

[00:00:00] INTRO

[00:00:43] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Hello there, beautiful people, and welcome to REAL WOMEN, REAL LIVES. I am Melissa.

[00:00:51] Barb Patterson: And I'm Barb.

[00:00:52] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Thank you for joining us today. Today, we are going to be talking about the topic 'all or nothing' in many areas of our lives. And I'm just gonna hand it over to you, Barb. Cause I know that you had something on your head in your heart that you wanted to share today.

[00:01:08] Barb Patterson: Yeah. Hi everybody. Thanks, Melissa. This idea of all or nothing, I think we can probably all relate in some way or another. You might remember, or know, or I don't know if I've spoken about it directly in this way, but I can be a bit of a workaholic. I can make work the central theme in my life. And, um, I have for many, many, many, many, many years.

About 11 years ago now, when I decided to start my own business, one of the main instigators of it inside of me was I wanted to feel as fulfilled in my personal life as I did in my career. And I just knew where I was; while it was full of a lot of wonderful people and exciting things and ways for me to contribute, there wasn't space for me to really incorporate my life in the way that I wanted to.

So having my own business, it's kind of funny because you, I think you have these fantasies that like "it's my own schedule" and, you know, "it's gonna be easy" and listen like it's true, there's something really



great knowing that if I wanna take a morning off to do something, I can do that. But anyone that has had their own business knows that your workaholic tendencies have plenty of opportunity to rear themselves.

[00:02:32] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Oh, yes.

[00:02:35] Barb Patterson: You know, I also wanna say that I love my work, and I love my passion for it. And my business my work throughout my life has been an opportunity for me to see more of who I am, to actualize, to stretch, to dream, to grow, to connect more powerfully to myself. So there have been a lot of wins and a lot of opportunities, and in a way, I'm a bit unapologetic about my work alcoholism, but I do have a desire not to have work be the only theme in my life.

And, you know, I also saw when I started my business, and things naturally slowed down because I was creating something new. I really saw how my worth was connected to my contribution. Like, you know, it took about a year and a half for things to really take off. And that first year, I can remember at times just being like, filled with questioning and self-doubt and wondering how I was gonna do it, but also I realized that I had so much of my own self-worth tied to doing and what I created and what I did. And all of a sudden, to be in a place where that wasn't happening to the degree that it was brought that front and center.

Now I'm grateful it did because I know that's a bad idea. All of us do. Listening to this, like...

[00:03:58] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Sure.

[00:03:58] Barb Patterson: Get it. We think, "Yeah, that doesn't make sense," but we do it.

And so the journey of trying to have this amazing and build this amazing business over the last ten plus years, it's been interesting to

watch my learning curve around that. And also one of the things which we have talked about is that drive to try and do more, to have work on our minds all the time, to think that what we do matters more than it matters in regards to our self-esteem and our self-worth; all of that creates a really busy sped up and weighed down internal climate.

And what we have learned and what we've talked about throughout this podcast is that in a freer, less gripped, more open, spacious internal climate, we actually bring our best selves to life and whatever we're up to.

In that freer mind, that less sped-up place, we tap into creativity and our authenticity and our realness. And, you know, we see what it does for our connections and impact.

So I don't respect anymore my drive and workaholism in the same way. Because I know there's a price at the end of it. You know, there's a cost, and that cost is wear and tear emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. But also, we just aren't as good in those states, even though we have a high tolerance for 'em, and I used to think it was, you know, an asset that I could override all my personal feelings and keep working... and listen, there are days and projects where I love that part of me. It has been helpful that I can, you know, make something happen when I need to.

But over the last couple of years with being grounded with COVID, I have seen even new levels of the value of slowing down, you know, literally being grounded, not being able to fly. I saw, oh, I've. Still, there's a layer of intensity that I was still kind of under the influence of. And so, you know, I just also wanna say in full transparency, I've also spent an immense amount of time alone over the last couple years.

