

**[00:00:00] Barb Patterson:**

Hi everyone. This is Barb. I'm popping in before we start today's episode because things went a little bit different than we had planned when we started. And in large part, that's thanks to Melissa and her listening and her presence in the moment.

Our original intent for this episode was to share how all of us are designed and have within us the capability to rise to the occasion, whatever that occasion is.

As you will hear, this realization is something that I have been living in very poignantly over the last few weeks.

On June 7th, my cousin Mary went into the hospital. She passed away on June 18th, and we had her celebration of life this past Sunday. In many ways, this episode is my story and my family's story of resilience and realizing that while we can't predict our futures or know when life will throw us in the deep end, knowing that we have what it takes to find our way and to rise to the occasion is a huge source of comfort.

We can trust ourselves and trust that wisdom will arrive in the moment when we need it.

I wanted to take a moment and dedicate this episode to the life and memory of my cousin, Mary Therese Harrington. In her last days and in her death, she brought our family together and reminded us that at the end of the pain and loss is immense love.



There is a beautiful song by Linda Ronstadt that has been running through my mind since her celebration of life. The simple words are:

"So goodbye, my friend. I know I'll never see you again, but the time together through all the years will take away these tears. It's okay now. Goodbye, my friend."

**[00:01:51] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Hello everyone. and welcome to REAL WOMEN REAL LIVES. We're so happy that you're here with us today. I am Melissa.

**[00:01:58] Barb Patterson:** I'm Barb.

**[00:01:59] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Today, we are going to be talking about how we are truly made to rise to the occasion. Barb and I were talking right before this, and we thought we'd jump right in. And so Barb—off to you, my friend.

**[00:02:13] Barb Patterson:** Yeah. Hi everybody. Good to be with you today. And good to be with Melissa. We've had to take a couple of weeks off of recording because of some personal things that have gone on in my family. And just say that...

Sorry...

**[00:02:31] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Yeah. Yeah.

**[00:02:33] Barb Patterson:** It's all good, everyone. Excuse me.

**[00:02:36] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Yeah.

**[00:02:36] Barb Patterson:** But, we lost a family member and...

I wasn't crying five minutes ago, you know. What the hell?

We lost my cousin a couple weeks ago, and we just had her beautiful celebration of life and memorial on Sunday. So, you know, three weeks ago now [I] got a call that her health had taken a turn for the worse and decided to make the trip home and just to share with everybody.

I had the gift of being with her the last week of her life. And if any of you have ever had that opportunity to be with somebody at that time, you know what a rare and special time it can be. And it's all the things, right. It's, you know, family coming in, and I got to spend a lot of time with my family, my immediate family, as well as her mom and my aunt and visitors.

So, you know, everyone's crowded in the room, laughing and telling stories and remembering. And then, of course, other times when we're crying and just sitting in silence, you know, the full gamut.

What has just struck me over these last few weeks. I mean, there's so many things I could probably talk for hours about it all.

Prior to those conversations three weeks ago, I had no clue what I was in store for.

I had no clue what these last few weeks we're gonna happen and that what they would entail and that what they would require of me. And if I had known they were coming, you know, like choices you have to make for someone's health, choices you make when you're even planning a celebration of life, you know. Choices you make when you are bringing family into conversations and wanting to respect and love and, you know, everyone involved.

If I had known and been able to predict that all those things were gonna happen, I guarantee I would've been really stressed, and I would've been trying to plan it all ahead, and I would've been trying to figure out the right way to be and how to be in a way that would respect everyone.

And I would've imagined scenarios playing out, and I guarantee a lot of my imagination. Would've thought things would be potentially harder and tougher than they were. And I would've had a lot of evidence for that kind of imagination. Right.

**[00:05:08] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Mm-hmm.

**[00:05:08] Barb Patterson:** But what's fascinating is never once in those few weeks did any of us involved say I can't do this.

**[00:05:19] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Wow.

**[00:05:20] Barb Patterson:** Right? None of us. And it wasn't just me. It was my aunt losing a daughter. It was my sisters and I just jumping in to figure things out we've never had to consider before, you know, everything from the logistics that happens in those kinds of scenarios to the bigger questions that you're asking yourself and having to face as a result of this time.

On the last night, before I left town, I had that morning a chance to go by and say goodbye to my two aunts. And, you know, we were just sitting in the gratitude of the last few weeks together and what a gift that's been to know each other in this way as adults and to face one of the most challenging and heartbreaking times, but also to feel the love and support of each other more fully.

Right. And then that night, at dinner at my sister's house, raise a glass. And I just said, I can't tell you how grateful I am to know that without hesitation, everyone in our family said, "What do we need to do? What's it take?"

I wanna also be transparent that in those few weeks, there were a lot of tough things that involved family history and hurt feelings and sensitive topics, and frustration and anger. You know, I don't want to whitewash, sugar coat that, you know, this wasn't also emotionally

challenging.

