

**Episode 100 – What Is Emotional Monitoring?**  
***Barb Knows Best™***  
**Episode Transcripts**

**Michelle Maros:** [00:00:13] Hello, everyone. Hi friends. Welcome back to Barb Knows Best the podcast. I am your co-host, Michelle Maros and I am sitting across the table from my mother, Barb, and it's a great day to be chatting with you mom.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:00:28] I know, I love it. Hi, Michelle. Hi, everyone. Hi. Oh, we're into the new year, and it feels, uh, I don't want to say exhausting already, but it just feels like it's a lot. And I was talking with Michelle earlier this week, and I was thinking, this is kind of the trend of getting into a new year, because I think there's so much on our minds, so much on our plates, so many expectations we have. So I was thinking, Michelle, maybe we could do an episode on expectations, because I think we have very high expectations of ourselves, and especially something about going into a new year. Speeds up, time speeds up. Our expectation, makes us feel like, oh my gosh, I've got to do this. I've got to do that in order to feel like, you know, I'm productive or that I'm accomplishing something or that I'm worthy. All the things that start happening, it just seems to be on overdrive. I feel in January and then by February, maybe March, we're like, okay, this is another year. Let's figure out what to do. So I think it could be interesting.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:01:29] Yes, I agree, I feel like we've done something on expectations, but in this context, that sounds great. And to your point about the new year, it's funny because I sent you, um, something the other day about, I think, like astrologically. This time. Right now, mid-January is also like an opportunity to start the year. I was trying to find it as you were talking, but I got lost in the 8 million text messages we send each other.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:02:05] That's true.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:06] Um, but I think what I take from that is. It's never too late to start again, or to decide to do something differently, or to start a new chapter because it's true. This is a common theme for us where, you know, the end of a year, beginning of a new year feels very chaotic and it was extremely chaotic for us this year. We were talking the other day where

it was like, did the holidays even happen? Because I don't I don't even feel like it did because there was just so much going on that I felt like we had to deal with. And then, you know, that carries into a new year, and it's like tying up all of the loose ends from the year before. And by the time you finally do it, it's February, like you were saying and you know.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:02:57] And I don't even think that matters.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:02:58] It doesn't. That was my whole point.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:03:00] Is that where you're going with that? Because I don't I just started to think, I'm sorry I interrupted you. Go ahead.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:03:04] No, no, I was saying this is a I feel like this happens every year. And so I'm like, the point of all of that is who cares? Because if it's happening, that seems to be we often talk about, you know, noticing the seasons and the the rhythms of your natural life and the flow of your life. And that seems to be our flow. And who cares? Like if we just maybe doing something about perspective or expectations, because if we just start to change our expectations or perspective of January, maybe, like I know a couple of, I don't remember, we talked about that, you know, week between Christmas and New Year's, that's usually that week where you just get things done. Maybe January is that month of clearing out for refresh. I don't know, it's like you make your rules. We talk about who made the rules in life and why does January have to be the month to start? I actually saw an interesting meme or quote on social media the other day where it was like. You don't plant seeds. You plant.... It was something to the degree of things. Don't bloom in winter and we're in winter if you're in our hemisphere. So don't expect your life to be changing right now, because this is the period of incubating and clearing out and processing and and connecting and not blooming. And I liked that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:04:35] Well, I think for sure we've talked about this idea, you know, this is our winter. But if you live in South Florida, if you live in a warm climate place, it's not winter. And if you live in South Florida or a place that has a tourist base, it is busy as all get out in January. January is when all the people in the world come to South Florida for whatever January, February, March and then into April. So I think what I'm starting to do more of, and maybe this would be a great episode and all of you listening, if you want to chime in on that,

maybe send us a message is that it's never too late, that George Eliot, quote, it's never too late to be who or what you might have been, is never too late for anything. It's never too late. I mean, yes, it can be too late. There are deadlines in life, but it's really never too late to start whatever it is you're wanting to do or planning to do, because we all bloom at different stages and different times and have different feelings and different things are happening. So I think this idea of time, I'm starting to really pay attention to this. You know, you hear really deep psychological, spiritual people talk about time being an illusion or time being, you know, just a construct that was that was kind of put upon us.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:05:51] There's some truth to that, and there's some truth to what what it is we're all doing. And we have to abide by time because that's how we live our lives by time to avoid having so much chaos. Maybe. But I think there's an integration here of trying to sort out what do we want to do in starting a new year? But why does the new year have to be any different than July 1st or, you know, March 1st? If I woke up tomorrow saying, wow, I really want to start this new project for peace of mind, peaceful life. I'm not going to wait till the new year. I might say, okay, maybe I'll start doing the little steps now. I think for me it boils down to the expectation, the external expectation of what is supposed to be happening. And I want to start talking more about how do we listen to the inner guide, the inner wisdom that we have within our bodies? You know, I believe our bodies never lie. They're constantly telling us what we need to do and what's okay and what's not okay in terms of rest and and recuperation and all of the things. So that's just a good start to I know I got a little bit derailed.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:06:55] I love how we are talking all about other topics that we want to talk about, but that is not what we're talking about today.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:07:01] I know. Because I think that people, in looking at social media and listening to all the messages that we get, I feel a lot of chaos and disruption and energy zapping and feeling like we're not worthy enough. I feel a lot of that coming through in some of the posts that I've read, but also in a lot of the messages, and I just want to make sure that you're all always knowing, you're always worthy, and you can start any time that you want. And if you need another month to start the new year, take another month. If you need another rest, or you need more relaxation, or you need to travel a little bit more, or whatever it is that you

