

Mothers Grave S3 Ep5 Barri

Transcript

[00:00:00] **Barri:** And there's all this good juicy science about what happens when we write to the person. Because our body, believe it or not, the cells in our body do not know that that person is earthly or otherwise. In fact, that's, to me, grief is sometimes even more complicated because we are born when somebody is lost to find them, right?

[00:00:22] So if one day my mother is here and the next day she's not, and I cannot find her like she is not, you know, it's interesting when we say lost, like she is not lost at the mall. She's not lost in the woods. She's dead, but, but lost is what our brain thinks, right? The person is lost. So we need to teach our body somatically.

[00:00:45] We need to teach our brain. We need to create these new neural pathways, if you will, that we can accept that as the truth, somehow. I know a lot of people that still are like, yeah, I just imagine my mom is still out shopping. That when we write to the person, we can create this imaginal beautiful relationship and who knows?

[00:01:14] Imaginal. You know, I have a deep connection to my mother. I don't know whether it's because of signs and synchronicities that have that have come into my life, or it is actually because in that very chapter I took her advice and realized I've written an awful lot about my mom, but I haven't written to her.

[00:01:49] **Dana:** Hey friend, welcome to, I Swear on My Mother's Grave, a podcast full of bold, funny, vulnerable conversations about the loss of our complex mothers. I like to say that you come for the grief, but you stay for the sass. That's my new tagline, trying to get that going for season three. So over the last year, a bunch of people would email me or text me and tell me that I had to talk to today's guest.

[00:02:14] They said, oh my gosh, Dana, have you heard of the Memory Circle? Dana. Dana. Dana. You have to connect with Barri, she's amazing and has a whole community dedicated to grief tending and writing and story sharing. You would love her. So I finally messaged Barri earlier this year on Instagram, and I asked her if she would be interested in chatting with me, and she said, quote, I would be honored to be on your pod.

[00:02:38] Yes exclamation mark end quote. Barri is the Chief Grief Officer and a certified grief coach with the Memory Circle, which is a space and a place to be with your grief when Barri's own beautiful mother died in 1993. There were no resources available to help her family through the pain. Nobody said grief or grieving.

[00:02:59] She knew motherless daughters deserved better, and so she created and opened a door where there wasn't one before and started the memory circle. Barri said, I want grief to be normalized. It needs a better place to live in modern day society, so let's work on becoming more grief literate in our daily lives.

[00:03:19] In this episode, we chat about her mother's final days in a beach chair, eating plums. We talk about writing to the dead, how to reframe big milestones in our lives, and we talk about menopause. Also, I know none of you will actually judge me or even notice, but because I'm a perfectionist and I'm... I'm working on it, I want you to know that I was so excited to speak with Barri that I forgot to turn my mic on.

[00:03:47] Yep. After three years of doing this, sometimes you remember you're just a human and you don't have a producer in the room with you. So I'm sorry I might not sound as clear and fancy as I usually do, but guess what that does? That allows us to give Barri more of the floor and let her speak after she's been holding so much space for others.

[00:04:12] This is the one and only Barri Leiner Grant.

[00:04:26] **Barri:** I lost my mother, Ellen in 1993. She died of a brain aneurysm. Suddenly, and without warning. She took the day off and went to Sandy Hook Beach and called me in the morning and said, it's just, she was an exceptional realtor. She said, it's too damn hot to sell anybody a house today. She'd just been to visit my sister and kind of tuck her into this new apartment.

[00:04:56] She was living in Denver right after school. She got plucked from Cornell Hotel School and had this fat job and my mom like swooped in and helped her decorate her new digs and she had scalped tickets to the US Open Golf Tournament for my stepfather. And she was kind of giddy about scalping as if it was like the most daring, illegal, something that she'd ever done.

[00:05:19] And she kind of had us all in our place. Like she, she knew we were all where we belonged that day, which in retrospect, I now think. It's, it's part of

a plan, like a, a large plan. Like she didn't know, but somewhere I think deeply you might know. She just fell asleep in her beach chair.

[00:05:40] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:05:40] **Barri:** And

[00:05:40] **Dana:** on the beach?

[00:05:41] **Barri:** On, on the beach. On the beach. Favorite place on earth. And yeah, she had like the deepest, darkest skin. She once went to Madam Marie on like the Jersey boardwalk who did her cards, and basically said it's her first life that she had ever been white. And we were giggling because her skin was so dark. It was like, it was just like a funny, a funny thing.

[00:06:08] But she was like golden all year round. And there was a couple on the beach who at sunset were about to leave, and they knew that she was the only other person there, they saw. And so this woman was kind enough to sort of pat my mom in the back to just wake her so that she wasn't alone, left alone.

[00:06:30] And the woman was a nurse and she realized that my mom, something was, something was wrong. And at that time she was brain dead, but they... pre-cell phones, you know, they had to like go find help and 9 1 1 and get the ambulance there. And we knew that she wanted her organs donated. That's about all we knew of my mom's end of life plans.

[00:06:52] So my stepfather called me and he said, there's been an accident at the beach, which was, my mom was like an amazing swimmer, grew up at the Jersey Shore, was a swim counselor teacher. I just thought to myself, there's no accidents at the beach. Like what kind of accident? And he was so vague. I sort of knew without knowing and I was living in the city.

[00:07:15] And so I just got in a car and car service, like a work car service and headed up the parkway and just, I just knew there was just something in me, I just knew she was gone. My sister was flying in from Denver and we got home and he, he told us, and...

[00:07:35] **Dana:** Did you feel it in your body that day?

[00:07:37] **Barri:** I, you know, I, I just, I had never received news like that.

[00:07:43] I think now I always think everyone's dead. If the phone rings after 10:00 PM like I I, it, it's like my awful knee jerk reaction now. Like once something, the worst thing that has ever happened to you happens, I think you know, that it's a possibility. But in the moment of getting the news, I just thought it was so vague and he was a very straightforward attorney and kind of stern and I just thought, why would he be vague?

[00:08:12] And so I don't know how my brain went there, but I also had had a visit with her at my New York apartment and we had like a girl's night and we had frozen yogurt when it was kind of like all the rage in New York from your little bodega, and we got soft serve and all the little toppings. And we had been to pasta earlier that night and she had like a fra diavolo and she said, this is the best pasta I've had in my whole life.

[00:08:46] So there were like these things that I look back now that felt like big markers in a, in a life where you, you don't know. I think there must be some small inkling in your subconscious that there was like a lot of preparation around. So I, I, I don't know if I knew, but, but somehow it was an awful possibility.

[00:09:13] So we went to the hospital and somehow, and this is why you have to leave directions and end of life wishes for your loved ones. So we knew that she wanted her organs donated, but that's, that's really all we knew about her wishes. So somehow...

[00:09:31] **Dana:** No wills, nothing written, no trusts.

[00:09:34] **Barri:** Crap crap, life insurance thing.

[00:09:37] Like she checked a box and some real estate thing that she did, like check, check. And she had just enough to cover the cost of, I guess, the casket we picked out like in our numb state. And when we went to the hospital, she was on life support 'cause they had to keep the organs, you know, alive so that they could be hopefully used by someone who was in need.

[00:10:04] And, you know, machines making her chest go up and down. It was so eerie and so awful. My sister remembers touching her hand and then it was very cold and that the blankets were like slip jaw of her body. The things we each remember are very different. And so she pulled the covers back, up on my mom and we both decided with my stepfather, my sister and I have both decided like everything but our eyes is okay because somehow we thought

wherever she was going that she would need her eyes or she would need to see us.

