

**Episode 97 – Cultivating Authentic Optimism**  
***Barb Knows Best™***  
**Episode Transcripts**

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:13] Hello, everyone. Hi, friends. Welcome back to Barb Knows Best the podcast. I'm your co-host, Michelle Maros, and I'm so excited to be sitting here across from my mom, who is so cutely as I talk and do my intro kind of mouths her along with me because she knows what I'm going to say. That was very cute. You're like, welcome back to Barb Knows Best the podcast. Maybe one day when we video these episodes, you can see her doing it because it's very sweet.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:41] I look forward to that in 2024 actually doing some kind of a video situation. But you're so cute.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:47] So long as you all don't mind. Maybe us looking a little raggedy from time to time.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:52] I think people would love it. It's the real world. It is. Yeah. So I'm very happy to be here. I am a little bit under the weather emotionally, so this should be a really good episode. I was waiting for you to say, as you always do. And how's it going being you today, mom?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:07] You know, actually, in my mind, I'm like, I'm not going to ask her because I know you're going to say no, please don't ask me that today because I don't want to answer it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:01:15] Actually I'm very emotional, you know, and maybe a lot of you listening are we're closing up 2023 and moving into 2024. And 2023 has been an extraordinarily difficult year for me, for us, which we've talked about on the podcast quite often. So it's I have a lot of emotions, a lot of waves of emotions. And that's why I think that this episode is so timely. When you and I were talking about what did we want to talk about today. And this particular topic came up, I thought, wow, this is perfect because it's what I've really been leaning heavily on in my own practice, and it's full of all the emotions and all the things that can be arising at this time of year. And just in general, you know, the emotions of sadness and grief and change

and uncertainty. And hopelessness possibly. And oh my gosh, what's next? All those feelings that we have as we close out a year. Are up probably for many, many people I know they're up for me in terms of all the things that could be happening. But also the other is true that the excitement of a new year being where my feet are today, experiencing some of the sadness and the overall exhaustion, I think I feel like I take good care of myself, but it's interesting to be overwhelmingly emotionally exhausted by the end of a year and not quite figuring out what's going on. I take care of myself. I do all the things, but it's normal. I have a tremendous exhaustion right now emotionally, and I think it's normal. So if you're feeling that, come right along with me and join the train of normalcy.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:57] Yeah, I have a lot of things to say to that first. It's interesting. It's interesting how we all can have our own unique experiences in life, but share so many experiences. You know, in seasons of difficulty or just really feeling, like you said, exhausted or overwhelmed or just kind of. Through it, you know, not through it, going through it all. And we were just traveling recently, and we ran into so many listeners on our travels and so many of the people that we ran into who listen to the show confirmed that for me, what we already know to be true, that, you know, what we speak about here is oftentimes what you all are going through, or similar circumstances or situations. Which brings me a lot of comfort because you know, I don't like to hear that anybody else is suffering, but it does give us that feeling like we're not going through things alone or we're not alone in our suffering or that we're not. I think especially at this time of year going through the holidays going through the end of the year, we can think that everybody else has their lives sorted out. Everybody else has everything that they want in life. They've got, you know, those Instagrammable family moments and holiday moments and gifts and abundance and just beautiful things in life.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:04:19] And that, what's wrong with us? Why don't we have those things? Or why don't we have what everybody else has? And obviously, as we talk about a lot on this show, the things that we see online aren't always the full story. And we are a lot of us are going through it, and a lot of us do have struggles, even if we have some of the things that people see online that makes us think that we have it all together. So knowing that no matter what you think or the stories that you write about other people, there's a lot of struggling and a lot of suffering, and we're not going through it alone. And that might not help our unique situations or help us figure out how to get through the difficulty. But it does provide us that little life