need, listen to your body and listen to your heart and follow that inner wisdom that you already have. Don't get caught in the trap of everyone else is doing this. So I have to to.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:07:51] Be the boss of your own life.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:07:54] Yes. You are the boss of your life. So what are we talking about today? Michelle.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:07:57] So I posted something on Instagram on December, and I think it's like the most engaged content that I've ever posted on my page. Obviously your page goes bonkers every time you do anything. In a good way.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:08:18] Yeah, no it is. I think this went viral because it really was so good.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:08:23] You know, we create content. Mostly based on our own experiences and the things that we've learned and lessons and personal situations and. It's always great when we share something that is going on for us that we hear is also going on for you, because it does remind us that we're all living such shared experiences. But this one I did not necessarily expect to see the engagement and the feedback and the commenting and the agreement and that it resonated so many people. That sounded weird when it came out.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:09:12] Resonated. Yeah.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:09:13] Yeah and so I was really thinking about it, and I wanted to talk about it on this episode because if it is a hit on the Instagram. I think it's something that people need to hear.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:09:29] Well, I also think that we do everything that we share is based on our own experiences, but it's really kind of neat when we share something in the moment of us experiencing it, which is what this whole, reel that you shared, this whole message that you shared back in December. And I love that when we share something that we're we're actually going through it or actually happen to be feeling it. And I think sometimes that can even resonate more. So I, I'm loving this because it's.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:09:58] Resonate.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:09:59] Resonate. Yeah. You got it. I'm loving this topic because I think it's always up for many of us, but we're just not aware of it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:10:07] Yeah.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:10:07] If you're doing this and I'm really excited about talking about the idea, should I launch it here? The idea if you grew up in an environment where you felt like you had to manage other people's moods. And I just paused for a second there. There are many of us. There are hundreds of millions of us around the world that grew up in environments like that and mine was it could be a spectrum, like it could be all the way to one end and all the way to the other, and many may fall in the middle somewhere. But for me it's all the way to one end. And so I am so excited to talk about this topic, because I feel like that has been one of the major MO's of my life managing other people's moods, managing other people's expectations, managing other people's issues. So I really think that this topic speaks to everyone. Depending on where you fall in the lineage of how severely you manage other people's moods or how severely that it matters to you. What other people are doing and thinking and how it how it affects you emotionally, physically, spiritually.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:11:23] Yes. So kind of going backwards a little bit. I think a lot of us do that without necessarily knowing that that's a habit that is draining and exhausting and overwhelming and ultimately not any of our jobs. And I hadn't even necessarily heard the name, the clinical name for it, of emotional monitoring. Which is that hyper vigilance of feeling like you have to be on so much and so aware of every little mood shift, energy shift, body language. Anything because you feel like you have to be that intermediary you have to be the fixer to make everything okay. And it is interesting. I know that I've done it. You just said that this is something that's been up for you, for, you know, your whole life. And it's really fascinating to kind of look backwards on life with a 2020 viewpoint of how much this practice takes up so much of our time and energy and. How we can start to let go of it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:12:59] And I think too, it's so subtle. And it's so harming. When I think about how and I well, let me finish. It's so subtle and it's so harming because we're doing this at the expense of our own emotions, at the expense of our own feelings, at the expense of our own worthiness, at the expense of us as we literally are abandoning ourselves every time we try to emotionally monitor someone else's mood or the situation or the environment, you know, or jump between two people, because we don't want to have a confrontation. Every time we try to do that, we are doing that at the expense of us. We are abandoning who we are. We are abandoning the preciousness and the magnificence of who we are to try to change or try to avoid or try to manipulate or try to do whatever it is we can do to make everything okay or to make it what we think that it needs to be, or what we know that we possibly can handle. And that's what I'm thinking about myself. I was constantly abandoning myself and thinking, I can't handle anything that's going to happen here with this person's mood. So at all costs, I have to try to regulate it. I have to try to be in an environment where I can manipulate it, or where I can try to fix it, as you said, Michelle.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:14:26] So I just want that to really settle in that we can't live our lives abandoning ourselves. And I saw we talk about this all the time on the podcast, because I think it's the number one thing. The number one thing in life is we can't lose ourselves. We are the number one person in our life, not in everyone's life, in our own lives. The word you, you matter so much. And we talk about that a lot, about how much we all matter individually, and we can't collectively have a relationship unless we understand that, is what I believe. And so I was at all costs. It didn't matter what I felt, didn't matter what I thought about myself, didn't matter what was going to happen, didn't matter that it took all my energy. It didn't matter that it was so exhausting. It didn't matter that I walked on eggshells. It didn't matter that I was hyper vigilant all the time. So if any of this is speaking to you, just take a little deep breath and think about that for a second. How often you put your own safety, or your own feelings, or your own emotions, or your own care aside, at the expense of trying to manage someone else's mood or someone else's behavior. Really, it's we're talking about behavior when we say the word mood, I think.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:15:46] Yeah we are. And it's. In listening to you say all of that, it is so interesting because I think that. It's a lot of anticipatory behavior of okay, I know that in these types of situations, this person tends to do this. And how can I or what can I do to make sure