[00:10:39] So odd when we look back at it now, but would've been more weird to like imagine someone walking around seeing with those eyes. They were so her, they were like, I think what like makes you, you uniquely, you, especially her eyes, they were very glinty and glimmery and, and so that was sort of the decision making there.

[00:11:02] And we knew that we wanted to bring like her own makeup bag with us because she was also very particular about that. So we had that, that we were like hemming and hawing or

[00:11:13] What could she

[00:11:14] **Dana:** not live without, like was it mascara? Is it under eye? Is it lipstick? Was it blush? Like what was the...

[00:11:19] **Barri:** Every holiday... I mean we used to sit in her bathroom and watch her do the application because it was, it was something, and it wasn't that it was so much makeup. It wasn't like a big covering extravaganza 'cause she was beautiful with no makeup. But she always had this like giant Forgasza box of eyeshadows every holiday she asked for it.

[00:11:43] It was like, kind of like the Crayola super box of, you know, colors. It had so many. And so she was always like an artist. Like it was almost like watching someone do watercolor. Like she was so her artistry...

[00:11:55] **Dana:** Palette. Yes.

[00:11:56] **Barri:** Of these, yeah, shadows. And so it was always just fun to see what she chose and whatever.

[00:12:01] And she had this very specific coverup. She started to get some melasma in her older age and so she had this very specific coverup that she used. So we just wanted to make sure that it looked like her as like her as it could. So somehow that was important to us. The crazy thing you think about and that was about it.

[00:12:22] And then someone said, oh, you're gonna be, you know, too sad to say the eulogy. So I didn't speak. It's probably my most giant regret. I didn't have any others. I remember seeing my sister for the first time and saying to

her, you know, like real urgently, I was like, if there was anything else that you needed to say to her, like, you need to tell me right now.

[00:12:45] Like, just tell me if there's anything that you feel bad about or, I just, it was like so big sister of me, I just like needed to know. And she's like, nothing, you? Nothing. And we were both like, it felt clear. It felt clean and clear every time my mom hung up the phone, I love you. Love you too. She knew the minutia of every bit of our days and, and one of the most precious, prized things that I have that remains is like the little tape in the old answering machine that, thank goodness. But it is like when you didn't run to pick the phone up, it would continue to record your entire conversation. I'm so grateful I have it.

[00:13:33] **Dana:** That's incredible. That's incredible.

[00:13:35] **Barri:** But the nonsense that is on this tape, it, it is the minutiae. What did everybody think about the jacket that you awarded the meeting? And, and they must have said this and did you buy another color?

[00:13:45] And I saw this thing on tv and it, it's a topsy tail and it's makes your ponytail go inside out. You know, the new thing that everybody's wearing is, tell me the, well the white shirt is the must buy. Yeah. Have one. I'm gonna buy another one. Like a big standup collar or you know, like a man's shirt. A man's shirt.

[00:14:06] Right. But the cool thing is to do french cuffs and not button them. All the ladies in Europe are wearing it and fold them up. Yeah. Pull them up over the jacket. Yeah. But they still sort of hang because they're open. Yeah. Out of the jacket. And that's cool? Very. So I wore that yesterday. That new bouse that has sort of sheer stuff in it.

[00:14:29] Yeah. With the collar up with that. With what do you mean the collar up? Well just put the backup. Yeah. The collar. It's really crispy. Yeah. And black suit with those platform boots. Mm-hmm. Real high boots and a big wide satin ribbon with a humongous Agatha Scotty dog. Like a big black Scotty dog on a short chain charm thing.

[00:15:00] Right. I got so many compliments. What'd you do with his sleeve? They were just open, hanging, unbuttoned, uhuh. Yeah. And I felt so cool and comfortable. And what did everyone say? I just thought it looked cool yesterday, but that, but Kathleen in my office, but nothing compares to your new jacket. Oh, they all love that, huh?

[00:15:23] Yeah. I told you what Kathleen said. If it comes in another color, you should have it. No, it still comes in any other color. So what'd you say to Kathleen? A jacket that costs this much money, it's not one of those fire sale items. I guess you're right, Emily. The Middletown. Yeah. Yeah. And um, my hair is so long, so long.

[00:15:47] Do you like it long? I can't decide. Yeah. I like mine long. I, I do, 'cause I do so much with it. Yeah. Every time I cut it off, sorry. Well, I pulled it all back on the top part. Yeah. I should get you one of those things. I say they're fabulous. I don't... a topsy tail? Yeah, I don't want that. Okay. Have it at Bloomingdale.

[00:16:11] I would never use it.

[00:16:15] It is so, it, it's so indicative of the how in she was to all the details. And if you looked at that and you looked at what she knew about my sister's life and her day to day, how the clients felt about her, the people that came to our house to tell us story after story about how she had changed lives. I I...

[00:16:38] **Dana:** Because she was a copywriter before, right?

[00:16:40] **Barri:** Yeah.

[00:16:40] **Dana:** Before real estate.

[00:16:41] **Barri:** Yes.

[00:16:41] **Dana:** Is that right? Yeah.

[00:16:42] **Barri:** Yes. She wrote for Steinbeck's department store and some other department stores. And she was, yeah, she was an excellent copywriter. Mostly fashion. She was a crazy wordsmith. She was so good at Scrabble, it was insane. She loved word puzzles. She used the most, her vocabulary was stunning.

[00:17:01] And funny enough, in her beach bag, she read books... like she went through them like, water. Like she was just, but the good book stayed at home. The hardcovers stayed at home. So when she went to the beach where I would get like a few magazines, she always brought like a trashy novel. So I don't even know if this was, you know, something telling us something into the future, but the novel that she had with her was Vanka.

[00:17:24] It was like an Ivanka Trump, no, a receipt for three pounds of Santa Rosa plums, which were her favorite ever food only come, but once a summer. They're the ones that are like so purple, they're almost black on the inside, and there were none left in the beach bag. So we know that she enjoyed three pounds of Santa Rosa plums, which also is like, is that part of the plan?

[00:17:51] Like you get to eat your favorite food on the way out? Like, I don't know. That just seemed like pretty magical, in your favorite place on earth. And I, I, I make up in my head that fast forward we found out, they couldn't donate the organs because they found early stage liver cancer. So while she died of a brain aneurysm, she would've had a really miserable, long, painful, I don't think she would've been very good about being a patient.

[00:18:21] I don't think she would've been very good about vanity. I think she would've gone out, like kind of, there would've been like bitchy bits of it and I, I can't imagine it. So sometimes, you know, the writer in me is always like writing the story of like the book I might write someday about my mom, that God came down, whatever we think, like she, I believe.

[00:18:48] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:18:48] **Barri:** And said, okay, you can have this. And gave her like all the options of the way that it was going down. But it was like 50, you'll like go out instantly at 50 and the beach and whatever. Or, and it was like the, the, the other door on the Price is Right or whatever it is, let's make a deal. And that one you'll live really little bit longer, but it's gonna be ugly and whatever.

[00:19:15] And so I think she would've chosen it, honestly, even if it meant less time with us. I think it was like less pain for us. She would just fall asleep in the beach chair. I, I think it all would've just been the choice.