raft to kind of bob above the waves, knowing that, you know, life isn't specifically attacking us singularly as like the person that can't have good stuff in life. And secondly, what I wanted to say from what you were saying, mom. It's interesting being so close to you in personal in life, obviously, I'm your daughter. Sometimes people don't know that. New listeners or new followers. You're my mom.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:05:33] Well, and also I think we keep a good healthy relationship of mother daughter, but also of coworkers and also of individuals and I. That's what I really love the most, I think about our relationship is we're not just one thing. And I think all of you listening, you can be many things and many people and you don't need to fall into a mold of what is a mother daughter look like, what is a what is a friend look like? And so I really love that we are very authentic and very real in the way that we are and the way that we work with each other. And we have our ways of being able to do things. And when we're in the mother daughter mode of going out and having fun, like we were on this trip together, that's fabulous. And we run into so many people. I just wanted to comment on that with you. Michelle, and I want to share a story that happened to me this morning. I walked into my local Starbucks, and I hadn't been to this particular one in quite a while, and I walked in and the manager was there. He was behind the counter and I know him forever, all during the pandemic and everything. He's been there for a long time. And he said, Barbara, it's nice to see you this morning.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:06:32] I haven't seen you for a long time. I said, it's really great to see you. And so I gave him my order and he said, I just want to tell you, I listened to your podcast. I didn't know you had a podcast. And I smiled and he said, it is unbelievable that your daughter and oh my gosh, I love your podcast. And I listen to 2 or 3 episodes in a row, and I just want to say, I had no idea that you were coming into the store for all these years, and I didn't know who you were and you don't even say anything. You're just the most humble person I've ever met. I just really am so happy that you come into our store. And I said, I'm really thrilled to be here. And I'm really glad that you like the podcast. And he said, please keep doing what you and your daughter are doing. It's almost gonna make me cry. I'm very emotional today. Please keep doing what you and your daughter are doing. I love the podcast and I love the work that you're doing. And knowing this part of you after all these years makes me love you even more. He was so sweet. He was so sweet. It was so nice. So sorry I derailed you in that moment, but.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:07:34] Well, no, that does go into what we're talking about. Just sometimes little acts like that or seemingly nothing interactions can give you that boost that you need. And what I was going to go into before that anecdote, which I appreciate, I loved is that I do I am close in your life even though I'm your daughter. Like we do so much together. I see so much of your life. I, I'm very I witness your life up close. And I do know. Personally how challenging this year has been for you. And you're very strong. You rely on your practices. You do the work that you need to do. And I think you handle all of this so well, given what you're going through and what you've been going through. But it's been a lot. And watching, like, I feel like sometimes you get a day reprieve and then it's like whack a mole. Something else pops up. Some quiet stillness and then something else pops up. And what I want to say just before we dive into the meat of the episode is. Watching someone's life. If you have people in your life that can bear witness to your life, it's really helpful because watching you and watching everything that's been popping up and seemingly it could very easily take you out the amount of stuff that's happened and just the tempo and the nonstop and the no reprieve could very easily take you out. But being able to witness the things that happen in your life, especially if it's challenging and hopefully maybe having someone who can witness it with you to say, like, what is this trying to tell you? Or what change is it asking you to make or why is all of this happening in this way? Because it's I don't believe that when life is so egregiously in-your-face about things that it's an accident.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:09:34] And I think that it's for me when I whenever I need to learn big life lessons, I have to be, like, punched in the face by life because it's like, you know, we've been trying to, you know, show you and you haven't listened. So now we're going to really put it front and center. Um. And so watching everything that's been unfolding for you, and it's like every time you kind of try to make a right turn to normalcy, something else happens. It's like, wait, there's a lot that's being asked for you to look at and let yourself make choices that can change to make change. And I had a point to all of this. But I just think that if you're going through a season where you feel like you can't catch a break, like I know you have mom. Maybe talk to someone in your life who you can trust and who you feel comfortable with about. Okay, there's a lot happening. Like, what do I need to do here? Because clearly life is sending me messages and, you know, it's the end of the year, the beginning of a new year. We're going through a reflective period. We've gone going through the holiday season. So many emotions. What is life asking of me right now? What is life showing me? And even if it's scary because I

know a lot of things in your life. Um, I feel are asking you to make big changes. And that's scary. But I think it's also exciting because it opens up new doors that maybe you never thought were possible.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:11:07] Thank you.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:11:07] Does that makes sense?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:11:08] It makes perfect sense. It's really beautifully said. And I believe I'll end. But then also begin with this as we go into this episode, I believe that. I believe so strongly that we all need a practice of reflection. And you're right. It feels like every time I open up one door. Okay, now, this is where I'm needed to be going. And then all of a sudden, that door closes again, and then some major pitfall happens. And you're right, that has been happening quite a bit in the past year, but especially in the past few months. And so I believe strongly that. Yes, I really rely heavily on my practice and just this deep, knowing that all is well, even though it doesn't feel like all is well. So I just want to say this to start this episode, that if you are feeling a lot of feelings right now and a lot of emotions right now, first of all, it's normal. Second of all, honor that you're doing that. Third of all, I love what Michelle said about having someone else in your life that can bear witness to it, because I can walk in the door and you automatically know that something is up and you don't really let it go, which I love.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:12:15] You'll say, mom, are you okay? And sometimes I'll say, yeah, why? Well, I just sent something. Do you want to talk? Do you want this? You want to that. And oftentimes maybe if I'm not wanting to talk, it at least brings me back to the present moment where my feet are saying, okay, wait a minute. Let me just take a breath here and sort out what is going on for me in this moment that I can deal with, handle, and be the best that I can possibly be now. So you, being that person that does bear witness to my life is wonderful. And I always say you are my greatest blessing, and I mean that in every sense of the word. And this is a huge one about really having someone that is not afraid to tell you the truth, or not afraid to just speak up and say, hey, are you all right? Like the other day? I am not a candy person at all. At all and I think that stems from going into treatment for bulimia.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:13:06] Of course, you all know her history.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:13:08] Well, maybe we should talk about that more in 2024, because there's so many little nuances to that. Could be funny and could be fun, I think, to delve into, because bulimia is such a heavy duty topic. But I went into treatment in 1984, and one of the treatment plans of this center, it was a 12 step recovery center, and one of the treatment plans was that you not to eat sugar. So if an alcoholic doesn't drink anymore, or if an alcoholic doesn't drink anymore, then someone who's suffering from bulimia or anorexia should not consume sugar or flour or wheat. They used to call it flour back in 1984. Now we call it wheat. Um, and so that was the treatment plan. And how does that manifest and how does that work in your life? So having been on that treatment plan, sugar has become something that isn't really good for me. I know that it's not. I don't even like it. I don't even enjoy it. So I know that when I'm drawn to eat sugar, it means something. Emotionally is up. Something's going on inside of me that I need to pay attention to. And so I was drawn to eat some sugar this weekend with Michelle in Bloomington, Indiana. We had such a great time, and the minute that I said that, she goes, okay, mom, what's up? And it's so wonderful because..

**Michelle Maros:** [00:14:17] I mean we were in the drugstore and you went to the candy aisle and we're like, pulling bags and bags. I'm like, um.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:14:23] What's going on?