that maybe that doesn't happen? Or when this person gets confronted in this way, this is their reaction. So how can I, you know, jump in to change the topic of conversation? So it's. It's a lot of anticipatory feelings of trying to be in front of the eight ball rather than behind it of like jumping in to fix something because you know, you know so much about the other person or people that you're around and you want to make it all okay. And it's interesting because I think if you relate to and I know we've talked about this in the past of codependency, I think that this kind of ties hand in hand with being codependent because and also addiction and things like that, but they're not mutually exclusive. But when you are in those codependent relationships, you do. You do become like the emotional monitor of the people in your life because everything around you is so chaotic. How can you control people's reactions and responses to life? Because what else can you control? And it is super exhausting and overwhelming and ultimately. And I know I said this at the beginning. It's it's not our jobs. I as you all know, I've been writing my first book and I just wrote an entry similar to this about letting people have their consequences and not trying to fix people to the degree where they can't get their own life lessons and escape, you know, consequences. And this, to me feels similarly because in us trying to control or fix people in a way to avoid reactions or emotions we're prohibiting people from experiencing life and maybe having the or the consequences that they need. Even though it's uncomfortable. Does that make sense?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:18:34] It makes perfect sense, I think. Yeah, it's fantastic because that's really what's going on. We don't....I think we think and I think, I will use the "I" word here because this is such a huge topic for me. First of all, I want to say what you just said is brilliant because actually the bottom line of that is that why do we think our needs are not important enough to just say, this is what I need, instead of trying to manage someone else's mood and give up what we need in that moment, or give up what we're feeling in that moment, and just put that on the, as you said, the back burner that is so destructive, it's so destructive for you, number one. So I saw how destructive it was for me. And as a result of this really difficult year and last six months, it's starting to it had started to affect my health. And so it was my body that gave me the wake up call. My body said, okay, you're continually doing this. So now it's time for us to step in and give you a bigger wake up call. So I think that that's something to think about in this whole concept of why do we feel like we have to manage other people's moods, why do we feel and their behaviors and not allow them to face the consequences or the results of their moods or their actions or whatever it is the situation happens to be calling for? Why do we think we

need to do that? And what I want to say about that for myself, when I think that I need to do that, it's because I think that I can't handle it.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:20:06] Right.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:20:06] I think that I just can't handle one more thing. I just can't. I can't do this. So let me try to manage it so that I can kind of skate through it. And it's because I'm I'm not really standing on my own two feet and saying, I deserve this. I am worthy of my own feelings. I'm worthy of having whatever it is that I need to discuss. Because usually we want to manage another person's moods because there's something that we want to say. For me anyway, I will usually want to manage someone else's moods because there's something that I have not said what I want to say, or I've got a need that I want met, or I've got an idea that I want to share or I've got a situation that that is not going well in our relationship. But I haven't been brave enough to stand up and say it. And what I want to say most about that, what I've noticed and what is really serving me well in the past month, is that I think I'm doing this to decrease my anxiety, to decrease my stress, to decrease my load, or to decrease whatever it is to try to make things better.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:21:12] Oh, this is going to make things better, and I'm going to be able to breathe and I'm going to be able to handle things so much better. Everything is going to go better when in reality it's the opposite. And I think that's why my body stepped up and said, hey, Barb, you're not listening here. You're not decreasing your anxiety. You're not decreasing your stress. You are compounding it. And now you have a hiatal hernia. When the doctor said, I went to the doctor and he said, we got to do a little endoscopy and this is what you have, and you know, if you do any research on hernias or anything with the body, I think so much of it is due to stress. So much of it is due to stress. So. I really think that this is such an important thing for us to be talking about right now, because I feel like. As we're starting a new year, although this can be done any time, really start to take notice of of how you are you putting yourself aside and abandoning yourself and your own needs and your own wants, and your own emotions and your own feelings.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:22:17] And little by little by little, start saying, wait a minute, this is important. Let me see what happens if I just stand up and step up in a kind way. But a strong

