

[00:00:00] INTRO

[00:00:48] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Hello and welcome to REAL WOMEN REAL LIVES. We are so happy you're with us today. I am Melissa.

[00:00:55] Barb Patterson: I'm Barb.

[00:00:56] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: We're still Melissa and Barb. Here we are. And Barb and I were talking about pressure. Something we all have felt, dealt with, believe in, perhaps sometimes, maybe not.

So Barb, talk to us about this thing called pressure.

[00:01:11] Barb Patterson: Yeah. First, I must get the incessant song line "Under pressure."

If I knew more, I'd do more, but now maybe everyone can join me in that going looping in your brain as we talk about it. But yeah, I think the pressure is interesting, especially in the context of our work. And I think the pressure has historically been misaligned, so the pressure is necessary to do well.

Pressure is necessary to get people motivated. Pressure is necessary for me to get my finally get going. I have used the pressure of a deadline to get focused like that has been kind of an M.O. for me. It started early days in, in school, you know, the last minute to the homework, the all-nighters. And at work, you know, the pressure of



expectation, or a meeting, a deadline to get things done.

But because I didn't understand the source of creativity and doing well, it looked like the pressure was the source. You know, like it was the pressure that was there. Now it did kind of suck. It wasn't (excuse my language), but it wasn't as if I was then pulling those all-nighters or, you know, doing things at the last minute and in a place of ease. Right.

[00:02:39] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Mm-hmm.

[00:02:39] Barb Patterson: Pressure is not that. So I was, while I'm pulling the all-nighter or doing the deck for, you know, a presentation at work at the last minute... the whole time what's also was happening was this stream of the noise of thinking like here, "You did it again. Why didn't you start this earlier? You really should have done this. Oh, you know, it's not gonna be as good..." you know, like just that constant noise.

So using pressure as a place to get myself focused had a lot of downsides.

[00:03:13] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Mm.

[00:03:14] Barb Patterson: But it was a misunderstanding I had. And, you know, through really seeing that in a free, open, more settled, easier internal state, we're better thinkers.

We're more productive. We don't make as many mistakes. We are better listeners. Like, once I began to see that, I had to face this thought, and by the way, I hear it from—and I know you do too—hear it from many people in business. Like, no, no, the pressure's important.

We have to put pressure on people, or they won't perform. We have to put pressure on ourselves to meet the deadlines. And so, it has been a fascinating inquiry to question that idea because, in its simplest way, I

think everybody would agree that when I'm in a more internal rushed, frantic, stressful state, I'm not necessarily at my best. Yet. How come in business, we think pressure is an important ingredient? Like that's, that's like odd to me now.

So this place, though, it's challenging because I, like maybe most people, want to grow, want to have more impact, want to, you know, stretch myself, try new things. And I'm afraid that ease won't get me there. You know, I've had to challenge and question, and I would have some mentors in this work who would lovingly and often remind me that, you know, my internal sped-up busyness doesn't lead to higher quality ideas or experiences in life.

[00:05:05] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Mm.

[00:05:05] Barb Patterson: It's the exact opposite.

[00:05:07] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Mm.

[00:05:08] Barb Patterson: So recently, and maybe, you know, over the last couple years in particular, as people have had to find a new way to do business. They have had to let go of their assumptions about how business is done. Right. I hear a theme over and over again right now. "I don't wanna go back."

I don't want to go back to busyness for busyness' sake. I don't want to feel so stressed when I'm at home at night that I can't be present to my kids. I don't want to be thinking about work the moment my eyes open in the morning. I don't want to feel like I'm behind all the time, but people are confused because their old model of business has that as a given. Has that something that you know is an ingredient. And so, I have found myself in my own business this last year, really challenging myself. Can it be easier? Can I experience more ease? Can I do this with more ease versus urgency and pressure? The good news is, I'm seeing evidence that I can that my pressure isn't making it happen

faster. That's an illusion. My pressure isn't helping me meet deadlines. Often using the deadline and last minute as a way to focus means I'm not giving space for maybe even more creativity to come into whatever I'm creating.