**Michelle Maros:** [00:14:24] No judgment. But who are you? I've been saying a little bit lately that we're kind of like Freaky Friday. Like I'm you and you're me, and I'm usually the one that's in the candy section, and you're like, do you really want that? And I'm like, yeah, I do. And it was role reversal there. I'm like, okay, what's happening here?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:14:42] And I just wanted to give a real sense of gratitude and shout out about gratitude for that, because it in that moment I said to her, I said, yeah, I'm struggling right now. And she goes, okay, fine. So that's the cool part. As you always say, Michelle, no judgment. There's no judgment, there's no attack, there's no oh my God, what's the matter with you? Do I need to call a doctor or are you relapsing or anything? No, it was just in that moment. That's what I was drawn to. But I know that that's not what I need. I need to be able

to sit with myself and say, what is the feeling and feel it deeply. And that's what you and I do for each other. And it's something that has been a godsend for me.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:15:22] Yeah. You were like, no, I'm struggling and I see it. And don't worry, this isn't.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:15:26] This too shall pass.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:15:27] No, you're like, this isn't going to be a thing. Yeah, okay. But I got my eye on you, ma'am. So.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:15:33] But it's nice to know that you have someone that has their eye on you. And. No. And in a way that is so non-judgmental and so accepting, but also so caring and strong. So let's talk about today.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:15:46] Let's so....Since we really I know we ran all over. Welcome to our lives. Let's take a quick break. And we are back.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:15:56] Should I hesitate to say this could be a part 123, four, whateer

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:00] Well you do, love that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:16:02] I do.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:02] I know we chatted a lot before really getting to the point of the whole episode,

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:16:09] But this was the point.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:11] It was the point.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:16:13] Go ahead.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:16:13] Freaky Friday. All right, so today we wanted to talk about. My favorite practice. Your favorite practice, but in different ways, which is interesting, of maintaining authentic optimism during difficult times and why I say authentic optimism is because. You know. We go through things and people are like, keep your chin up, keep your head up. Even us. This too shall pass. And that's all true. You have to cultivate a semblance of staying afloat when things are tough. But sometimes those surface level quips of maintaining optimism, feel fake when things are really hard. And there's a practice that you and I both rely on in our own unique ways that help to be that life raft in difficult times in a way that feels authentic to me. And you can talk about how it's authentic to you. So that it doesn't feel forced or phony or fake when things are going difficultly.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:17:28] I love it and I think that word authentic is important. And for me, it's going to be one of my words for 2024. Because we don't. Everywhere we go and people come up to us and say, oh my gosh, I love your podcast, I know you, I follow you on Instagram. And I think of the word that's used the most by the people that came up to us is you guys are so authentic. You share everything that I'm feeling, you're not afraid to say the hard things and all that. And I always just smile because I'm like, yeah, that's who we are. And it's how all of us should be. We need to give ourselves permission to be who we are. And I think that's really a huge message for me in 2024 to be who we are and to also have people in our lives. It's interesting when you said that Michelle, when someone says, keep your chin up and all of that. But there are those people in our lives who are truly caring about you are one of those for me, truly caring about us. And I have a couple of really close friends and one in particular recently who can tell who has asked me. And I said, yeah, I'm struggling. And she said, I just want you to know, she's a very dear friend. I just want you to know how amazing you are. And I know you're struggling. I just want you to know how everyone loves you and everyone respects you. And we really appreciate that you are you and how you are. And when you're feeling a little bit overwhelmed or when you're feeling like, oh my gosh, not one more thing, can you send my way that I can handle? When someone says that at first it might feel, you know, especially if you're in a hole, it might feel like, oh my gosh, okay, hurry up and keep saying all these things that I know that aren't exactly true.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:19:08] You know, that kind of the mind will start to diminish what someone is saying. But I promise you, in the next moment, if you have some quiet time with yourself,

please find a few minutes every day. I promise you, that comes back to you. And it's like, yeah, that's the voice of Trueness. That's the voice of reality. So that friend of yours or that person that says that to you, it's like, yeah, thank you for saying that to me. Even in the moment, I was kind of bypassing it internally, like, okay, yes, I know you love me, but. Do you really know what all. I'm going. It's just kind of interesting what the mind will do. So it's really important when someone loves you in your life and says that to you. It's okay to internally just kind of dismiss it in the moment. But the episode today is for us to talk about what are some of those beautiful things, what are some of those true things, what are some of those authentic things that people say to you or that you see, or that you know deep in your heart that life tries to take away from you in the moment because it's so hard. And I think that's what I'm loving that we're going to talk about today, because there are many of those things that happen to us. If we can just for a moment, let them take root in our consciousness while we're going through all the tragedies or while all the sufferings that we're going through.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:20:21] Yeah. I love that, and I'm glad that you had a friend that said that to you. That's very nice. Even though I say that to you often.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:20:28] All the time.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:20:28] I'm just kidding.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:20:29] No. You do. And as you used to say to me when you were younger, but you're my mom. What you think doesn't count, remember? Oh, but you're my mom. And it's true. It's true. It's nice to have a mom, and it's nice to have a daughter that has your back 24 over seven. Even though we can fight. And even though we can be at odds with each other.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:20:50] I mean, if you were in Bloomington, Indiana, perhaps you did see us fighting in the middle of town.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:20:56] It wasn't really a fight. I think it was. I just in that moment.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:21:00] Well it was halt, we talked about halt. We were hungry, angry, lonely and tired.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:21:05] Yes I hadn't eaten anything all day. The only thing I ate all day was popcorn.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:21:07] Yeah And candy.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:21:09] Oh I did eat a couple of pieces of candy there at the game. Yeah, like I knew it was right. So it wasn't really a fight. It was like I had enough. Let me just express this. Anger. Frustration. Hunger. Tiredness. Let me just express it in the way that I need to express it. And I thought it was kind of funny.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:21:28] It was funny.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:21:28] And you thought it was really funny. And we went on with the day. Yeah.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:21:33] But that's who we are. Yeah. So if you saw that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:21:36] It is who we are.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:21:38] Um.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:21:40] What she's talking about is I threw my purse and my phone on the ground. It's like standing in the sidewalk. In the grass. Yeah, it wasn't just. Oh, this is it. She's looking at me like, what? And I said, she goes, you need help? And I go, no, just give me a moment. Let me go pick this stuff up. Yeah, it was fine, but okay, let's move on because I can't wait to talk about this.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:22:02] So this concept of keeping something beautiful in your mind, it came to me when I last night, as I was thinking about what we were going to talk about today, and it just felt like. Kind of the perfect. Way to talk about optimism at this stage of life. But at any stage of life, honestly, any period of the year, whenever you're listening to this episode, because like I said, sometimes when life is challenging and you rely on some of those surface