way. An authoritative way, like own how you're feeling or own what you want to say. And do the thing that I have to do that is really hard to do. Instead of trying to do the thing that I can never, ever do. And I could spend my whole life trying to manage other people's moods and never have accomplished or done or known my own brilliance and my own worthiness till I get to the end of my life and then look back and say, whoa, what the heck was I doing? Which I said, I think to you the other day. I said, there's to me there's nothing more sad or more. Um, I don't know, just overwhelmingly not okay than being at the end of my life knowing that had I taken a step here or a step there for my own benefit, or for my own needs or my own emotions, I might not be feeling like, wow, I didn't actually accomplish or I didn't actually do, or I didn't actually say the thing or do the thing that I really, really wanted to. I can't think of anything more sad than that.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:23:37] I agree. On that note, let's take a quick break. And we are back. I agree. I agree with everything that you said. And you put a lot out there for us to think about and now digest and pick apart. And what's interesting for me with this topic is that I think there are a lot of different layers of it and levels of it and dynamics of emotional monitoring, and I think it can be very sneaky and insidious where you do just kind of fall into the habit and it almost becomes part of your personality. And of course, this isn't a judgment about you. If you do this, it's obviously a protection and a safety mechanism to protect yourself or to preemptively push away any sort of discomfort or uncomfortable situations. And it's interesting that you were saying that. You also think that it's because things that want to be said aren't being said, because I think ultimately, in this dynamic of emotional monitoring, it's living in a false reality. I think you or me or whoever the person is that's doing the monitoring, knows what's true and is trying to create a different reality. Because the reality that's true is painful. So how can I shift or manipulate the situation to create a reality that's not going to be so painful or dysfunctional or traumatic. And ultimately, I feel like that's denying what's true and what you say. I've been again in my book.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:25:34] I've been thinking about this a lot of and in my own life is that truth is the basis of all healing. That's one of my favorite things that you've ever said to me. And how can you heal or create healthy dynamics or relationships when you are constantly living in a state of false reality. And there's been a lot of instances for me in my life of now recognizing emotional monitoring, but they're having a parental figure, not you, where I felt like I had to do

this. And thinking back to so many instances in my life of kind of feeling like you have to prepare emotionally and even mentally. And physically to go anywhere. To think about what you're going to do if you need to step in to make the situation not uncomfortable, or to even kind of run through your mind the scenarios of what could happen so that you can know what you're going to do if it does happen or have in your back pocket like ways like this is one of your solutions is to, you know, change the subject. So having in your back pocket topics of things that you can immediately bring into a conversation that can change the subject if, if it gets to a certain space and. You know, I think in society we often give people passes of like, oh, they're just like that. They're curmudgeons or oh, they're just difficult people or oh they don't.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:27:23] Really mean any harm.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:27:24] They don't mean any harm. Oh, they had a really. This has been an excuse. I've heard a lot. They had a really traumatic upbringing. So they're they're damaged now. And that's why they are the way that they are. And I don't think that trauma is ever an excuse for perpetuating trauma or dysfunction. And so, yes, all of those things can be true. People cannot mean harm and can have a lot of wounds and can be deeply damaged. And. Act out in certain ways because of past situations. But I feel like we live in a society where we all kind of expect, and maybe this is an expectation that I need to rid myself of that you know, you work through your stuff so that you can be better for your present and future self and for the people around you. And so if things happen to you in the past that have hardened you or made you more cynical or more short tempered, like working on that so that we're not that way and so. In the context of emotional monitoring and why I kind of said it's taking people out of their consequences for me in in situations in my past where I would try to jump in to avoid awkward outbursts or embarrassing situations, it was to make that other person look good or to not. Make people think that this person was mean or bad or difficult. But that A, of course, wasn't my job. But B, that's who that person was. So let them think that you know, and it's like making. Someone else's bad behavior, a reflection of you when how other people act and behave has nothing to do with you. So it is not my job to jump in to do this person's PR work so that they don't ever have to change.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:29:36] You just said a whole lot Michelle. And that was so good. It is really. I think it's why I love Glennon Doyle and Abby Wambach. We can do hard things. Life is hard.

And I love the first paragraph in Scott Peck's book, *The Road Less Traveled*. Life is difficult, you know? And he goes on to say, basically that life is always going to be difficult. It's our responsibility to know that life is difficult and not try to change life out there, but try to grow and learn and become the best version of who we are, in whatever way that means. I know I've seen some memes. Why do we have to be the best version? Why can't we just be the version that we are right now and we can? But if we're if we're the version that we are right now and there are things that we want to change and that they're within our power to change, then I'm all for changing them or becoming. I think it's always a becoming and not becoming anything different than who we already are. People have said to me so much over the years, you know, Barb, how do you accept yourself? And you're saying to accept yourself and love yourself completely. But then now we're also trying to learn and grow and change and become. And it really is. It really is a very interesting scenario of how you I don't think you can learn and become until you accept yourself completely in this present moment. And so I've talked about this a lot, and I think it was one of my words, one of my intention, words of awareness, becoming aware. And so there's a lot of internal work that has to happen. But it doesn't mean that everybody's going to do it, but it doesn't mean it's your job to try to make everyone look good, even though maybe the behavior and all the things aren't okay. Like it's a very fine line and it's a really difficult subject, I think, to talk about.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:31:22] Well because it's just beneath the surface.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:31:24] It's just beneath. How do you talk about going through trauma? And we are definitely both trauma survivors going through trauma. And then you get your trauma, for what I've really seen happen to me in this past year, my trauma kept getting triggered and triggered and triggered and triggered over and over and over. So you think you're healed from a certain trauma, and then you get into a relationship and you start to abandon yourself to try to make the relationship be okay, or try to see if I can manage this or handle it. And the traumas get triggered because of the behaviors of the other person. So it's very tricky. Very you're right, very subtle, very sneaky. So everyone listening to this episode, it truly is about spending time getting to know yourself a little. And I say little. I mean tiny by tiny. Like what? Who are, what do you need and what's happening for you so that you can live? Being that person from the inside out that you already are. We've been so co-opted, we don't even know who we are, what we're feeling, because we're so busy letting our lives be led from the outside in. So I say that if