I'm single and, you know, while I was dating someone and that has been mixed as wonderful and, um, awful at different times, the being... as much time as I've spent by myself. And at times, my go-to has been work. It's, again, it's the place of comfort and joy. So I'm not

judging that or any of it. I'm just sharing to be transparent here.

Last week I was going through my week, and I noticed I kept telling myself, "You just gotta get to Friday. You just gotta get to Friday. You just gotta get to Friday." And it just sort of struck me. I'm like, "What am I doing?" Like, and I realized I had like set up my schedule in such a way that I was having these majorly long, intense days, just so I could have a day with nothing on it.

And I saw my habit of all or nothing, you know, it's a simple way, but I was like, in this sort of desire to have an open space, I had unintentionally set up these days that were too long, too much going on. And then, so I saw it's like, oh yeah, even, even there I can do all or nothing. Like why not just ride the normal ebbs and flows of the different weeks. Some weeks are fuller than others.

I started to see that like, yeah, my, I have to create new content, and I'm designing an online program. I'm trying not to be my usual way, which is to wait till the last minute till it's due and then do the crash course on it. Like seriously, I was that student every semester, "This is the semester I'm gonna stay on top of everything, and I'm gonna, you know, pace it normally."

And sure enough, it wasn't long before I was pulling all-nighters doing research papers or studying. So this is something, this sort of energy of the all or nothing is something that I'm just sitting within a new way and wondering how to do that differently.

I know that I'm talking to a lot of people, and you are one of 'em, Melissa, where these last couple years have changed us.

And the slowing down has been amazing for the most part, yet a lot of people are also like me right now going, "Oh, wow. Okay. The momentum's picking up things. There's opportunity out there. I have some new creative ideas. My company is calling me back. We're starting to travel more. A lot of my clients.." You know, all those things

and people are, you know, part excited and part terrorized.

You know, this fear of, “I don't wanna go back. I don't wanna go back to how I used to do things. I don't wanna go back to all-nighters and crams. I don't wanna go back to the pressure of meeting after meeting, after meeting.”

And so I think it's just an interesting thing for us to explore today is how do we have a new relationship to our doing? How do we have a new relationship to our creativity, to our work life, you know, so that it is not this go full steam ahead so, you know, I can earn the right to take a day off.

I'll never forget. My last six months in Paris, I was working like crazy. Like, you know, a lot of people do, and I was traveling internationally significantly. And I would be gone, you know, like sometimes Monday through Friday, and I'd get home, and I'd have a Saturday or Sunday. And I was so exhausted that I would just like, hang out and do laundry. And again, no judgment here, but I remember thinking, “You're in Paris, you're moving soon, get outside!” You know? And so like, even, even my pleasure became a do it, you know, became something I needed to do.

But I just share that in the sense of how do we move in our businesses? How do we go back to maybe cultures that haven't radically shifted and step into our creativity, our businesses, with less of that workaholic push, you know, all-are-nothing feeling?

[00:10:33] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Yeah. I, uh, relate so much to what you're sharing. And I actually just took some notes down. All of these different times in my life that I remember the all or nothing.

And the first one was in college. I just remember I gave my everything and I did fantastic. And, you know, I had a perfect 4.0, and I remember thinking when this last test is done, then I will enjoy my life. And what I realized was I didn't have that much fun in college. It was all about the

work. And I remember walking through the gates St. John's University in Queens and thinking. "Now what?"

It was almost that I didn't know what to do with myself because I didn't have something to do. And I thought, well, this is strange. I'm confused. I had waited for this moment for three or four years, and now I have this moment, and I felt a little lost. I felt a little lost in the not doing.

And so what I did was, I got a very intense job so I can do a lot. And a lot I did—80-hour weeks, and I, I did it, frankly, cause I thought I had to. Everyone around me was doing it. So I thought, yeah, even though this seems insane, we're all doing it. So we'll just do it. And I remember there were nights I didn't eat, and I would walk home at around 11:30 up the streets in New York City and get home and just be so exhausted.