level tools to keep your spirits high, it can feel like you're faking, like faking it to your making it. And sometimes when you feel like you're faking it. You're being inauthentic. I don't know if that makes sense to anyone else, but sometimes I'm like this. I'm working my tools. I'm working my affirmations. But it's it's not aligning. And I know it's helping me in a lot of different ways, but there's some sort of disconnect still, and I need something extra. So this is the extra for me. And it's this practice that you've always said to me from one of your favorite poets, John O'Donohue, but who also use this phrase from Blaise Pascal of always keep something beautiful in your mind, always keep something beautiful in your heart. And. I love this because it can mean so many different things based on who you are and what you want and what you need in the moment. But for me and why I wanted to bring this up at this time of year and to talk about it is because this concept of and practice of keeping something beautiful in your mind is my way of that

**Michelle Maros:** [00:23:42] keeping my attention to the light at the end of the tunnel.

Especially when we're in the holiday season, when life might not be where we want it to be or whatever's happening in our lives. If life is tough. Knowing that there is somewhere in my psyche that can see that light at the end of the tunnel. And because I can visualize. Something that I'm creating, or a situation that I know I will experience and feel, or keeping feelings that I want to feel in my mind, or something just simple. Like the tiny joys that we talk about. In my mind. That is what reminds me of what you were saying, mom. What's true, what's real, and what I can actually hold on to. And it's that practice of kind of knowing that the good things are coming, or reminding myself that good things will come because they are in my mind, and that power of visualization and manifestation like that we talk about where it's about feeling the feelings that you want to create now, like letting yourself feel the pride that you want to feel when you achieve your goal, or the love that you want to feel when you're in a relationship that you're looking for. Letting yourself feel that now because you deserve to feel that now. You don't have to wait. And for me, that's that practice of keeping something beautiful in your mind and in your heart. As a form of optimism and motivation.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:25:16] It's so beautifully said. Michelle. You know, beautiful happens to be one of my favorite words. I use it a lot, especially since I got out of treatment. It was one of the things that really, I don't know, the word beautiful resonates with me and it's not. And I think it

well, first of all, it's not just an outside loveliness or sense of beauty as we describe beauty sometimes.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:25:38] Physical beauty,

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:25:39] Physical beauty. Beautiful. I use that word so much so, and I think that's when I got out of treatment. And as I've been on this path for 40 years, one of my greatest, greatest teachers and most I just adore him so much. John O'Donohue is an Irish poet and author, and I think having half of my ancestry be Irish. My mother was Irish, my grandparents were Irish and my great grandparents came over from Ireland. This idea of finding this. John O'Donohue, an Irish poet, author, priest and philosopher, just his poetry just spoke straight to my heart. And one of the things that he insists on greatly in all of the studies, I bet I studied him, I don't know, for two, three, four years reading all of his stuff. And I think as he passed away in 2008, very young, it really reminded me of how much I was meant to meet him, just not only because of his Irish roots, but because of how much he touched my heart and this idea of beautiful. Quoting Pascal as you just did in this idea that beauty is more than just an external physical beauty. Because yes if you're living in the parts of Ireland that he was living in, there was a lot of geographical chaos.

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

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:26:57] And conflict and everything. So it's not just a matter of the outer presence of the landscape of life. And he introduced that word landscape to me in my life, in his teachings about how it has to become a more, I don't know, a more rounded, substantial, almost like a more fullness of life. Beauty is not just external and giving yourself the grace and the elegance and a deeper sense of depth from the inside out. And that's where I started my whole practice, that idea of living life from the inside out and watching your life unfold in that way gives you that sense when you're really at a place where I have been the past few months, I've been saying this almost every episode, and especially as we close out this year, it's given me a sense of aliveness from the inside of what's real and what's true. And when you use that phrase, fake it till you make it. I am such a proponent, as you are Michelle, of redefining things, because I think people have taken things out of context or have morphed them into something that they want them to be in, whatever it is they're trying to teach. So I just want to say, in my