So I think people are craving more ease and yet afraid like me. Does that mean I have to give up on my desires to wanna grow and have a lifestyle that excites me or supports my family?

[00:06:57] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Mm, this topic that you're talking about, Barb, is something I think about a lot.

Frankly, for the sustainability of workers. In the workforce. And we talk about sustainability in many areas, environmentally and whatnot. But workers cannot continue going on in the way they've been going on. And we're seeing it in all the studies. And yet there still is a conditioning, a belief that this is the way.

And what I'm curious about is when you talk about pressure to me, I ask myself, "What is pressure? Is it pressure to meet a deadline?" Well, said another way. Sometimes in my life, having a deadline has helped me to focus. So that might not be pressure for me necessarily.

Right. Focus is important for me to achieve what I need to achieve.

And then I wonder about pressure for me; the perfectionism hops in there, right. The pressure to do it right the first time. To not allow me to make a mistake or fail. That kind of pressure to me, is actually deadly. It's deadly to our creativity. It's deadly to our innovation. And that's the one that I'm hoping to get a little space around, frankly, because I do think that there are deadlines.

You know, I was talking with two very, very senior people at a public company yesterday, and the topic of pressure came up. And the truth is, is that there are deadlines. There are goals, and there are prior. And

those need to be met. It doesn't necessarily mean there's pressure. I think clarity around those items helps. Clarity helps. Pressure doesn't.

I am reminded of this experiment that we were talking about earlier, THE MARSHMALLOW EXPERIMENT, and how this kind of plays into effect.

So there's been a couple of marshmallow experiments, apparently. There was one in Stanford about delayed satisfaction and gratification. That's not the one we're going to talk about.

There was a marshmallow experiment that had to do with a spaghetti stick, a yard of string, and some tape, and I'm not going to get this perfect. Just so you know. And that's part of it; I'm not going to put pressure on myself to get this perfect.

But the idea behind it is that this experiment is—you're given 18 minutes to create some sort of free-standing object. And the experiment is done with executives, physicians, PhDs, athletes, children, and people of all ages in all countries.

And the study shows that the category of people that win this most often are kindergartners. Am I saying that word, right? Children in kindergarten.

[00:09:31] Barb Patterson: Yeah.

[00:09:31] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: There you go. Much better. And that's very interesting. And I, I wonder what that is in terms of pressure.

I know for myself that when I was in kindergarten, I didn't feel that much pressure about getting it right. I was very exploratory in nature. I tried different things, but as an executive, oh man, did I want to get stuff right. And I had a plan to get it right.

And so what they found with executives who did this marshmallow experiment is that they failed. The reason they failed is because they thought they knew how to do it, and they stuck with that plan, no matter what. Whereas the young children iterated that they failed, their marshmallow failed to the ground, and they just picked it up and started again. And for me, that's what's interesting about pressure. Am I? Are we putting that kind of pressure that we have to get it right?

Because when we have to get it right, that doesn't leave room for creativity, innovation, or iteration. And where we are in the world today in this world of volatility, uncertainty, change, and consistent change. We need to be thinking about the future of work. We need to be thinking about the future of our workforce.

And so this idea of pressure that you bring up is interesting to me because I don't think that's an environment that's going to create innovation for the future. Creativity for new ideas. I think it's going to do the opposite. It's going to have a workforce. That's going to stick to what they know to be safe, as opposed to trying new things.

And that is not the future of work. Frankly, companies that rely on that will probably end up like some companies we know. Like a blockbuster that wanted to stick to what they knew as opposed to what Netflix was doing was trying new things.

[00:11:17] Barb Patterson: And I think wellbeing is one of the most important things on people's minds, employees' minds, right now when they're looking at organizations and places to work.