you listen to our episode on intention Words for the year, the practice that Michelle designed, you know, a decade ago or so that I use every year, and we shared it with all of you on the podcast recently. My word is acceptance. What I realized, especially in this really most one of the more difficult years of my life in 2023 was I was not accepting of the things that I have absolutely no control over.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:33:09] Absolutely have no ability to change and abandon myself in the process. It made me physically, spiritually, and emotionally not well. So this is what I feel like Michelle and I are trying to share today. And it's very it's very hard, but we can do the hard thing little by little by little, we can start to wake up. To the idea or the notion or the little bit of glimmer of that. Wait, if I start to feel my emotions and I start to actually know how I feel and know what I need and know what I want, I can't have it in a moment. No, it's going to take time, but it actually lays the groundwork for the path of me leading the happy, successful, wonderful life that I truly want to lead. Isn't that what everyone wants is to be happy, or to have some element of success, and to really feel like we're owning our place here on this planet.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:34:11] Yes.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:34:13] I know. It's just, you know, I think it's why I love our our podcast so much. Michelle. Because we do tackle the hard subjects. It's a really hard topic to talk about, a really hard topic to talk about. And I think for me, it's necessary to talk about it because we, as we say all the time, we share all of our experiences. It's necessary because I don't see any way around it, especially if you're a trauma survivor, especially if you've had so many situations of trauma in your life and your little by little by little healing from all of that, it has been a great blessing for me to know that the healing takes place for the rest of my life.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:34:54] If I thought. You know, I was sexually abused as a child. If I thought I worked through that so many years of therapy, and if I thought my trauma would be done and I would be healed and I would kind of sail through life, I would be really miserable right now because that's not how life works. So the idea if you can embrace the healing is a forever process in little ways and big ways and in beautiful ways. Like, I feel like I'm going through a healing right now. And the the whole notion of coming into this next chapter of my life. Feels like I want to be more inward, and not that I wasn't inward before. That's what I'm trying to say.

So don't think that you're one or the other. There's more and more integration. I think, that happens in our lives. I've integrated new experiences this past year that were really traumatic and really hard. So it's not like I'm starting over. I'm starting with this wisdom and all this knowledge and all this awareness that I've gained and what I noticed the most beneficial thing that I can do for myself this year is to accept the things that I cannot change, and change the things that I can, and put my energy toward things that I can, and honoring myself instead of abandoning myself.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:36:14] And I think I just want to share one more thing before I stop talking here and give you a word in here Michelle. Is that I believe that the way we do this, when I say little by little steps, and when Michelle and I talk about how do we do this with a therapist? It doesn't have to be a therapist because I know some people don't have access to a therapist. It can be another person in your life that won't abandon you or that won't say, hey, get over that, you're fine. Oh my gosh, you're such a great success. You know, you're a big success. What do you mean you're fine? Someone who will really sit there and be with you and just allow you to share. Just being able to share my needs and my emotions and my wants is huge. Being able to share it. You do your journaling, practice Michelle giving your thoughts at home and putting it on paper, putting it on paper, or speaking it to another person makes it real. And then when we make it real and the world didn't come to an end, it's like, okay, I can stick my toe in this water. And little by little by little, say how I feel. And not abandon myself and take care of myself and make me the number one priority in my life, so that I can be strong and be there for the rest of the things and the rest of the people that are in my life.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:37:30] I love that. Let's take another quick break. And we are back. So obviously this dynamic is very layered and subconscious and you know traumatic responses and it's a lot. And for anyone who resonates with this and does this, I don't think we're even saying to stop doing it, because a lot of times this emotional monitoring can prevent, you know, a dangerous situation. And so, you know, we're not saying stopping so that full, chaos breaks loose and you're in an unsafe situation. But again, if that is the case, I think a lot of other steps could be taken. But, it's really becoming aware of how this sneaks into life and how we do engage in this and what we can do to start to cut it back and focus more about being in the present moment, knowing that we're capable of managing what life has in the present moment, and then ultimately to making changes or setting boundaries with the people that the

emotional monitoring is, you know, unsafe or not aligned with who we are and what we want. But I think another aspect of emotional monitoring to that for me was a big one that. I think sometimes gets just labeled as being a kind and caring and empathetic person. And I used to think that this was an aspect of me that was you know, more admirable is, you know, always wanting to check in on people to make sure that they're okay, too. So I feel like in my mind I have like an umbrella of this term. And then there's all these layers underneath and outside of feeling like I needed to be prepared and anticipatory for other people's behavior. It also goes into constantly checking in to make sure that things weren't happening that I didn't know about, that were making people upset with me, or that were making people mad at me so constantly, you know, wanting to ask, are you mad? Are you okay? Did something happen? And constantly checking in with people to make sure that something didn't change without my knowing. Does that make sense?