treatment in 1984, it was a 12 step program, so fake it to make it was part of it. But it isn't what people I hear saying today.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:28:17] It's not be a fake person until you make it to be a real person. That is not what that meant at all. It means you already are worthy. You already are beautiful from the inside out. You already are great. You already are deserving, as you said Michelle of all the things that you deeply desire, of all the goodness of all, the love of all, the acceptance of all the worthiness, you already are all of that. But we are so effed up in our world today, and we get it all covered up with all these negativity and all these things that aren't real, and that people say to us or that we internalize from the traumas. Michelle and I are big time trauma survivors and surviving, so it's not like we don't get it. But there's a belief inside of you that's real that you don't have to earn your own worth. You don't have to earn the deserved nature of having the life that you truly. So that is what's real. So faking it til you make it means believe in yourself that this is real and no matter what, life is sending your way. Because, as Scott Peck said, in the Road less Traveled, life is difficult. Always going to be difficult. How we internalize it and what we do with it is what matters. So believing that you are already this person, even though you have the most extraordinary difficulties that all of us have, is not faking it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:29:40] It's truly aligning with who you already are. But you've forgotten. Yeah. So it helps to unfold the remembrance inside of you. And I think as I'm going through these past few months of the year, that's one of the things that's come up a lot for me. When Michelle you said it would have taken me down, taking me down. I just every night when I reflect, I think I just remember who I am. Even though all of this is hard and really sad and very emotional, I just remembered, okay, you can do this for one day, Barbara, that maybe you couldn't do for a whole lifetime. You've got this. You know who you are, and you may stumble again tomorrow and you're going to get back up and remember who you are. So that is what so many of the great teachers that I want to talk about as we go into 2024. But that's what John O'Donohue has really done for me. I feel like I feel like he's my brother. I feel like I know him inside and out. And he was born in 1956, so he was my he is my age. Um. I feel like I know him so well. And when I'm at my deepest, darkest place, the idea of. Okay, what is that one thing that I can keep in my mind right now in remembering who I am, and that is that I am beautiful and that life is beautiful and hard and chaotic and traumatic.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:30:58] And fulfilling and I deserve it all. I can't have the good without the bad. I can't have the hard without the ease. And so I deserve it all. And I'm capable of handling it all. And there is nothing wrong with me. And life isn't trying to teach me a lesson, or try to tell me what's wrong with me so that I can course correct. I've really been studying all this. I have lots to say in 2024.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:31:20] I see that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:31:21] Because I don't really. I don't like to use the word lesson, even though maybe that may be a fine word. And it is. I mean, we all learn lessons. I like to use the word teaching, like what is life teaching me right now? I didn't mean to..... It's just know I'm so excited about the prospects of 2024 in the midst of my emotional state right now. And we can have both. We can hold space for both and not claim either one as our be all and end all. But just knowing that we're worthy. And I don't ever want to have to prove my worth to live the life that I feel like I deserve to live.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:32:03] Well, a few things.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:32:06] Unpack all that Michelle.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:32:08] None of us have to prove our worth because our worth is inherent. And notice if you're feeling like you have to try and prove something to someone in your life or in a situation because. Of course. Certainly there might be situations where people ask us to prove our skills and our abilities and our knowledge and how we can handle certain situations, but. Our worthiness and our worth and our inherent ability to be loved and to love and to be worthy of good things in this world. Should not need to be proven to anybody and are not needing to be earned. And so. Sidebar. I guess if you feel like you're in a situation where you feel like you need to prove something, to even be worthy of something, or to someone, or to earn your earn respect or to earn love in a situation. You shouldn't have to do that right. Life is hard. There's a lot of work that we have to do every single day, but that's not something that we should have to labor for.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:33:25] I agree, and I also think that it really matters that you deeply know that and deeply understand that even if it doesn't feel it right now, even if you're not feeling it, I think trust what we're saying in our own experiences and that we are the same. We have different experiences, but we all get to the same place of uncovering that we are worthy. We are. Deserving of the life that we desire to live. And for me, what John O'Donohue did in changing my life. As so many teachers have. But in this particular moment, what he really helped me see in his teachings was that there's an inner landscape. He uses the word landscape a lot, which is so cool because Ireland has probably one of the more rugged, gorgeous landscapes. And so he used the word landscape a lot, and I used to use the word inner world and outer world. That was kind of my practice when I first started, when I got out of treatment was like, wow, I need to get more in touch with this inner world. What you're talking about Michelle, which is truth and love and worthiness and all the things, because I was so disconnected from the inner world of who I was and so deeply connected to the outer world. And I think that's what happens to us sometimes when we have way too much heaviness in the outer world and connection in the outer world, and not enough in the inner world, we start to feel that feeling of we're not good enough or we don't measure up. So John O'Donoghue helped me really using that word landscape. So yes, there's an inner world within all of us that is as real as the outer world.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:35:04] It's not like we're trying to negate the outer world. Oh, just live in the inner world, and the outer world isn't even real. Anyway, that was a huge thing back in the New Age movement when I was younger. And so it's not that one or the other is true. It's all true. There's the inner world. There's an outer world. But when John O'Donohue talks about the landscape, it helped me connect this idea of an inner world of landscape. What does that mean? I'm worthy. I'm beautiful. I'm deserving. I'm loving, I am love, and the outer landscape can be all rugged and all those things, but it doesn't have a bearing on the inner landscape. We can I can actually be connected and grounded in the landscape of my inner world, and then go out into the outer world where everything is all happening. Sometimes it's wonderful and beautiful and everything is great, and sometimes it's all falling apart and everything's going to hell. And I think this has helped me the most about recalling this idea of the inner landscape, because every time I go back to taking a deep breath and pausing. Okay, the inner landscape is I am worthy, I am whole, I am unique, and it helps me get that place of stillness for that moment of silence where I can actually receive being where my feet are, being in time. Okay, at this