[00:19:28] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:19:29] **Barri:** And maybe I make that up.

[00:19:31] **Dana:** What do they call that in the grief coaching world or in your language?

[00:19:34] What you just did that like finding the silver lining or finding the, what is that called? What...

[00:19:40] **Barri:** I think finding meaning, you know, David Kessler is one of the teachers and he wrote a book...

[00:19:46] **Dana:** yes.

[00:19:46] **Barri:** ...that's called Finding Meaning, and I think it's almost like you can't imagine it when you first are grieving, but all of a sudden something emerges that's not like bright siding your grief or like, let's find what's good about it.

[00:20:02] But somehow it does emerge that like you start to find small things that seem like this is better. And I don't know whether it's the peace that we find because we remain without them, but there's something about that that just seems like, yeah, I may, I, I find peace in knowing that there wasn't suffering.

[00:20:25] I find peace that she was in her favorite place on earth. I've written and rewritten the story of like her jaunt about the AMP that day and what she picked up, like bain de soleil. I make up in my mind's eye that like she loved, like the giant balls that were in that big wire rack, like the bouncy balls that were in the big wire rack.

[00:20:48] And I imagine she took it out and like bounced it and like, Put her leg up and over like a big kick.

[00:20:53] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:20:55] **Barri:** I, I, I write it over and over and like I said in my head, or the magical book that may or may never be written, but that little bit of information about her having early stage liver cancer was given to my stepfather.

[00:21:09] And he waited until about six months fast forward, like around holiday time, and we're having like this misery of a get together with him pretending it was like a holiday that we could bear... said, I, I debated whether or not to tell you girls, but I, but this is what happened. And I thought that was not your news to keep.

[00:21:32] So family secrets are also, you know, note to self like the, they just don't help the people who remain, find any way forward. And I don't think that we ever get over grieving or grief or living with this kind of loss. I there, I think we learn to live with the tools that help us in some way move forward so we can learn to hold grief in one hand, which I believe we always will, might not be as heavy and we will learn to find joy.

[00:22:10] And in like in the joy pot is like meaning making. Maybe you write something, maybe you become a grief coach, maybe you like move from peer to taking some trainings. You know, like I met every motherless daughter that you can imagine following the loss of my mom. It was like a magnet.

[00:22:33] **Dana:** Because you were like in the PR world, not in the grief space.

[00:22:36] **Barri:** Nobody even offered my sister and I, no one said grief grieving. We sat Shiva, we're Jewish, we sat Shiva, which means like lots of people come to your house, honor a beautiful tradition, which I know a lot of my clients and family friends have adopted and adapted as their own because it's really beautiful tradition.

[00:22:57] **Dana:** Mm-hmm. It is.

[00:22:58] **Barri:** House was so full of stories of my mom, one that's especially poignant to me. I happened to have answered the door and there was this woman who I didn't recognize. There were a lot of people that I, I didn't know because they were people that my mom knew could almost not imagine her having enough time in the day to know all of these people, but her outstretch hands held like a bakery box.

[00:23:22] She had come from Brooklyn. All I remember is like the bakery box in my face and that bakery string around the box, and she said, I heard the news. I had to come and meet you to tell you that your mom sold me a house when I was going through my divorce. And it was way more than that, giving me the confidence in doing so and teaching me about like the financing of my mortgage, like how we're gonna get this done.

[00:23:50] And I think it's because my mom had been through her own divorce, that she felt she could share and, and what she learned. But she said as we were about to part ways, she said, if you're gonna go on a date, I need to teach you how to wear a red lipstick. And she like leaned over and put down the visor and like whipped out her lipstick.

[00:24:09] And the way this woman recounted the story was so touching and made my mom this like, you know, your mom is a 360 degree person, you know, she has a life away from you. You only imagine it because she's so there and present for you. And I know that's lucky because I have since met a lot of clients and women who had, you know, relationships that were less than or wish they wished for it to be so much more, or they were estranged or it was fraught with, you know, troubles and illness and, you know, I know that, so I feel really

lucky for that too, in retrospect. Even though it was, you know, just, you know, 20- 28 years, you know, that I knew her and that she only had 50 on the earth.

[00:24:57] I just think, wow. They were like big and major. But when people tell you these stories, you just larger than life, you know, the, the character...

[00:25:07] **Dana:** larger than life.

[00:25:07] **Barri:** She was...

[00:25:08] **Dana:** yes. Just, or that they had a life before you, which I find so fascinating, right? The life before me, or my mom is a teacher. I did an episode where I go back to her school and I'm talking to a former, a, a, a colleague of hers who's now a principal, and she was like, your mom was, the sh just the, the shit. She was incredible. She was so fashionable and she was so incredible. She took me under her wing and now I'm a principal here and I was just a teach a fellow teacher. It's, and so incredible. There's a jealousy of like, I wish I knew that part of her, or How did, how did you get that?

[00:25:37] **Barri:** But asking for the stories is to make...

[00:25:40] **Dana:** Right.

[00:25:41] **Barri:** ...what I think helps own the great story that you, that you bear, that you and, and to make sense of it. And I love that I know more about her, even more about her. I, I'm so into memoir and I think quite often I find sort of like the peer guide, the peer guide in me, I find in a memoir, unlike a self-help book, that you not only find like a little slice of you in someone else's story or like a head nodding or like an aha, just even if it's little.

[00:26:20] But also this like beautiful sense of completion. Like especially during, when you're grieving, like you have this brain fog and you, you know, reading a book is like heavy lifting. And

[00:26:33] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:26:33] **Barri:** There's so much in a self-help book that's sometimes makes you feel as if you're doing something right or something wrong.

[00:26:40] And I don't know, I'm always like gifting memoirs to people who have had someone who passed away. Rabbi Steve Leder wrote like one of the most beautiful, beautiful memoirs ever. It's called, The Beauty of What

Remains. I always have these like books on the tip of my tongue because people often say to me like, what do I do for this person?

[00:27:03] I know that's experienced a loss.

[00:27:06] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:27:06] **Barri:** And that's really how this trajectory started because people would always ask me, because mine was, you know, 30 years ago now, but people along the way would say, oh, I know this person who just lost her mom. And so it sort of started that way for me.

[00:27:24] **Dana:** They'd wanna connect you to someone.

[00:27:26] They'd say, Hey, talk to this person. Talk to this person. Okay.

[00:27:28] **Barri:** Talk to this person. She knows, I don't know, but maybe, maybe it would feel good if you talked to her. Yeah. Then that sort of eked into finding yoga and I did my yoga teacher training and one of my teachers was also motherless daughter, and I was like, look, Mother's Day is awful.

[00:27:53] Let's just call it what it is. Like my kids really wanna celebrate me. I don't feel like celebrating. It's really awful. What if we did an event together, like some kind of thing for people that feel similarly? You do yoga, I'll do like hands-on adjustments, run around the room, and I'll do a little bit of writing.

[00:28:15] We'll just do this quick healing cathartic thing on Saturday, and then on Sunday we've done our thing on Saturday. In retrospect, in hindsight, I now, as a grief coach, say that's reframing the day, that's taking like one of those milestone days that's on your calendar and saying, I gotta take the power back here.

[00:28:36] Like, I'm not gonna out, I'm gonna reframe the day. So if you know that a calendar date is coming up, like a death anniversary, a birthday, and sometimes it takes you by surprise. Like sometimes I see bounty in the grocery and I, you know, could fall into tears because if you didn't buy bounty, my mother was like, don't come home with the paper towels.