But I didn't. I didn't really learn my lesson. You know, for me, it goes to a little bit of black and white thinking. It's like an equation in my head. If I do well, then... And doing well for me, frankly, meant being the best. So there's the all or nothing. I was never one of many. I was either the best or don't bother trying.

That's a lot of pressure I put on myself. And here's the truth, though. I was the best, a lot of the time at the expense of a lot of my personal life.

You know, I heard you say emotionally, spiritually; for me, it was also physically, you know, I got very, very sick, and that was the wake-up call for me because I couldn't push anymore. The all-or-nothing, frankly, did not work anymore.

I remember I was working at USA Networks at the time, and we had, we were doing a very big deal. And so, you know, we pulled all-nighters for a week, and I was all on board, and I was super excited. I realized in that moment that, Okay, life can be a series of sprints, but it

can't be a series of marathons one after the other, and in business, sometimes it is; we have sprints, we have things that need to get done. We have deadlines, we have projects, and that's okay. As long as it's not followed up by another marathon. And even very regularly right now, just talking about culture and how do we create that culture that we all wanna be a part of? And the truth is is that a lot of people in business have this all-or-nothing thinking.

It's kind of what I/we have equated success with. The really hard workers are the rock stars. So we just get to ask the question, "Is that true?" Is it true?

And I ask that question on a regular basis. Is it true that we really need people to work 70-80 hours a week to perform at high levels? What's really going on there if we really look behind the scenes?

So I think there's a bit of a perception that we need to poke a little bit and really ask the question. Is it true?

And I always go back to creativity and innovation because that's my heart in work, and are our creative teams being as creative as they can be when they're working all the time?

Of course they're not.

And we can see it easily in creativity, but it relates to all areas of business, finance, operations, marketing, business development. I do expect that there will be, there will be sprints. And the other thing I liked about the all or nothing is, you know when I go on vacation, I wanna make sure I have that best darn vacation ever.

I wanna take that lemon, and I wanna squeeze it so darn tight that all that juice comes out of it. And then I realize I'm not even drinking the juice coming out at the lemon; I'm just working on squeezing it really hard. And it's like, if I'm squeezing it so hard, maybe I should taste it. Maybe I should be in the moment with that lemon juice, enjoying the

citrus, the sweetness, the saltiness of it.

And that's a metaphor for my life in business and in personal. Am I enjoying the juice that's coming out on the lemon?

It's a good question for today. I appreciate the conversation. And as I think about clients and me and this “going back” that you talked about, that's even an interesting question to me. Right? The going back, cuz I've asked that questions when I've gone on retreats or in trainings, what this is great now, but what about when I go back?

I mean, literally, I can't go back. There is no going back, and yet I still ask that question, right? It's like such an interesting way to look at it. And so I'm only going forward. So what choices do I wanna make as I go forward in whatever that is—an executive job, a consulting client.

You know, a lot of the women that I am working with, I'm seeing a lot of this all or nothing thinking.

I do think it's a little bit cultural. So we just get to continue to ask the question, is it true? And I know it's not, and yet I still do it. And so I'm reminded today, not to squeeze that lemon so darn hard; hold it gently. The juice will come out. We can perform it at the highest levels in that way.

[00:16:00] Barb Patterson: Yeah, I do think it's cultural. And I think that the people that get the accolades are the ones that, you know, show up the loudest and then also go above and beyond.

You know, all those things we've normalized both inside our lives and inside organizations. This idea of overriding our internal wisdom.

I remember speaking to this one executive, and she was talking about a really big project that they had in the company, and it was a huge win. And it took a number of months to kind of turn things around. At the end of this period, they lost some people. She was just saying,

“Well, I guess that's kind of the price.” You know, is that the price we have to pay for when the marathon is needed, right. Or the sprint, as you said.

It's interesting for us, I think, to really ask ourselves that question because I think what's the misunderstanding is the idea that we do well in that kind of climate. You know, that ultimately could the results have been even better had we created a culture that allows for rest, allows for time off, allows the mind to settle. And so, you know, I don't know the answer, but I know there is a theme out there that people want to experience more of the culture and the climate that allows for all of it, that allows for the sprint and the rest. That allows for time away to refresh, reset.