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:40:20] Oh, yeah. You're on guard. It's like you're living. I'm going to use this sports analogy. You're living your life as a defensive tackle or a defensive guard or defensive lineman, or in a football field where you're always in that position. I'm in that position with my body down and my shoulders up, and I'm I'm squatted down and I'm in that position to just be ready for whatever could happen. And it's taking you totally out of the present moment. You're constantly living in the future or constantly living in what could happen. And I love what you said, Michelle because we do have to protect ourselves a lot of a lot can be a protective measure, which is which is a necessary thing sometimes. And I really love what you just said when you said that you would check in with other people to see how they're doing, check in, see how they're feeling, so that nothing caught you by surprise, like you were one step ahead of everything and you were constantly thinking about, what can I do now to be ahead or to be aware? And I think what really struck me when you were saying all that because it's true and I've lived my life that way as well. What struck me and what changed my life, to start moving away from that emotional monitoring and that and that being prepared for what's going to happen constantly on guard and living more in the moment, knowing that I'll be ready for whatever the moment presents.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:41:47] What helped me change that whole thought process was, I'm a kind and loving and caring person, so I am checking in on other people. But when am I going to start checking in on myself? So what I would like to share with everyone listening is like just

incorporate. Just. If you did one thing after listening to this episode of any of this resonates for you, just start incorporating a couple minute, sit down with yourself and ask yourself how you're doing. I think I've shared this many times in these episodes and on in my own work. I'm constantly. Barb, how are you doing today? I wake up in the morning. How are you feeling today, Barb? What's happening for you today? Just doing the same thing. Especially if you are such an empath. Or if you are a person that really does check in on other people a lot. Check in on yourself to just add that to your mix. Just add that whole practice to your mix. Ask yourself how you're doing and then allow. A minute or two to pass of quiet to to let your heart or your soul, or your presence within answer. You'll get the answer. And just doing that little by little by little, I can't even explain to you how profound that is, how life changing it is.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:43:05] And that's where I've come up with this idea of changing the things that I can change. And knowing that I have the strength and the ability to do it. Maybe not all at once, maybe not in a year, maybe not in ten years, but having the confidence that I cannot abandon myself any longer. So how do I start to integrate caring about what other people think? Because I'm still there wanting to protect myself or wanting to do the things that I need to do, but also caring about what I think. So how do I integrate the two and start finding a way to check in with myself as well? I personally feel like you will find that. A life changing. And then when it starts to become a little bit overwhelming because you start to recognize which is the case for me, then I needed to go get help, or then I needed to talk to someone that I could trust and say, hey, this is what I'm feeling. This is what's happening. I mean, I hope that makes sense. It's just that idea of taking we have to take care of ourselves. No one is going to take care of us. I mean, I don't mean that in a bad way.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:44:13] I mean, yes, people take care of me. All the people. I have so many beautiful people in my life. So I have people in my life that I really, I want to make it sound like I've got, you know, I've got people in my life that do they care deeply about me. And I love that, and I appreciate it, and I'm so grateful for it. But ultimately, I am the one responsible for making the decisions and taking the actions and knowing what it is I need to do. Their input is valuable and their love is more than needed and loved and appreciated. But ultimately, I have to integrate all of it into my life and say, okay, what is one step that you can take right now, Barb? And so that's why acceptance is huge for me right now. How can I accept the things that I cannot change and really work on the things that I can and start to notice? What is my

reaction? How is it affecting my body? How is it affecting my mind, how it is affecting my spirit? How is it affecting my energy? And it's little by little by little, you start to come out of some of these places where emotional monitoring, just out of habit and really not out of any protection or any kind of necessity. That's what I've noticed from my life.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:45:34] Yeah. I mean. I think if you are someone who has picked up the habit, you do shift into doing it out of habit and as a control mechanism. You know we can't control anything. But we can. A lot of us want to try and. Obviously this is a response to trauma and dysfunction and chaos, but we think that if we can do one little thing or say one little thing or jump in a little bit quicker, we can prevent something from happening that we don't want to happen. And as we know, we can't control the external world or we can't control other people. We can't control other people's responses or moods. And. How can we stop trying? And what can we do to be more in the present moment knowing that you can manage what comes up moment to moment and feeling your feelings and noticing when it comes up, and noticing when those impulses come up to try and micromanage or control or jump in or be hyper vigilant, or to want to check in. And separately. Just to bring this aspect of emotional monitoring up, because this came up a lot in the comments of my Instagram post, I saw a lot of parents saying that this is how they are with their kids, especially young children. And I think that that is a little bit different. I think when you have young kids, you have to monitor and be hyper vigilant of what they're going to do and how they're going to respond. Because you're not dealing with full fledged adults, right? I mean, I guess I wanted to bring this up because this came up a lot and people were asking questions, but I'm not a parent, so I can't necessarily speak to that.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:33] Well, I think, I personally think as a parent, allowing your children to feel comfortable and safe to say how they feel.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:47:43] Maybe like young, young, young children.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:45] Same.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:47:47] Babies? .