moment in time, all is well. So when you and I Michelle talk about, okay, use that affirmation all as well, we could be saying all is well and the whole world around us is falling apart, but all is well on the inside. If you can connect for that brief moment of time and that inner landscape.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:36:39] Yeah. And. Going back to the all is well. For me all, as well as a reminder of my own strength that I can handle what's happening in this moment, even if it's a dumpster fire, which oftentimes it is. Um, so it's not bypassing or dismissing the true trauma or challenge of regular life. It's sitting in it and being where your feet are and being present to it. Reaffirming to yourself that you're strong and capable and you can handle it. And. I'm not saying this also to convince anyone that they have to be or create themselves to be so strong that they can just bring on challenges and traumas of life.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:37:36] Do not do that.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:37:37] Unfortunately trauma happens. And I guess in a perfect world, it wouldn't. But also know that you don't deserve to be mistreated, and your strength doesn't have to be a badge of honor of what you've been through, but rather knowing that your strength, inner and outer, is something that you've cultivated so that you can maneuver through life, knowing that you can handle things, if that makes sense. Um, and that's what all is well does for me, is it just reminds me that. There can be a lot happening, and I might not even know how to handle it, or how to deal with it, or how to work through it. But if I can tell myself in this moment that the answers will come to me, knowing what to do will come to me, a solution will come to me. And I'm capable. That always helps me. But I also wanted to say. Given something you said a little while ago.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:38:39] Could I just say one thing to that? Because I love that, and I do the same practice that you do, but but I wanted to add one thing is that the answers will come to me. Life is showing me direction. All the things are all true and not but, but. And in this moment I'm suffering. I'm sad, I'm hurt. I'm lost. I'm stuck. Acknowledge the feelings and say okay, it's okay. This is how I feel. And I know that it isn't going to last forever. It's that Maya Angelou quote, every storm runs out of rain, or the this too shall pass. So it's not that we have to believe. It's not that we have to be in the midst of this too shall pass and be over our feelings. It means. I know this isn't going to last, but in this moment, this is how I'm feeling and I want to

honor where I am right now. So maybe I need to cancel lunch with a friend because I'm just not up for it. Or maybe I need to tell the friend this is how I'm feeling. Can I take a pass or whatever it is, honoring yourself in every moment and not trying to bypass it, not trying to say that. And the only other thing I wanted to say with that Michelle and then go on, go ahead, is that this idea of, you know, when you think about landscape and for me, thinking about inner landscape and outer landscape. We wake up in the morning. And for me, my practice is I wake up every morning. I wake up, open my eyes, close my eyes again before I even do anything else and say thank you for the gift of this new day.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:40:11] And then when I get out of bed and plant my feet on the ground, I just have a sense of gratitude. Okay? I'm alive today. I'm grateful for that. And then I move into the day. And so I want to say about that is every day, you know, the the sun goes up, or maybe it doesn't go up because it's cloudy, you know, the sun goes down. It's all happening. Even though we can't see it. Sun goes up, the sun goes down everywhere in the in the whole world. No matter if you're in the mountains, the snow covered mountains in Colorado, or if you're on the front lines and doing all of the hard work that's happening in the country and the world today. It's all happening all the time. The sun goes up, the sun goes down. That external landscape is the same, but it but it differs in what it is. Our participation is in it. So what I wanted to say about that is in my most difficult hours. If I can just kind of keep a sense of the beauty of me or the beauty of life, not the external what it looks like out there, but just that knowing of the worthiness that you were talking about. Michelle. And we don't like take that out of your. Mindset that you have to go out and prove yourself. Like, go out and be yourself. Just be exactly who you are, tapping into all of the strengths and all of the things that you love the most.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:41:35] I love that. Let's take another quick break. And we're back. So we say all of this to say that. What is it that you want to cultivate in your inner landscape? To use your words that can help you move through the outer landscape. And how do you want to feel and what does that look like? And. What is? Who are the people that are in it and what are the surroundings? And this also kind of goes back to one of our really, really early episodes of asking yourself the important questions in your life and maybe revisiting that. Because I think when life is really challenging and I do personally like the word lessons, like lessons hit me over the head and I'm like, thank you. It's good. No, I know, and when you feel like you're. Being