[00:28:57] Like, get outta here. There was no, there was no other, yeah, she was just, there was just certain things like that, that was her thing. So you don't know when those like grief bursts might come, but I think if you do know that they're coming up on a calendar and it's been traditionally a difficult day. Own it.

[00:29:14] Find a way to own it, to take power over, and it really helped so many people. And the thing that I hear most often is, I never had a place to go. I never knew I felt this way. I never knew I needed this.

[00:29:29] **Dana:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. Same. Where, where has this been? Where Right. These kids, you hold space for so many people and, and even my show people are like, where I wish I had this, you know, 10 years ago.

[00:29:42] **Barri:** Yeah.

[00:29:42] **Dana:** I go, well, me too. Or this retreat. Right? Yes. I, I wanted to go right, right back to what you just said about you didn't wanna celebrate Mother's Day. Even though your kids wanted to celebrate you, you felt still. Can you talk about that, Barri? Like what that meant? I don't, I'm assuming that shifted and changed.

[00:29:58] **Barri:** Yeah.

[00:29:58] **Dana:** Just like all big milestones do. But what does that mean?

[00:30:02] **Barri:** It's still a day that changed for me. You know, it's a day that I celebrated my mother. Then of course I feel so lucky because all I wanted back was the mother-daughter relationship. And my daughter Emma, who's named after my mom. My mom was Ellen Jane, and I had Emma, she's Emma Jane.

[00:30:19] I made sort of like a funny thing during my pregnancy, like a little pregnancy bucket list, and I said, oh, reread a classic. And the classic I chose was Emma by Jane Austen. So my bedside every night, it said Emma Jane Austin. And I'm like, Emma Jane. That's nice. That's kind of like my mom, but not, you know, she could own it herself.

[00:30:39] She's a singer-songwriter. And now it's funny because when she started out on YouTube and all that stuff, I said, you can't use your last name. So interestingly, she's Emma Jane forever. So awesome. But it was just painful and they wanted to make it a nice day for me. And I remember...

[00:30:55] **Dana:** right

[00:30:55] **Barri:** ...that's exactly what I loved about Mother's Day, like honoring this like incredible woman.

[00:31:01] I. And I just wanted to like disappear. Like maybe I used to make like days where like maybe mom can go to the flea market in the morning or a yoga class in the morning and then in the afternoon we could celebrate. Like I really needed a piece of it to honor my mom and a piece of it to allow to be honored, you know?

[00:31:19] To allow...

[00:31:19] **Dana:** To be honored. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:31:21] **Barri:** ...and I didn't have any idea cognitively really back in the day of what was going on and why that felt like such heavy lifting. But now I think it's like all part of really reframing the day that we can make it what we want. Like this year I woke up just like last week and thought, what if I just put a post on Instagram and said, mother's Day can stink for a lot of reasons, for a lot of people.

[00:31:51] If you think this day is really hard for you to send me your address, I'm gonna send you a card. And it blew up. I mean, it blew up. So I have this like, massive list now of people who are like giving me their little spiel in my DMs and they're like, and I also would love to help send a card to someone else and like exchanging the names and that.

[00:32:13] **Dana:** Yes, yes, yes. I'd, yeah. You gotta, I, I'm ready to do anything. Any, any notes you need.

[00:32:18] **Barri:** Yeah.

[00:32:18] **Dana:** I'm ready. Yeah.

[00:32:19] **Barri:** And the moral of that story and also the story of the yoga class and everything else I've ever done is, and, and what you've done with your podcast: open a door, open a door where you think there needs to be one.

[00:32:34] Maybe it's something you didn't have, maybe it's something you wish you had, you'll be so surprised at how cathartic that is, also. I'm sure it has been for you. We've talked about it a little bit, what it feels like to be able to tell your story, what it feels like to take in other people's stories. It's powerful and at some point, after the loss.

[00:32:59] Maybe it's the first year, maybe it's second. You're like, people are sort of like all tapped out. They're like around you of being like, I was so fearful

that I would be the sad girl in the room, but I was also the only one that could stomach you telling me all day long about the person in your life that died, that was sick, whatever that was.

[00:33:22] Like, I, I really, I didn't know holding space. I didn't know those words, but that's basically what I was doing. On the grocery line, someone would be like checking out and she'd say, oh, my mom loved those. And I'd hear past tense, which is so crazy that I would ask her, is she alive? No, she died three years ago.

[00:33:46] And then we'd have this chitchat, all the people waiting behind us talking about her. What's her name? I would say, it's like my big thing. It's like part of the memory circle mantra. You must always say their name. I don't know. I just felt very called to do the work and at the same time I thought, God, she would be horrified.

[00:34:07] Like she would truly be horrified, and so I stuck it out in a lot of other work and remained a peer because I knew she knew I was a writer. I knew she knew I had my own public relations firm. I knew she knew I was like in and around like the fashion industry and supermodels and the Bill Cunningham days.

[00:34:24] And like she knew, she knew the minutiae of that and that I had really made a name for myself to the point where I had editors returning calls and, and a went tour in a front row. Like it was really in the heyday of the fashion industry. And I just thought she'd be horrified if I in any way defined myself by this loss, horrified.

[00:34:47] And it was a story I told myself. It was really because I think I was worried about losing the connection of sadness, of being connected to that loss. What she knew that remained like, we'll just keep this this way. It's kind of like somebody not cleaning out a closet because if we just keep it this way, it is as it was.

[00:35:12] So for me, that was like, I knew she knew me as that, and so I would just continue on as that and it was, it became false, somewhere along the way. The more life tapped me on the shoulder and was like, this is your work. This is your work. This is your work. It just seemed like at one point I couldn't stop answering the, the call.

[00:35:35] It wasn't like divine or anything. It was like just because. It just felt right. It just felt like, I'll just step in a little more. I'll just, I'll just step in a little

more. And so I took my first training as a certified grief coach with someone named Dora Carpenter. I really wanted something non-denominational.

[00:36:02] I called a few people that had taken the training and said, do you think it's, you know, worthwhile? You know, these things could be pricey. I weighed the idea of going back to school, but I thought I'll do that first and step into the work and just see if this resonates or if I'm in like, heap of sadness on top of it all because of the...

[00:36:23] **Dana:** but it's just certified grief work, not therapy.

[00:36:26] Like you, you, you considered going to school for therapy. You mean like you thought about it and then you go, Ooh, is that it?

[00:36:31] **Barri:** I dunno.

[00:36:31] **Dana:** So you said lemme just dip my toes first

[00:36:33] **Barri:** Dip my tow in. Exactly. Like, what does this look like? And the most affirming part of going to training was that there was so much that was intuitive.

[00:36:42] And so for me, it felt quite natural to use my meditation background, to use my writing background. Like a lot of the tools just felt very natural. I love morning pages and I revamped the idea of Julia Cameron's morning page, morning pages, where you wake and write three pages upon waking to mourning pages, M O U R N I N G, and you know, what's a practice that we can offer that feels like grief tending, right?

[00:37:20] What time in my day can I carve out so that I feel like I can really weed and water this thing? You know, it can get really big and outta control. It can be something that you never wanna dip into 'cause you feel like you'll just be too sad, too much, too overwhelmed.

