the episode with this. Well, get rid of "should" the bucket. Have only two buckets for this holiday season and for life. Really, we have to do and what you want to do and make a little list.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:57:07] Yeah. You can make them little stockings instead of buckets.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:57:13] Oh, I could make the list. Oh. Like have a stocking instead of a bucket. Okay, well, I got it. That's cute.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:57:19] Okay. We've lost the plot. Anyways, I love it, and I hope that this was helpful and we'll continue the conversation next week. But. Just do your best to honor you and yourself and your needs and take good care of yourself, because it's not always easy and. We are here for you. So thank you for listening and being a part of the community.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:57:41] We love you.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:57:43] Yes, we do.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:57:43] So much.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:57:46] Yes we do.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:57:46] We have vicarious joy in your joy. I mean, I can feel the joy and the. Just the energy that you all put out for us. And it's really beautiful. And I love you and I thank you.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:57:58] Yes. Thank you so much. Thank you. You know, this is also the season of gratitude. And we are so grateful for. The whole Barb Knows Best community and all of the messages that you send and the topics that you request and the support and the community and the love it's. We don't take it for granted. And we are so grateful for all of you for making this small corner of the internet so special and loving and kind. So we send so much gratitude out for each and every one of you listening, and we are so grateful. If you are loving the show and you want to spread the love, tell a friend about Barb knows best and spread the

word to those who might also want to be in our community, that's always the best way to. Let people know about the show, and also make sure that your liked and subscribed to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. Apple. Google. Spotify. If you love the show and you want to help us out, giving us a five star rating on iTunes and Spotify and leaving a review is hugely helpful and greatly appreciated. And lastly, 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 stay in touch, ask questions, and give podcast topic requests. Lastly, since it is the holiday season, as we said last week, we do have a journaling bundle available and it is so cute and it's such a great holiday any time of year. Gift and it is available through the link in our show notes, so make sure you check it out. Thank you so much for listening again and thank you mom and we will chat with you next week because as we know, Barb knows best. Bye.