given lessons or teachings. I do really feel like it's an opportunity to. To witness life and say, okay, what? Like what is life trying to tell me? And. Maybe there's something in the inner landscape inside that your inner self is trying to tell you. And asking yourself those questions of like, what do I really want in this moment? Or how am I really feeling? What is my deepest desire? What matters most to me right now? Getting in touch with those answers.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:43:12] They might surprise you, especially when you're in these challenging situations, because I think being this person that is witnessing the challenges that you're facing in your life right now, I think if you ask yourself those questions, you might get some answers that would surprise you, because maybe they're not your typical answers, because in this moment, you need or want or value something that can just bring you peace in this moment. And that might be different from your overarching regular day Barb. And I think taking some time to connect with yourself in that way, to get clear on what matters to you in this moment, especially if things are difficult, can remind you of what's important to then help you find that thing that you can keep in your mind that's beautiful, that's on the horizon, or that's, you know, that light at the end of the tunnel to help you stay afloat. You know, we're in this season, calendar year closing out one, starting another. We think about goals and intentions and resolutions and what we want to create and. For me, sometimes those practices can be a little triggering because. Sometimes we don't fulfill everything. But I love to visualize in my mind myself doing the stuff that I want to create.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:44:44] I like to visualize myself in a room with people that make me feel loved and supported, and how I feel when I'm in those places. I like to visualize completing goals and how I'll feel again when I do that, and being in situations and being in nature, being in places or doing small things, the tiny joys that we talk about and how that feels. And for me, that's the practice that feels authentic to me because I can be sitting in my house feeling down about a lot of different things, or stressed or overwhelmed or really confused. But I can also take that space where I'm in the present moment, where my feet are, and visualize myself that I know will happen in the future. I might not know when, doing the things that I want to do, feeling the ways I want to feel and knowing that both of those things can be true at once. I can be excited about the version of me that's going to finish my book or be in a certain place, or be with certain people, while still knowing that in this moment there's some stuff that I have to work through to get to that place. Does that make sense?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:46:02] Yes, it's beautifully said, Michelle, for sure. And I I'm so proud of you and I love witnessing you. I love being a part of your life and just witnessing the way you work through this whole practice of what you just described. It's so beautiful. And I think that's the key. We all need some sort of an inner practice. That keeps us grounded from the inside out, knowing the truth. And sure, we're going to go up and down in peaks and valleys and things can get very bleak and things can get very difficult. But as you're saying, there's that moment that you say, okay, wait a minute, let me just take a pause here, and I actually can feel the truth of who I am and feel the truth of that. And I think you writing your book this year has been one of the greatest joys that I love watching happening for you, and I'm so excited for next year. And at the same time, I think about, wow, it's been ten years since I launched my book. I've talked about writing a book now for the past four years at least, I think. And you're so funny. You're so cute when I say, hey Michelle, I got this great piece from a book. She goes, oh, okay, mom, are you actually going to start writing that? And it's so we have this cute banter back and forth. But as this year has closed out and it's been so hard. I've thought about, you know, that idea that you were saying that we're not failing, we're learning, we're growing.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:24] We have lessons that we've been taught. And I remember in one of my meditations in the past month, the book was coming because I had all these ideas and all these ways. And I remember this sense of gratitude and ease come over like, you know, the timing is perfect right now because you have so much more you want to say in this book, and you're you're now ready to say it. You weren't quite through it. And I think we talked about that in some of the episodes. I'm in the middle of it and I'm going to share more later. And so it just gave me a sense of don't close out this year, Barb feeling like you're a failure or feeling like, oh my God, here. I got another year going into 2024 and then I opened up. I always have these little passage books or prayer books or poem books at on my nightstand there, um, in my meditation room. And I opened up one John O'Donohue's poems, and this is what I opened to. May the light of your soul, mind you. May all of your worry and anxiousness about becoming old be transfigured. May you be given a wisdom with the eye of your soul to see this beautiful time of harvesting. Is that a fabulous way to end the year? I have goosebumps because, as you were saying, Michelle life gives us everything we need. It's just we don't want it sometimes, but we need it. And I thought I opened my poem book of his.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:48:49] Just grab one of his. And this is what? Front and center. Hmm. So as a testimony to what you were saying, we are given everything we need. And the teaching or the lesson that we're supposed to learn is to know that. To know that all is well in this moment and it doesn't feel like it own how you're feeling, and then know that you're going to be given the next step, next and the next step next. I remember, I think I shared this when I came out of that month long silent retreat, that one of the things that. With a poem that one of the teachers had read was basically, you know, how do you cross the flood? Oh, yeah. You know, you cross it bravely, one little step at a time. So I've been thinking about that too, in this whole context of ending the year, beginning a new year. And think about this. To see this beautiful time of harvesting. And I know I probably read that poem a million times, but it has not touched me the way it has today. Beautiful time. Of how gentle is that? You're not a failure. You haven't taken like five years to try to figure out how to write a first sentence of this next book. It's all been harvesting, all the experiences, all the ups and downs, all of the great bleakness. As John O'Donohue would say that I've endured. We all endure is a beautiful time of harvesting.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:50:11] I love that, and I love thinking of life as seasons, because.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:50:16] You really love that. And I love that about you.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:50:18] Well, because I do believe in the duality of of life, you know? We don't know true happiness without also knowing sadness and. I think that. The. Contrasting parts of life do teach us of what we really want and. I often wonder what life would be like if we didn't have these dualities and these seasons, you know, if we were just constantly. Happy and not challenged and given everything that we want, when we want it. Would we really appreciate it? Because that would be the normal and, you know, these seasons that are a part of life, like you were saying, of harvesting of. Reaping what we've sown, of bringing things to life, of planting seeds, of healing, of, you know, stillness or being quiet, of being active. You know, there's so many different. Chapters of our lives and noticing what chapter or what season we're in and being accepting of it. Knowing that each season ends and a new one will be begin asking us to show up in a different way and not trying to rush through. It is really helpful for me and I think for you. You know, with your book that you're talking about with your life that's been like, you're not going to be in this season of your life where you're constantly being batted down like a whack a mole. Um, that won't always be the case. Maybe it's lasting longer

than you and I both kind of would have liked for it to, or would have expected it to. But I do know that I can see that light at the end of the tunnel where. It's a different chapter and it's like, what all can I take from these seasons? That might be difficult because I know that they're not going to always be this way.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:52:29] And I think about that in my personal life as well. Especially during the holidays. But in any part of life, you know, sometimes I get really reflective of the things that I haven't quite achieved or or made a reality yet with relationships, with my own family, with meeting someone, and my antidote to that when I get disappointed or sad about that is. I'm not going to be in the single season of my life forever, where it's just me and my cat at home. I know that that's not going to be my season forever. And so what can I take from this season right now and be in it in this moment, knowing that one day I'll look back and it won't be my reality? And so just maybe sit with yourself and ask, what is this season asking of you? Or what is this season asking to be recognized, knowing that one day it won't be anymore, for the better or for worse, and taking some of the lessons or the teachings from it, taking the good and the bad from it, and knowing that another season is coming, another chapter is coming. Things are always changing if we, even if we can't see it. And one day you will look back and be like, oh wow, that was that was difficult. That was good, that was bad, that was ugly. But you will look back on it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:53:57] That's so beautiful. Michelle so beautiful. I get it completely. I think all of us listening are getting it completely. And I think the thing that I would like to close this episode with is the idea of. Making sure that when we have expectations of ourselves that they're realistic and that they're true. Maybe my word also is going to be true for 2024, because I feel like...