And I think that just to clarify, pressure is an experience like every other experience, an internal experience, like urgency, love, peace, all of those things. So, we can understand that as humans, at times, we just, we feel that. But the real power here is, what we're saying is don't mistake a temporary human experience as a necessary ingredient for success.

Don't mistake a temporary human experience as a given in business.

[00:12:04] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Mm.

[00:12:05] Barb Patterson: You know, to broaden what's possible and to see that yes, of course, at times, we'll feel pressure. And I resonate with what you're saying, Melissa. Like, often it's, where's the pressure coming from? It's coming from maybe expectations or standards we're holding inside ourselves.

It's coming because we think something's at stake. Like our reputation or money or a client, you know, those kind of things. So it's a very understandable human experience, but the idea that it's benefiting us and our business and our culture is false. I think that's what we're both boldly stating.

[00:12:45] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: And it's bold.

[00:12:46] Barb Patterson: Yeah. And so, when you see that pressure is another way to talk about an internal reactive space. And we know that when our minds are reactive when our internal state is reactive, we are not accessing our full perspective. We aren't accessing the full capacity of our minds. We are getting more and more rigid. We're getting more and more closed-minded. That's just how our minds work in a more reactive mind. It gets more constricted in an open, freer, less reactive internal state. We have more perspective. That's natural. That's the way it works. To argue that somehow pressure makes us better, I think, is just a misunderstanding.

And I think what we want to offer today is, what if ease? Ease was the way to be a more productive, creative, connected, and better influencer. You know, we get more sales in that state versus pressure.

[00:13:47] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Oh, I agree with you. And I'm just

gonna share a short story about a negotiation I had with a procurement head of procurement for a very large fortune 500 company.

And there was a lot at. It was going to be our largest client that impacted a lot of our employees and new employees. And I knew that, but I also knew that pressure was not going to help our conversation. And because of that, I took time to build trust and rapport with this person. And because of that, I was able to hear what she was saying and also between the lines of what she was saying.

And that turned out to be super helpful in the negotiation because we say things, of course. But it's not just what we say. It's how we're saying it. It's our being and doing together, our whole person, if you will. And so, if I'm in a state of pressure, I'm missing out on valuable cues in very important high-stakes conversations.

[00:14:40] Barb Patterson: Absolutely.

[00:14:42] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: So I think that's another little case study for me and for anyone that's listening because I too do the same.

[00:14:48] Barb Patterson: Absolutely.

[00:14:49] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Let's just be really clear about that.

[00:14:51] Barb Patterson: But that's the revolutionary part of what we're saying, is the pressure's coming maybe because we want something to go well, and yet leaning more into the pressure and the internal reactivity takes us in the opposite direction of that.

[00:15:06] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Yes. Yes.

[00:15:07] Barb Patterson: You know, so how do we? I'm imagining people might be listening and saying, "Okay, I'm with you, but how do I get out of that? When I feel the deadline, when I feel the urgency,

when it does matter to me, well, how do I shift that inside?"

[00:15:22] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Mm.

[00:15:23] Barb Patterson: And I'd love to hear what you have to say on that, Melissa. And, you know, I'll say too, I think it's, first of all, for me, I had to not respect the pressure.

I had to really see that the downside of it. And because prior to that, I respected. I thought it was giving me good information, you know, versus that it was actually contaminating my thinking.

[00:15:49] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Yeah. Uh, I will share an experience with a client who just had this. They were negotiating for themselves for their compensation.

And that's a lot of pressure, right? Normally it's a lot of pressure. It's how we support ourselves. And she found herself feeling very overwhelmed and very sped up in the moment of the negotiation. And she. That she felt the overwhelm. She felt her full mind, knowing it wasn't the best time to negotiate.

And so whatever she said is not important, but she gave herself some time, and she settled. Like we, humans, are meant to do. She put it on the back burner. There's a wonderful book that I read years ago that really helped me with this. It's called slowing down to the speed of life. And they talk about this thing called the back burner.