And I don't just mean vacation. I mean, an hour break in the day. Um, a meeting's not going well, and rather than pushing through it, you know, we take a break and reset and do what we need to to come back fresh.

This woman brought up a great analogy. She's like, you know, Olympians train every single day. And yet what we then talked about is yeah, but athletes understand without rest, they will not do well.

Rest is a an ingredient of doing well in sports. And I think we just need to transfer that more and more. And I think we are, we're moving in that direction to business, but I know, I, I know for me, I can just fall into my doer, my comfort of doer.

[00:18:22] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Yeah, I think that's for me; why community is so wonderful, right?

Having this conversation with you right now, I'm reminded. And so I forget. And then I remember, and what I'm loving right now, Barb, is I'm seeing a lot in corporations, large corporations, public companies, they are hiring what is being called Head of Wellbeing. And I love that because there's a recognition that tweaks are needed.

Our people are all we have unless it's a manufacturing company that's completely automated and artificial intelligence. Our people are all we have, you know, and we talk a lot about sustainability. Something that I love talking about and I'm passion about is human sustainability in business. Because it is not possible to continue on like some people have. We have more burnout now than we've ever had.

We have more people leaving for many different reasons. And so a focus on our people. We have heads of people operations but from a perspective of wellbeing. What are the conditions for people where they are the highest performers? Nurturing is a big part of that.

Same things with plants, right? Plants need water, they need food, they need sunlight. People need certain things to grow and to, innovate, and to create. And so I love that businesses are looking in this direction, and I love the conversation that we're having about it because change is happening, and more change is on the way.

[00:19:49] Barb Patterson: Yeah. Yeah. I agree. And I think in listening to you too, it's like, where can we find our personal power around that?

And that's inside of us, you know? So to really begin to pay attention to the habits that we have around all or nothing. All of us, maybe most of us, would laugh and say, you know, we can relate to it. And oh, I blew my eating today. So I'm just gonna go ahead and keep blowing it, you know, just all those simple ways.

And by the way, blow it, go for it. Have those French fries.

[00:20:22] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Are you talking about me right now?

[00:20:24] Barb Patterson: Exactly. Or, you know, oh, I haven't been consistent with exercise. I'll start next week. I mean, I have so many of

these that I could bore you all for hours. But, what I'm looking for is a new relationship inside myself around this all-or-nothing.

A new relationship that as life opens up more, as maybe schedules and opportunities grow or creativity, new ideas come, how can I embrace those and lean into them without going back to my habits of pressure and striving and in a room full of people who, you know, are just full of a busy mind and you know, all of that. How can I find my own bearings?

These are the things that I think empower each of us individually to navigate our way, our life, our business, our our way.

[00:21:22] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: I agree, 100%. And then I would just add in knowing where my value comes from.

[00:21:29] Barb Patterson: Mm.

[00:21:30] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Not equating my value with how much doing I'm doing.

[00:21:34] Barb Patterson: Yeah.

[00:21:35] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Just to really hold that up to the light and know that it's just not true.

And in knowing that it's not true, what's so crazy is that I can actually add more value because I'm not so attached to the belief that I need to do or there's pressure to do. And then I do and give from a different place and a different space that is much more free, open, creative, kind in interactions with other and myself.

Before I had been introduced to this understanding, I actually had it all backwards, and I still forget, and I still forget. And then we remember.

[00:22:14] Barb Patterson: Yeah. Well, thank you, everybody. The

invitation, the exploration, if you wanna join us in all of this, I think is again, just to let go of the all or nothing—when we see it, ask ourselves, is there another way, is there another way in this moment?

[00:22:30] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Thank you so much for being with us. We so appreciate you being here. And if you are liking this and you wanna share it with someone that might benefit, please do; we would love for you to do so. And we'd also love if you wanted to give us a review or a rating; please go to Spotify or wherever you're listening on your platform.

And we thank you for being with us, and we will see you next week.

[00:22:53] Barb Patterson: Bye, everyone.