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:49] Well you mean if they're not talking,

**Michelle Maros:** [00:47:51] I don't know.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:51] Yes,

**Michelle Maros:** [00:47:53] I always play devil's advocate.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:47:55] You know, babies you just you hold them and you hug them and you give them the warmth and the security that they're, I think for me, what my view of it. And I've heard this from many therapists, because I've talked to so many over the years, is that a baby wants to know that they're safe, that a baby wants to know that the parent's there, that someone's there, who is the person that's my safety, because they have no ability to be able to take care of themselves. As a baby. We don't take care of ourselves. Our parents are responsible for taking care of us or our the guardians or whoever, the grandparents or the guardians or the the community, family or whoever that is they. I feel like babies need to know that there is an another person or an entity out there that's taking care of me. But then as we grow to be, you know, little kids and teenagers and all of that, I feel strongly about, it was never safe for me to say how I felt ever. I don't think I ever I don't remember one time as a child telling my parents how I felt. I don't even think I felt my feelings, you know, i.e., you know, 20 some years old. I'm bulimic, you know, because I really believe that stuffing your feelings and stuff and bulimia have go hand in hand, which is what I learned in treatment a lot.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:49:11] And through all the therapy that I've had, that if we don't feel our feelings and, if we don't feel safe enough to say how we feel in an environment that is necessary to be safe, which is our family structure, whatever that looks like, it's a recipe for all the things that we're talking about. And it's no judgment, no blame or anything, but it just kind of how it progresses. If we don't feel safe as a child, if we don't feel that, we can say, I'm hurting right now. Even if even if the herding is something that I cause myself, it doesn't matter what I'm feeling. Like there's no judgment. A child has to be able to say I'm hurting. I feel bad, I feel guilty, I feel sad, I feel abandoned or whatever the words are, whatever the feeling is, and I think. That's the most important thing. And I think if children can't feel safe or comfortable doing that as they grow up, they end up, in my view, which is how I ended up. So I always only

bring it back to myself. I'm never trying to imagine what is happening because I'm not a doctor. I'm not a therapist.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:50:18] I'm not a psychologist. I'm just sharing my experiences of all the things that I've been through, in my view, I'm going to constantly be afraid to say how I feel. So I'm going to constantly be afraid of feelings. I'm going to constantly be afraid of emotions. I'm not going to know how to handle them. I'm not going to know how to deal with my own emotions and feelings. So certainly I'm going to want to handle and manage everybody else's because I'm just not familiar with it. It's not a territory that I've been taught. It's not anything that I've been a part of. You know, I can see all the emotions of other people in the external world or in my family structure that don't feel very safe or that don't feel very comfortable or that don't feel good. So I learn how to not even feel my own feelings because they don't seem to matter, because I don't have a forum to be able to talk about them. So now it becomes my job to handle everything out there. And I think that for me, I think what happened to me is everything in my life, from a young girl onward, until I went into treatment at 28 years old, was externally driven. Nothing was internally driven, nothing. Nothing.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:51:32] It was always about how do I manage the outside world? How do I get other people to know that I'm worthy? To know that I'm smart, to know that I'm successful and everything was driven on? What do I have? How can I show people how good that I am or how smart that I am and that I mean, it works for a while? I think there are very I was very successful. It works for a while, but it certainly can never be sustained in life. That's why I say the body. There's a book, *The Body Knows The Score*, but the body doesn't lie. And the body will eventually catch up and wear out and not be able to handle all the stress or not to be able to handle all the emotions because you're not you're not allowing the emotions to be felt. Just I just said a whole bunch of stuff here that I don't know if it made any sense.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:52:23] It did. It did.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:52:24] Because it's talking about a lot of things, though, that need their own space to be talked about, because it's a lot. So I want all of you to know this is a lot, it's a lot, a lot. And I hope we haven't said anything that triggers you that says, oh, you know, when I say the body never lies, it doesn't mean that we cause ourselves to get sick.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:52:43] I never, ever, because I don't believe that. I believe that when we don't take care of ourselves emotionally, the body can get weaker, the body can get more worn out and not be able to handle maybe all the things that might be coming its way.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:53:00] Yeah,