And at the time, I thought they were absolutely insane. I had no time for a back burner. I needed to fire that grill up. Get that stuff cooked! But what I realized was I was burning everything in my pan and wondering why it didn't taste so good. So letting that sauce simmer on the back burner like this woman did gave her the clarity that she needed to have the conversation that was much more advantageous for her and allowed her to show up with her boss in a way that was her

truth.

She was very strong and not in a strong with a duke's up kind of way, which is how I've done it in the past strong meaning with integrity that she was true to herself and she was able to speak for her truth, and she felt good about it. Now the results kind of is what the results are. It's not about that necessarily.

It's about the experience. So when you talk about the how, Barb, for me, when I feel sped up, overwhelmed, and stressed, that's my navigation system telling me to take my car to the shop for a little resty rest. And that could be in a big office building in New York City, going out to get a coffee for five minutes, feeling my feet on the floor, or my shoes on the floor. Rather, I'm not going to walk down New York City with no shoes on. That would be dangerous. Feeling the hot coffee in my hand and smelling the aroma of the coffee. So that I can let my mind do what it naturally does, which is settled. I don't do it perfectly. I don't do it all the time. Sometimes I want to burn that hamburger in the front pan just to get it done.

And sometimes, I remember to let it simmer on the back burner until I can let myself settle.

[00:18:13] Barb Patterson: Yeah, you can never underestimate the power of a pause, right. When you feel... and that's how we know, we, uh, we will feel it. We'll feel our shoulders raised. We'll feel our guts tighten. We'll feel that urgent. And that's the wake-up call. Right? Before, I thought it was the "go" button, you know. Go faster button, yeah.

Now it's like, "Oh wait, no, that's the, it's the red flag, like, oh, okay." And so I think, you know, what we're both saying is first see it for what it is, and then do what occurs to you to do at the moment. Put it on the back burner, and take a pause. Sometimes in the seeing of it, it just allows me to take my foot off the gas pedal, and that little bit goes a

long way.

And you know, I can take a deep breath and get in my body again. I think it's ultimately that if we start to get more curious about how powerful, productive, creative, and connected wise, you are in the feeling of ease, you will start to go on your own learning curve of how to find that place within more often.

And I think that's just, the other thing I want to say is that place of ease is inside of us. It's not in getting the, you know, house in order. It's not in getting the deck done. Right. Like I think that was the other thing I used to look for my ease. I could take a break. I could feel rested once I got to the end of the to-do list or the end of the project, but there was always more, and to really know that even in the midst, like your example with the client, even in the midst of a high stake conversation or deadline, we can find that place of.

Beyond the noise beyond the reactivity inside of us, is that stillness that place of ease? It is there.

[00:20:09] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: That's right. So when you're starting to feel some pressure in your life and things are starting to feel unmanageable... barb wants to sing again; just so you know, she's bopping her head.

[Under pressure. She is, uh, doing a great dance.]

Just recognize that for yourself. Recognize the overwhelm. Recognize the stress. Recognize the sped-upness and see what occurs to you to take that pause or halt, whatever the word is for you. Sometimes the word halt. I like it because it's like, am I hungry? Am I angry? Am I lonely? Am I tired? How do I tend to my needs in the moment?

So take that pause for yourself. If you feel called.

Thank you so much for being with us today. We appreciate you being here and engaging with us. If you would like to engage a little more, we would love that. Email us at realwomenreallivespodcast@gmail.com. Let us know what you're thinking and feeling and how we can support you.

And until then...

[00:21:07] Barb Patterson: Goodbye, everybody.

[00:21:09] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Yeah, I was going to say, is there anything brilliant we can say or end with? I don't know. I feel pressure know, feel,

[00:21:13] Barb Patterson: Get it good. Sign off really strong. Yeah. No, we're so grateful for all of you. Thank you for joining us and listening. And we look forward to seeing you on our next episode or being with you.

Thanks, everyone.

[00:21:30] Melissa Palazzo-Hart: Thank you.