[00:37:39] **Dana:** Yeah, a lot of people do say that about even the show, you know, that they, I mean, a lot of people, thousands of listeners come to it, but some people are nervous to start that journey 'cause they're like, I can't even press play.

[00:37:53] I'm too scared. I'm too scared to acknowledge that she's gonna die. 'cause I have a lot of listeners whose mothers are living or they're just scared to rip that bandaid off. And I get that. I, I've, I've, I understand that. And you gotta

go to work. You gotta go to the dry cleaners. You gotta pick up your kids like, yeah, I get it.

[00:38:09] And they, they're nervous that it's just gonna, they're gonna evaporate, you know?

[00:38:12] **Barri:** But it's as much apart life as anything else. And I think we're pretty grief denying and death denying as a society in general.

[00:38:19] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:38:20] **Barri:** And so...

[00:38:20] **Dana:** Yes, of course.

[00:38:22] **Barri:** It might be uncomfortable for some, but it will come your way. And so I think there's no way to be prepared for it, but there is a way to be more grief literate in the workplace.

[00:38:33] You know, maybe it's in your own office space. That you just decide. I just wanna be a little more knowledgeable so that I am a compassionate leader. You know, there's so many ways of getting involved without, you know, ever knowing someone in your own family who's died. A lot of it is because people have had like a grandparent pass away, and that's their own only experience with death.

[00:38:57] And because we imagine our elders, you know, it's, it's like, it's not an out of order death, you know, it's something that we expect in our society. We just think, you know, older you get, you know, oh, big full life, live to 90, whatever. But there's just not a lot that we understand about out of order, death, com- complex relationships, our own mortality.

[00:39:20] There are a lot of women who have lost a parent and they think, oh, well maybe when I turn that age, you know, the year between 49 and 50 for me was... There was like this record in my head and it was like, what if this is all you had left? What if this is all you had left and it was nonstop.

[00:39:42] **Dana:** I hear that a lot about approaching the the, the age, right?

[00:39:46] **Barri:** Yeah. I mean, I read Hope Edelman's book came, *Motherless Daughters* came out in 1994. Wasn't until I read that book the year after my mom died, that I even had an inkling... cognitively, I know other people's

mothers had died, but I felt so alone on the planet that I started to read the book and meet the women who she had interviewed.

[00:40:09] So I learned about sudden loss. I learned about coming of that age. I learned about birthdays, death, anniversaries. I learned all of these women and how they were coping some that actually did have the same disease that their parent had. I mean, there were so. Much that I learned, but I thought they're all out there.

[00:40:32] Like, it, it, it almost had like these like pins on a map for me became more of a reality that they were all out there. I might not know them, but they're all out there and then somehow near, far, they started to find me. It's complex, but it's also something that's just, I never thought I could like love this work the way that I do, but I feel so proud.

[00:40:58] Like I always say I might, I might die with a thin dime, but I will be so proud going down. Even if I, you know, when I put up a, you might feel this way too, like when you put up the podcast or you have your retreat, I always think, well, what if only one person comes? Or what if no one comes? Then I was like, well, well what if one person comes.

[00:41:23] What if I helped just one person? Oh, I always say every circle comes together for a reason. And I say it all the time. I don't know whether it's because I am always shocked and surprised. Like even you found out that there were some people that I knew that came to my circle that, and so we became a circle, the two of us.

[00:41:41] Right circle, right

[00:41:42] **Dana:** Two. Yeah. Just you and I and I was, and then you put up those Oracle cards. I was like, girl, I got "My Work Your Light," which I think we should pull a card at the end, but I feel sometimes this is just me and I'm speaking for myself. I'm not, I'm not a coach, but I'm holding a lot of space for people for free, for the love of the storytelling, for the podcast, for the journey.

[00:42:02] Retreats are different, but it's a lot of energy and sometimes I, I don't ever wanna feel like resentful of that. I never wanna feel tired by that. I never wanna feel burnt out by that. How do you give yourself self care? How do you... how do you balance that and, and I think that if I'm fully transparent, which I am on my show a lot, the truth is I'm like, well, maybe I should become a therapist so I can get paid for the work I'm doing.

[00:42:29] You get what I'm saying? Then you go, well, but then I'm turning this thing that was a passion project into a career. You get it, it becomes muddled and complicated, and I wanted to just ask your questions about self-care and how you do that for yourself.

[00:42:39] **Barri:** Yeah. It's kind of funny. I don't know that I have ever really had like the exact words to name it, but I know that I wear a lot of other people's stories, muck energy, whatever you call it. It feels like some kind of like a suit that I wear after a while when that suit feels like I need like a shower, that the, that the shower will not help. I do acupuncture and not on a regular basis. Like sometimes I'll just tap into like what would feel good right now, a massage.

[00:43:17] Sometimes when I arrive, I have a, a dear friend, Carrie, and she's now a death doula, but she was a massage therapist in Chicago, and she would always say, how do you wanna feel when you leave?

[00:43:28] **Dana:** The session? Like, how do you wanna feel?

[00:43:30] **Barri:** How do you wanna feel when you leave? And so now I I, I always ask in sessions, how do you wanna feel when you leave?

[00:43:38] **Dana:** I love that.

[00:43:38] **Barri:** But for, for my answer to carry, it was always like this physical, like squeegee of like wiping my body free, of like whatever it was that I was wearing, like I was wearing other people's grief. I needed to remove that so that I could start again. So it's almost energetic. It's almost energetic, I think.

[00:44:00] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:44:00] **Barri:** I mean, if that's not too woowoo, it's just like, no, you're wearing, I imagine I'm covered in the words that all the people tell me. And so at some point there's just too many. And...

[00:44:13] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:44:13] **Barri:** I need a, like a clean page. That's what I imagine it. It's all a book. It's all a book.

[00:44:18] **Dana:** It's all a book. She's writing a book people. Okay.

[00:44:21] **Barri:** You know, it was funny, one of, you know, my favorite teachers and authors is Claire Bidwell Smith and I read Claire's book where she talks about the final stage of grief being anxiety. And I read it really as a resource.

[00:44:35] **Dana:** I need to read it. Yeah, it's been on my list for a while. It's been on my list and I'm like, girl, get to it. Yeah.

[00:44:39] **Barri:** Well it is one of those books that I bought because I'm forever keeping up on, you know, what's going on. I feel like it's my own like continuing ed credits. And in each chapter she unfurls some kind of story about somebody who had come to her practice who was experiencing panic attacks, didn't know what they were.

[00:45:03] So this gentleman, I forgot what chapter it is, gentleman comes to her, he's lost his dad, he's experiencing, he doesn't even know how to name them, like, hard to breathe, you know, all these things. She's like, oh, you know, sounds like panic attacks or whatever. Like it's been a long time since I read it. But he's so upset because he had unfinished business with his dad and this very relationship that was fraught with a lot of conflict.

[00:45:32] And he is so sad that he can't remedy these outstanding issues. That panic is set in and anxiety is set in and she says, write to him. Write to him. And there's all this good, juicy science about what happens when we write to the person. Because our body, believe it or not, the cells in our body do not know that that person is earthly or otherwise.

[00:45:55] In fact, that's, to me, grief is sometimes even more complicated because we are born when somebody is lost to find them, right? So if one day my mother is here and the next day she's not, and I cannot find her like she is, not... you know, it's interesting when we say lost, like she is not lost in the mall she's not lost in the woods.