I say this to say that as Glennon Doyle says, "We can do hard things." You know that as you and I talk about it, we are designed to rise to the occasion. Every morning, having to get up and decide what decision was gonna have to be made today.

And, you know, I literally met with my aunt one morning, and we were talking about potential long care facilities, and then walking into the hospital and discovering that we were making the decision about hospice that morning, you know, to have it just completely, you know, move much faster than we wanted and expected.

But yet to watch that we did it, we could do it. And we could do it with love and care and all the myriad of human experiences and emotions, you know?

**[00:07:49] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Yeah.

**[00:07:50] Barb Patterson:** It didn't mean I didn't have days in those two weeks—that all of us didn't have days where we were ruminating about something or a situation or irritated or afraid, or just other moments of love and pure joy and contentment, you know, and...

Yet never once did any of us question where we were meant to be. And I think that's so powerful because I think that's common for all of us. I don't think that's rare, to be honest. You know, I think that if all of us look to our own lives, when the rug has been pulled out, when we **[00:08:30]** have to have a tough conversation, when life throws us curve balls, yes, we experience the full range of human emotion, but we rise to the occasion.

We find our way. And I think there's something really beautiful and powerful in that, that if I knew I could put my faith in that, you know, how much I would ease up and not feel like I have to brace against life,

not have to shore up against life and everything going on. That we can put our faith in our innate capacity to rise to the occasion.

We can put our faith and our certainty in knowing that we can figure it out. We can do what feels aligned and right. And it may feel messy and incredibly vulnerable and hard at times, but it can also feel clear and connected. I know every single one of us has things in our lives that require us to rise to the occasion.

You know, I'll just share one more story and turn it over to you, Melissa. But there was one moment where I got some news that when my sister told me, my first response was like my head in my hands. And I'm like, "No!". And I knew that this news was going to potentially upset someone and. You know, that broke my heart.

You know, like my whole nervous system, my [ whole intense thing went completely like, "Oh no." And I was thinking about her and how she was gonna react and what was gonna go on. And I even, you know, said to my sister, "What am I gonna tell her?" And, and, and to be really transparent, my mind was already thinking, "Can I not tell her that? Is there a way I cannot do this? Can I not tell her this. Can I, can I sugarcoat it? Can I lie?" Can I—you know, right. Like my mind just instantly got totally activated. But of course, you know, it was like, all right, just take a breath. And then it was like, all right, you gotta tell her. There's no way around this.

And as soon as I just surrendered to, "Okay, this is the next thing you have to say, this is the next thing you have to share." Then calling this person and sharing this. She took it as best anybody could. But not as like my first fight or flight response had already imagined a worst-case scenario and years of upset.

But again, it just showed me that all of us in our humanness have the ability to rise to the occasion of having to tell someone something that's potentially really disappointing or upsetting to hear. To be on the receiving end of that news and take it with compassion and

understanding. And so I think I just, over the last three weeks between my family and all the events and the doctors and the nurses and the caregivers and the neighbors and the friends, and, you know, the people, the strangers just watched people really demonstrate the capacity to handle and rise to the occasion for each other, for themselves, for my cousin.

So I'm just so grateful and struck again, like how often I may stop myself from something or going for something that matters to me or saying something that's intimate and vulnerable because I'm not sure I can handle it.

And yet to just be really shown day after day, moment, moment after moment, how we are, we can handle it.

**[00:12:18] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Barb, what's your cousin's name?

**[00:12:20] Barb Patterson:** Mary. Thank you for asking. Yeah, Mary.

**[00:12:24] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Yeah. I feel that, um, this is such a vulnerable, precious share that I would actually like to leave it right there and just put a little blessing out there for your cousin.

**[00:12:37] Barb Patterson:** Oh, that's nice, Melissa. Thank you. She was an amazing, larger-than-life physically, emotionally, playful, strong, opinionated, sensitive, loving woman. So I appreciate that.

**[00:12:53] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Yeah. I can only imagine the trust that she felt for you and how she knew that you would rise to the occasion.

**[00:13:02] Barb Patterson:** Yeah, thank you so much.

It really was a family affair. My sisters, Mary, put a lot of trust and faith in my sisters and me and, and all of us, including her aunts and her

mom, and the community and extended family around her, showed up.

**[00:13:21] Melissa Palazzo-Hart:** Great. Well, I just want to thank everyone for listening today. If this is something that you feel can help someone else, please share it with them.

You're not alone going through whatever you're going through. You can rise to the occasion. And if you feel called, we would so appreciate you to download and leave a review and rate us on Apple and Spotify. And we will see you next week. Lots of love.

**[00:13:49] Barb Patterson:** Thank you for listening, everyone. Lots of love.