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:53:01] But because stress. I remember going to the doctor doing my annual physical and you know, when I got diagnosed with this hiatal hernia and all of that, and he says, I know him forever and I just love him so much. And he says, you know what exacerbates all this, Barb? And I said, sure, I said, stress. He goes, yeah, I know you know that. So what are you doing about it? And we laughed a little bit and I said, I'm working on it, I'm working on it. And so I think having people like that in your life that yeah, I know, but you don't have to make me feel bad about it or you don't have to say, and we're not here to say any of that. We're just here to say we're here to be there for you. Like, be that person that you can say, yeah, I know, I know why this has gotten worse because of my stress level or because of my overwhelm or whatever it is.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:53:50] And I think I'll share this one more thing. One of the things I don't know if I've shared this before, and this is my year for sharing a lot of personal stuff. I was using the word overwhelm a lot in this last chapter, this last quarter of 2023, and I had this brilliant, brilliant person and she's such a sweetheart. I wouldn't necessarily call her a friend, but she's just someone that I look up to a lot. And she said to me. You are not overwhelmed, Barb. You are putting all of the pieces of yourself back together. You are putting those pieces in this little area where you abandoned yourself here in this little area where you forgot to love yourself more. Here, this little area where you, um, thought you weren't worthy enough here so you had to do an action that wasn't necessarily in alignment with what you would do. You're just calling all of those beautiful, loving pieces of yourself back home, and that's a lot. So don't use the word overwhelm, Barb. Use the word that you're just bringing yourself back whole again. In any area where you felt like you've abandoned yourself, or where you felt like you didn't take as much care, or you were too externally driven with trying to emotionally monitor someone else. You're now coming back home.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:10] Yeah I agree.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:11] So I think this was part one. I think we need to do a part two. And I know I say that a lot, but I would love to do a part two.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:17] It's your world, Barbara. We're just living in it.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:55:19] No, that's not true. It's all of our worlds. I just think that this is a very freeing for me. It's been a lot of freedom to talk to all of you about this. And I think it's very, I know not I think, I know that I appreciate and I love you all so much to have this platform, just to be able to riff on these most important, very deep. Very difficult topics. So thank you so much and Michelle thank you. There are no words for me to thank you enough for being you. Thank you all for being you.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:55:51] Thank you for being you. I think the biggest thing that I took away from the Instagram post, and hopefully everyone here listening to this conversation, is being able to give words to the sensation or the feelings to know that this dynamic is happening and that there's something that you can do about it. And it's like, what is a Bernie Siegel? Name it to Dan Siegel.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:56:18] Dan Siegel,

**Michelle Maros:** [00:56:18] Dan Siegel, name it to tame it. Um, giving things a name, to have the awareness, to know when you want to do something differently. And being able to name it for myself was a big personal shift. And hopefully we'll continue this conversation, like you said. But in this first piece of just understanding, knowing where it comes from, knowing that there's nothing wrong with you if this is a dynamic that you fall into, and what can we do to start to reclaim our energy and be more present and then set the boundaries needed for the people that are the big proponents of this dynamic.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:57:03] You know. I'll end with this. You asked about children, and I just. What you just said really brought something up for me. I would say the the number one thing that I would do as a parent with a child is if your child is walking in the door and they're angry

or sad or hurt. Or bothered. Or annoyed or any of those emotions, allowing them to be that allowing your child to say I'm really angry right now and saying, okay, it is okay that you're angry, let's let's sit down and talk about it for a little bit. Share with me and just being open to it without any kind of judgment. Allowing people because feelings are feelings. They're not facts. They're not right or wrong, they just are feelings. And if you if you allow your child to acknowledge what they're feeling in the first, first of all, if they say I'm angry or if they say I'm sad, that's that's a win. That is a huge win in my mind and in my in my sphere. So just and just allowing them to be that and giving them the opportunity to just say whatever it is they want to say without you, without you really trying to manage it, you know, don't manage. I would never manage other I would not manage children's emotions. I would be there with their emotions and help them move through them. I would not become an emotional monitor if they're not sharing their feelings. See, that's the thing. If they're not sharing their feelings, not not emotionally monitoring them and trying to manipulate how they're feeling or how their mood is going to be. But just if you notice that your child seems to be angrier than usual or seems to be more, you know, reclusive than usual, or seems to be more sad than usual.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:58:51] Yeah, we can dive into this.

**Barb Schmidt:** [00:58:52] Yeah, I know, I just wanted to share that that it just came up when you were saying that that just just allow them to be in that moment, in that very precious, delicate moment of an emotion that's coming up for them.

**Michelle Maros:** [00:59:07] I love that. Thank you. Thank you, everyone, for listening. Obviously this was a heavy topic, so we'll dive into it more in next week's episode. So stay tuned for that. If this was interesting for you, but thank you so much again for listening and thank you for being such wonderful supporters of the show. We're so grateful for all of you. And it does not go unappreciated. If you are liking the show, please make sure that you are liked and subscribed to the podcast wherever you listen to podcasts. It's a really easy just hit the subscribe or the download button that is really helpful for us in the show. So if you haven't yet, take five seconds to do so. It would be so appreciative of it. If you'd like to stay in touch with us, follow us on social media at Peaceful\_Barb, at Michelle Maros, at Barb Knows Best Pod. That's the best way to send us podcast topic requests and stay in touch with all of the new updates. Lastly, if you haven't given us a five star rating and review on iTunes and Spotify, if you could take

another five seconds to do so, we would be so appreciative. That's another great way to support the show as we build this community. Thank you so much again for listening. Thank you, mom for your insights, and we will chat with you next week because as we know, Barb knows best. Bye.