[00:46:17] She's dead, but, but lost is what our brain thinks, right? The person is lost. So we need to teach our body somatically. We need to teach our brain. We need to create these new neural pathways, if you will, that we can accept that as the truth, somehow. I know a lot of people that still are like, yeah, I just imagine my mom is still out shopping that when we write to the person, we can create this imaginal beautiful relationship and who knows?

[00:46:57] Imaginal. You know, I have a deep connection to my mother. I don't know whether it's because of signs and synchronicities that have, that have

come into my life, or it is actually because in that very chapter, I took her advice and realized I've written an awful lot about my mom, but I haven't written to her.

[00:47:16] **Dana:** Hmm. So that's so, that's so great. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:47:19] **Barri:** And another way, yeah. And another way of reframing the day. Sometimes instead of coming up to these days on the calendar, like my daughter's college graduation, she's graduating this like, journalism degree. All I want is my mom to come. And instead of having these, like the PC version, I call, ah, shucks moments.

[00:47:45] But, you know, there's lots of expletives for that. Like, I would come up upon these big days and I'd be like, instead of having these moments where I'm like, I can't believe this is another event where she is missing... dear mom today, graduating from *bu cum laude*. Like, it, it, it creates this, it's, it's no substitute, certainly for her being there, but it's inviting her in. And then maybe I wear her pearls, maybe I bring her purse. Maybe I find a way where I could really include her. And these are the tools that I help clients who have these big dates on the calendar that are upcoming where you're just so sad that they're not around.

[00:48:31] And it could be even like your own birthday where all of a sudden that day that you were born is no longer like, oh, presents and confetti. But all of a sudden it's like, oh, birth day. This is the day that my mother brought me into this earth, into the world. Like she ushered me in. She birthed me. Like I don't think I had ever thought about it that way until she was gone. Birthday sucked. 'cause it was like, I just wanted her there. So I had to think of ways that I could honor that on my birthday and also on hers. And I think that's like power over, right? We don't have to get stuck, you know, sometimes that's what makes us feel stuck or sticky in those situations because it, it really feels so heavy and sometimes we think what would, what would mom do?

[00:49:28] Like she loved, you know, we always say she was like an Olympic discount shopper. Like what would mom do? Mom would buy something, you know, delicious at discount. And so her birthday and my sister Donna and I honor her by doing just that. We buy something discount and we write each other in the morning and remind each other, you know, that's what we're gonna do.

[00:49:48] And at the end of the day, we exchange what we got. And it could be simple, you know, sometimes I can't go like outta my way. One year I went to

TJ Maxx and bought this like lavender giant thing, pumped soap for the shower. Seriously, every time I used it, it was just like a treat and I left its sticker on and it said like, you know, \$7.99 was \$25, whatever.

[00:50:14] I was like, yeah. So funny to visit even the sticker.

[00:50:19] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:50:19] **Barri:** Every single time I got in the shower.

[00:50:21] **Dana:** Can I ask you, Barry, if you talk about death with your children, how do you talk about end of life with your, with your family or your children? And if you don't, that's cool.

[00:50:30] **Barri:** I do. Well it's crazy.

[00:50:31] **Dana:** And since you're such a active right? We just talked about how we have to be more Yeah. We're a death adverse a, a death adverse society.

[00:50:38] **Barri:** So yeah, I, I, I guess the biggest thing that I've done with my girls was that they never met my mother, and I've always called her to them, grandma Ellen. So I think the greatest gift was sharing my mother with them.

[00:51:00] And both Emma and Quinn feel as if they know her, which is like the greatest gift to me in that sharing. So that's one way, you know, and I encourage them to, you know, they were never afraid when I said those stories. I, I used to sing them a little song before bed and we would say, goodnight, grandma Ellen.

[00:51:23] And so I don't think that they were ever really afraid because I brought it up so often. I, even in my move, I recently moved from Chicago back home, back east, and I was telling them about how important it was, the way that I was cleaning and clearing the house so that they wouldn't have to do a lot of that.

[00:51:43] It was like a giant downsizing, but it was also like, I don't want you to have to open a drawer...

[00:51:48] **Dana:** Oh, what a gift. You just gave them such a gift, Barri. That's amazing.

[00:51:51] **Barri:** ...more, but I, I did a big chunk

[00:51:54] **Dana:** that's tough yeah, yeah. Any, any little bit is...

[00:51:57] **Barri:** and I told them why, so that's another thing. I just thought, I'm gonna let you know, you know why we need to clean up and clear out this way.

[00:52:06] And I made them pick some of their things from childhood and...

[00:52:09] **Dana:** where were you in Chicago again? Can you remind me?

[00:52:11] **Barri:** I was in Lakeview.

[00:52:12] **Dana:** Nice.

[00:52:13] **Barri:** Yeah.

[00:52:13] **Dana:** I was at Andersonville for like 20 years. Well, river Ravenswood, then Andersonville. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

[00:52:19] **Barri:** Yeah, we were there forever. And that was another interesting thing because I think she would've been like good and pissed that we moved away, but to me it was like an escape from the reality of her, again, not not being where I was.

[00:52:34] And also, right. A first act of defiance in some way. Like, oh, I'm gonna have to make my own decisions that are right for me without her. Even what I knew that I thought, even that I knew I, that she would be pissed. I went anyway. It was sort of like a middle finger to the whole, to the whole situation. The thing that I, I would say that I'm most critical about in, in hindsight is that I never allowed for any mothering from others.

[00:53:11] Like, it was almost like a, like a, a distance from anybody who would offer any mothering. Like, I, I think I became so fiercely independent, resilient, strong, like all the things that people say said of me after I lost my mom, like, you're strong, like her, you're brave like her.

[00:53:34] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:53:34] **Barri:** You're...

[00:53:34] **Dana:** mm-hmm.

[00:53:36] **Barri:** That I became that. And in doing so, that, that, like, fierce independence, like I'll have to figure out how to live this life alone, and I'll also figure out how to do everything else alone. Being a mother, all these things that were just like super heavy lifting without a mom, like I just desperately wanted her there, but I, I had no choice but to do it alone, but it made me miss her so much.

[00:54:01] And at the same time, I should have let many, many more people in and asked for help.

[00:54:08] **Dana:** Can we talk about menopause at the end here with me?

[00:54:10] **Barri:** Yeah, sure, sure, sure.

[00:54:12] **Dana:** If you're feeling it.

[00:54:13] **Barri:** That's like one of those you know topics that I'm like, oh, for goodness.

[00:54:16] **Dana:** There you go.

[00:54:16] **Barri:** You got nobody to ask.

[00:54:19] **Dana:** Yeah. When I was like, what do you wanna talk about in the podcast?

[00:54:21] You said, I would also want you to ask me about menopause without a mom. I am on a, a rip and a journey. So yeah.

[00:54:29] **Barri:** I. I only know that my mom was 50 and had like a fan by her bedside, and she wrote this funny poem that she was trying to get placed in like Ladies Home Journal about menopause. Oh. And it was like, I knew hot flashes were like, because of the poem were like part of her world.

[00:54:47] The fan was so ugly I knew like, it must be hot at night if she was gonna have that by the bed.

[00:54:53] **Dana:** What did it look like?

[00:54:53] **Barri:** It was just like plastic, you know, the like clicking went back and forth. It was beige, it was like horrible. It did not go with the bedroom decor. And so I knew she must need it and that was all we knew.