**Michelle Maros:** [00:54:23] You got a lot of words I think.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:54:24] I do have a lot of words. I feel like, you know, I want a treatment in 1984. So that's 40 years ago. In October of 2024, I wrote my first book, which is all about my daily practice and what all I learned in those decades in 2014. So that was 30 years into my practice. So what makes me think I need another book out so fast? And I think that's what I've been thinking about. All of the teachings and the learnings and the lessons and all the things are

so necessary. So I think for me, I would leave it as embracing what's happening in the moment. We don't have to like it. We don't have to ask for it. Please don't ever ask for hard things to come your way in life because they will come. I remember in 1997, I think it was 96, 97. I remember I felt on top of the world. Don't ask me why, I don't remember what was going on, but I just remember driving to work feeling like, oh, I am strong. I think I just come back from a retreat. Capable, powerful. I can handle anything. I everything is so fantastic. I'm thinking this to myself as I'm driving 35 miles to work. I can handle anything. Life. Bring it on. I was so excited and thinking, you know, just please bring it on. And there was almost like a I want to prove to myself that I can handle anything, that I'm now really strong and capable. I got it, I understand it all and I'm ready. Well. Like, not even five months later, your dad and I are talking about separating. So it was kind of interesting when I think back on.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:58] That timeline's not adding up.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:00] Maybe I have the wrong date. Oh, I said 90. Timeline is definitely not like so 87. 87. Anyway, the point is, I remember and maybe I have the wrong episode that happened, but the point is feeling on top of the world. And it wasn't more than a month or two later where I was feeling like in the barrels of the world.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:18] Yeah, you never know.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:19] So you don't have to ask for the bad things to come. They're coming. This is life, as you said.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:23] But the good things are coming too..

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:24] And the good things are coming to you. That's a good place to end this episode for me. And I just want to re-speak that piece of the poem that I read that really, I say, so many things have changed my life, but this certainly has turned me around to read this again after my meditation this past week to. A whole new way of thinking about life as harvesting. So in John O'Donohue's words, May the light of your soul mind you, may all of your worry and anxiousness about becoming old be transfigured. May you be given a wisdom with the eye of your soul to see this beautiful time of harvesting. So this is a beautiful time of

harvesting as we close out 2023, and I look forward to seeing all the growth and the beauty of the external that is happening already internally for all of us, of what all we're going to harvest in 2024. Thank you. I love all of you so much, Michelle. Thank you for being you.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:57:30] Thanks, mom. And I love that thinking, you know, just going back to what you were saying about the bad will come. But the good will also come. So just know like that's just a part of life. There's challenges and bumps in the road, but know that. Keep your mind on the good that will come. Keep that in your mind and in your heart of the good things that are coming and believing in that the good things that are coming and believing in the seeds that you've planted during your harvest are going to bloom and grow and turn into something real. Keeping that in your mind and in your heart as that authentic optimism is really a game changer, I think. For both of us at least.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:58:13] I got one more I could read. Okay.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:58:16] Here she comes.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:58:17] We got two more minutes. I just this is another one that I read, actually a couple months ago when I opened my book. I've been kind of in a John O'Donohue phase here. Poetry is always my thing when I'm really feeling down and really dark, and this one helped a lot as well. And maybe this would be a good way to close out. I think this episode is going to air before the end of the year, or maybe right at the beginning of the year. So this one has been put this on your mirror or write this out. May the flame of anger free you from falsity. May warmth of heart keep your presence of flame and anxiety never linger about you. May your outer dignity mirror an inner dignity of soul. May you take time to celebrate the quiet miracles that seek no attention. May you be consoled in the secret symmetry of your soul. May you experience each day as a sacred gift woven around the heart of wonder.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:16] Beautiful. Thank you for sharing that. And thank you to all of our listeners for being with us for another episode. We can share those poems on our Instagram as always, and sometimes it's hard for me to take it all in via audio.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:59:36] Yeah, they're deep orally. Or listen to the podcast two or 3 or 4 times in a row, but they're deep.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:42] I like to read and see things visually.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:59:45] Visually.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:46] Geez. All right.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:59:47] I'm very visual too. I got you Michelle.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:49] All right. Anyways, thank you, I love that and I hope that this episode was helpful for anyone who just feels like they're in that season of difficulty knowing that. We just never know. In each new moment and new day. An opportunity that will come, that will turn things around or change things for us, or make us feel or believe that we're in a new season. So never give up on that belief that in each passing moment, that opportunity will come. But let us know, um, what you think and what you want to hear more about and what you want to hear from us in 2024. You know, we always love hearing suggestions and topics and questions and all of those things. So keep us posted. We are always open to all of it, and the best way to do that is to make sure that you're following us on social media at Peaceful\_Barb, at Michelle Maros, at Barb Knows Best Pod, because that is the best way to stay in touch. And if you're loving the show, which of course we hope that you are, make sure that you're liked and subscribed to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. Apple, Google, Spotify so that you're always up to date on each new episode. And if you haven't yet, we would love for you to give us a five star rating on iTunes and Spotify and leave a review that's so helpful for us and for the show, and we would be so grateful. Lastly, I know we are missing the holiday shipping deadline, but we do still have journals available through the link in the show notes. They're very cute. I've been loving sending them out to all of you. We package them ourselves and send a little love when we ship them.

**Barb Schmidt:** [01:01:34] I just want to say I love it and I gave them as a as a separate gift to all of my friends, and it's helped me a lot in the past six months. So thank you.

**Michelle Maros:** [01:01:42] Thank you. So link in the show notes. Love it. If you want more. Thank you so much again for listening. Thank you for being a part of this community. We are so grateful for all of you, and we will chat with you next week. Because as we know, Barb knows best. Bye.