[00:55:07] Like she didn't really say much at all. So I was kind of like angry at our OBs being not so menopause informed. There were lots of studies that have now been debunked and great New York Times article that came out that just said, okay, I know you're all really frightened and afraid that you're gonna get cancer if you take hormone replacement therapy, and I am no doctor, but I say find someone who is menopause informed.

[00:55:39] If you are experiencing any of these symptoms or you feel slightly out of control, crazy tired, there are so many things that we now know that can help. There is just no reason to suffer and that there are so many more people talking about it now, which is so good. And just like anything else, I've been through divorce, infertility issues, mother loss, like I feel like it's my job to raise a flag to wave it when I've learned something on my own.

[00:56:20] That should not be a secret. It's like the pay it forward thing has always been very natural to me. And also I guess in an effort to know that I'm okay by sharing my story also is like just very natural to me. But this, this is like universal. Women just need not suffer in silence. I started hormone replacement therapy.

[00:56:48] It's bioidentical hormone, so I take estrogen and progesterone that are bioidentical to what my body lost in losing my period and being, you know, seven years without it. Not one OB appointment in all of those years did anyone ever say anything about, you know, any of the symptoms, any of why I was feeling that way. Sleeplessness and, and then I started to notice that other people were saying the same thing.

[00:57:13] And so I just went on this like crazy journey to just find the kind of support I wanted. And even, even currently, the doctor that I was working with was like kind of on the fence about it, like your mom died and I was like, yeah, she did die of anything that, that was a night sweat. Like I, I promise you like this did ...

[00:57:35] **Dana:** What does a female doctor or a male doctor?

[00:57:38] **Barri:** It was. And I just think the, the, the ticket is find someone who is menopause informed. They're just some are just trained to, you know, help you through your pregnancy. And at that time I almost think like maybe

you switch to somebody after you have a child, if that's your journey, that you just switch to somebody who's more menopause informed.

[00:58:00] Because in those years after lots of different things happened to our body and I just think power over.

[00:58:06] **Dana:** And I wonder if your mom was your mom talking to anyone? Was she talking to friends? Was she talking to her partner? Was she... she had lady friends, you think? Yeah. Was not,

[00:58:16] **Barri:** I think that that poem was like made to stand in front of the office and like, make everybody giggle that they were all going through the thing.

[00:58:23] **Dana:** Got it, got it. Yeah. So she had some community and...

[00:58:26] **Barri:** Yeah. Yeah. A real estate office full of ladies and totally. And she was that too, like I think she got divorced when I was like fourth grade. First person I ever knew, family I ever knew, experienced divorce firsthand. Women came to her same as me. And she said, oh, I see you're on the other side of this and you figured it all out. Like, I think she was ahead of her time. She was like thoroughly Modern Millie.

[00:58:53] **Dana:** What would you ask her like today about menopause?

[00:58:56] **Barri:** Yeah. Mom. What the fuck?

[00:58:58] **Dana:** And why that fan?

[00:59:00] **Barri:** I don't know. 'cause now there's all these like modern drugs and I don't know.

[00:59:04] **Dana:** Right, right.

[00:59:04] **Barri:** Sometimes think she would've been on top of it had she, you know, just forged ahead a a, a few more years.

[00:59:14] I think she totally would've been on top of it, and we would've known her history. So ask your mom their, their medical history. Know your medical history.

[00:59:22] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:59:23] **Barri:** Yeah.

[00:59:23] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:59:24] **Barri:** That's another thing that a lot of clients grieve like if you have a mom that dies when you're very young and you don't know anything about yourself.

[00:59:30] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:59:30] You don't know anything. Right. Or you were adopted. Right. And your biological mom, it's closed adoption. Yeah.

[00:59:35] **Barri:** Yeah. It's, it's, it's hard. So, you know, that's another thing that I just tell at a doctor's appointment that I say, I don't know my history. So I, I want blood work. I want, I wanna become informed so that I can share, and then I share that journey with my daughters so they know say it, you know, proud and out loud.

[00:59:57] Like, here's the little sticker that I put on twice a week.

[01:00:01] **Dana:** I'm on the cusp of the peri journey, but I also don't know how it was for my mom. I never talked to her about that stuff. She had a hysterectomy later on in life, but I'm sure she went through some type of, of, of journey. I just, I don't know.

[01:00:14] And it's weird 'cause my mom is a biology teacher, so she was pretty open and she loved talking about biology and yet we didn't talk about menopause. You know what I mean? That did not come up. But...

[01:00:23] **Barri:** I think what's changing is we're, first of all, we're living longer as as...

[01:00:28] **Dana:** right

[01:00:29] **Barri:** ...humans, we're just living longer.

[01:00:31] That affords us the beautiful opportunity to do so, to live these healthy lives. And if we are going to that, we don't need to live with any

suffering. There are things that can help you with sleep, with night sweats, with hot flashes, with brain fog. There's just

[01:00:51] **Dana:** like hair loss. There's all this... that's a thing.

[01:00:53] **Barri:** Hair loss, that was the first thing that happened. Hair loss and thinning.

[01:00:57] **Dana:** Yeah.

[01:00:57] **Barri:** I went to the doctor and I had been seeing her since before I had children and she said something, all I heard was like vaginal atrophy and I thought I was gonna pass out. And I was like, what the f is that? And why do we wait until seven years with no period down the line to have never spoken about vaginal health at all.

[01:01:20] So if this is at all interesting to anybody who's listening, find someone who is menopause informed because it's a gift to be relieved of symptoms that you don't need to be living with. Like, I feel like I can't believe I waited so long and, and a little, and a lot of times the, the, the doctor will just give you medicine for your symptoms.

[01:01:43] So they'll give you medicine for depression. And never once will they say, babe, this is menopause.

[01:01:48] **Dana:** Right? What's going on with their cortisol? Right. That too. There's all these things you have to think about. And...

[01:01:54] **Barri:** you know, I signed up for this programming recently. That was Oprah, Maria Sha.

[01:01:59] **Dana:** Oh yeah,

[01:02:00] **Barri:** drew...

[01:02:00] **Dana:** I saw that there. Yeah. Drew barrimore

[01:02:03] **Barri:** But Oprah tells the story of having heart palpitations and going to a cardiologist who prescribed her medicine for her heart. Oprah was menopausal, so now she's like was saying, you know, I take this little, she's like

this little click, she calls it the click click or something like she admitted to being, you know, HRT.

[01:02:24] And I think just the more women you can tell about your own journey, not that any of us are gonna have the same, because all of our hormones will be completely different and our, you know, whatever we're going through is gonna be, you know, our own. But it's out there. Help is available and if, and it should be very affordable.

[01:02:45] So if you also find that whatever anybody is telling you is not affordable, keep looking or DM me.

[01:02:52] **Dana:** Yeah. Oh my gosh. You're gonna, yeah, you're gonna be sending Mother's Day cards, you got a spreadsheet, and then you've got a second spreadsheet of menopause advice. Send a card. I do, I don't know how many episodes you've listened to, but of course, just like you, I started ending my episodes asking people to tell me their mom's name and how you feel about her in this moment today.

[01:03:12] What's coming up for you. But for you, Barri I was thinking about the beautiful, the the grief relief kit that you give out to people when they come to the Memory Circle. They can sign up for the newsletter and then you can ask to get this five page beautiful little kit, your toolkit for grief tending.

[01:03:29] And I got it, little PDF that includes, you know, a little meditation, a a poet piece of poetry. And then this piece section around writing, which we talked about, which is how is your grief today? You ask people to write and reflect on their grief. So I thought I'd do a two-parter. I would ask you your mom's name, how you're feeling about her today, in this moment?

[01:03:50] What's coming up for you after our conversation? And then how is your grief today?

[01:03:55] **Barri:** Aw.

[01:03:55] **Dana:** I guess it's kind of all wrapped up into one. Yeah. But. Chief Grief Officer, hit it

[01:04:01] **Barri:** Hit it my mom is Ellen Jane Deutsch.

[01:04:09] I feel about her today, lots of love and that she'd be very proud of the way that I am speaking up and speaking out about so many things that are

important to me and were important to her about being a proud, independent, modern woman. My grief is okay today. I did the Google this morning and nothing major came up.

[01:04:43] I, I call it my Nancy Drew. Every now and again, I'm in search of a clue, something that I might not know, and just being able to tell the story of my mom and how I came to do this beautiful work is always a gift. And so it makes me feel like I can hold the story of losing her again in one hand and in the other hand, just lots of pride and even joy today for just being able to find, for us to find each other.

[01:05:18] **Dana:** Our circle.

[01:05:19] **Barri:** Our circle of two.

[01:05:21] I always say HOPE help one person every day.

[01:05:38] **Dana:** So I asked Barry if we could hear that menopause poem her mom wrote, but she can't find it. So if she does find it, you know, I'm gonna share it on Instagram because I really wanna hear it. Speaking of come follow us on Instagram @mothergravepodcast and definitely make sure you follow Barri on Instagram at the memory circle and sign up for her beautiful emails where you can get access to grief relief kits, writing, journal prompts, resources, and book one-on-one time with her.

[01:06:04] It's an amazing community. Barry also has a new awesome remember and reflect deck that you can purchase for daily prompts that invite writing, movement, dreams. So check out our show notes for links to everything I've mentioned and all the books that we discussed in this episode as well. Ever since I heard Barri talk about this, I haven't stopped thinking about it.

[01:06:24] She said, there's all this juicy science about what happens when we write to someone. The cells in our body don't know if that person is earthly or otherwise. We are born when somebody is lost to find them. So if one day my mother's here and one day she is not, she's not lost in the mall or in the woods, she is dead.

[01:06:44] But lost is what our brains think. So we have to teach our bodies and brains somatically with new pathways about this truth. So when we write to the person, we can create this imaginal new, beautiful relationship. So don't just write about your mother. Write to her. I started this podcast in the depths of the pandemic on my mother's fourth death anniversary, April 16th, 2020.

[01:07:10] I drove to a lake. I took a photo of my mother and I from college, and I started talking into my voice memo app on my phone about this photo, describing the photo, talking about my mom's highlights, her eyes, her physical state, uh, the time of year. It was right after nine 11. So how I felt looking at this picture, what was coming up for me, but I didn't talk to her.

[01:07:34] I talked about her and I thought, like, what would I say? What would I write to her now, three years after starting this show, "mom, I know you are not lost. I am positive you are not at the mall. And if you are, uh, please find me comfortable jeans that aren't skinny and just make my gut disappear. Mom, I want you to know that listening to the audio recording of Barri and her mother talk about fashion over a hard line phone for many years ago, brought me to tears when I first heard it, it was so simple, so mundane, so pure, it made me weep.

[01:08:14] I mean, you and I did so many back to school shopping trips together, shopping for clothes at Nordstrom's and Express. Mom, you had a great eye for fashion, great legs, great style, and you also made me feel even at a young age that I could pull anything off. Even cardigans with cat pins. Yeah, yeah. I was a preppy dork.

[01:08:35] And you know it. But hearing that audio made me yearn for you, Almost like I wished I could go back and do the last 10 years of your life all over again because we didn't banter like Barri and her mom did, did we? We haven't bantered like that since high school. I avoided your calls mom a lot over the years and you avoided mine or you were always asleep when I called or feeling sick.

[01:08:59] I want audio like Barri so I can listen to it whenever I want and smile. I want a heavenly landline to you now. I want you to know that I should have picked up your calls more and told you all about my new blonde highlights, my gyn appointments, the bass player I hooked up with that my rent bounced in 2005 and that I still wear that shower cap you bought me for college and think of you.

[01:09:24] Mom, I remember one year for Christmas you put detergent and quarters in my stocking for college. It was so practical, so helpful, and slightly embarrassing. But every time my 19 year old self was states and miles away in my dorm. I would think of you, your only child when I went to do my laundry, having to learn how to do it for myself without you, but with your practical, supportive, and slightly embarrassing gift of quarters right by my side.

[01:09:54] I took it for granted and now I think it might be one of my favorite memories. Mom, you are not lost. You are not in the mall. You are dead, but your supportive, practical, slightly embarrassing love, is never far, and all I have to do is remember it and write to you and say thanks. One last thought. In this episode, Barri talked about the gorgeous book, the Beauty of What Remains by Steve Leider and I finally read it this summer and it's glorious.

[01:10:27] I just wanted to read a small snippet from a chapter called The Afterlife of Memory. "Close your eyes. I said to the congregation of 2000 people seated in the quiet beauty of the sanctuary. It was the holiest day of the year. During a service devoted to remembering loved ones who have died. Close your eyes and breathe in deeply.

[01:10:49] Breathe out and relax. Breathe in deeply again. Breathe in peace. Breathe in quiet. Now place yourself in a comfortable room in your home or wherever you choose, and invite into that room a loved one who has died. Bring him to life again in your mind. Bring her to life again in your mind, in your memory, see her.

[01:11:12] See her skin, her hair. Feel his whiskers against your cheek. See his smile and his eyes. Be with her. Speak to her. Tell her what you wish for her. Give her your blessing. Now allow her to leave the room. Be with him. Speak to him. Tell him what you wish for him. Give him your blessing. Now. Allow him to leave the room.

[01:11:40] Breathe deeply, and when you're ready, open your eyes."

[01:11:47] Talk to you soon.

[01:12:00] The third season, which is crazy to say of I swear on my Mother's grave, podcast would never be possible without our editor. Amanda Mayo from Cassiopeia Studio. I also wanna thank our music composer, Adam Ollendorff, our graphic designer and illustrator Meredith Montgomery, our copywriter Rachel Claff and Tony Howell and Jonathan Freeland for all of their work on our beautiful website. And as always, thank you to Heather Bode for her emotional, spiritual, social. Physical for well, for all of the help over all of the years. Thank you. And all of you. Thank you for listening, for subscribing, for reaching out, for telling all of your friends.

[01:12:38] I know that this club, this complicated, messy club. Isn't fun to be in, but I'm so glad that you're here. I couldn't do this without you, so thank you for being a part of this community. And if you haven't signed up for our newsletter,

please do so at our website, which is danablack.org. Not just because I wanna sell you stuff, but because I wanna keep talking to you and you talking to me.

[01:13:01] So go check that out. There's personal stories, I'll tell you about the season and you'll learn about some live retreats that we're curating. One retreat at a time. So, yeah, thanks for being here. I hope you'll come back. Will you come back? Don't leave me like my dead mom. You know what I mean? Come back, please.

[01:13:18] I'll talk to you soon.