

Ep #13: When the Message is Tricky Yet Really Matters with Caryn Gillen



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Michelle Barry Franco

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You are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast episode number 13.

Welcome to *Beyond Applause*, a podcast for mission-driven leaders, coaches, and creatives who are ready to share their expertise and stories through public speaking. Here's your host, Michelle Barry Franco.

Hello, my speaker friends. I can't wait to share this conversation with you that I had with Caryn Gillen. Caryn Gillen is a weight loss coach for powerhouse women and there's a lot of cool stuff we talk about just in that domain, just the whole fascinating world of talking about weight loss in today's current environment.

But also, I love how Caryn really approaches her message, both from the niche of weight loss for powerhouse women, but what she really wants for women and what she knows helps women lose weight much more naturally and easily. And it isn't like a lot of the tips and tricks and techniques that you might think it is. So I love that. I love in this conversation that she shares her one thought about speaking that dramatically impacts how excited she gets, and she gets excited to get on stages of all kinds of sizes.

The one thought she has that really serves her in her speaking and in attracting clients naturally through her speaking. So I can't wait for you to hear that plus the evolution of her message, which is fascinating and interesting and I think will really resonate so much goodness in this conversation. I hope you love it even half as much as I did.

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Michelle: Hello my speaker friends, I cannot wait to have this conversation with Caryn Gillen. I've been watching Caryn a bit over this last year as she's continued to grow a pretty awesome business. And I've been super impressed by her confidence and conviction in a coaching space that to me, seems kind of tricky to navigate, which is women and weight loss. I just

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love the totally body and life loving and inspired way that Caryn approaches the topic. So when I met her at an event recently, I knew that she'd be a perfect person to share her experience with us about making a difference with her message. So I can't wait to talk with Caryn about all the ways she shares her message and how she navigates some of the harder parts of being so visible with her message.

A bit more about Caryn: Caryn Gillen is a life coach and weight loss expert who helps powerhouse women end the struggle with food and their weight. She currently lives in Oregon with her husband and three-year-old daughter and would love to tell you about her glamorous hobbies, but really, the three-year-old it is. Currently, her personal challenge is to read more and Facebook less. Join the club here. So Caryn, thank you so much for being here and having this conversation with me.

Caryn: Thank you. Thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Michelle: First of all, I would love to ask you to get on the rooftop with me and have you share your message with us from that place. Is that okay with you?

Caryn: Yeah.

Michelle: Okay, so I'm going to set the scene, okay?

Caryn: Okay.

Michelle: So you're in this little town and the streets in this town are full of people and these people are really struggling, and they're all talking to each other and there's chaos everywhere, and you're standing among them and they're struggling with something that you, with the thing, that you really know you can help them with. It's like, the thing. And you're trying to tell the people around you but they can't hear you because there's chaos everywhere and so you look to your right and you see that there's this building, and against this building, there's a ladder. And it leads to a

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reasonably safe rooftop. So you decide to head on over, climb up that ladder, you get to the rooftop, you cup your hands around your mouth, and you say, "Listen to me, beautiful people, here's what you need to know to make your lives better." What would you say? And then tell us a bit about who's on those streets. Who are the people you're serving with that message?

Caryn: I would let them know they need to stop waiting. Stop waiting to live your life. You think there's something you have to fix, but really, you have to do it now or you never get there. You have to live every day as the person you want to become, or she never exists. And if she never exists, we all miss out.

Michelle: Yeah. Yeah. I want to climb up there next to you. That's awesome. So you get to choose the people on the streets, and really, they're the people that you know you can impact the most. So who are those people?

Caryn: These are the women who are running the world. They have all the power, they make all the decisions, they organize everyone's lives and their own, they run their businesses, they run other people's businesses, they run their homes, they are in charge of everything and there's something that's getting in their way. And the people I help are the ones who have that and I call it kind of the scapegoat of the weight loss struggle, the body struggle. There's this thing, and I don't get to do my life until after I figure this thing out, and their life is always 20, 40, 17 pounds away from now. And once they get there, then they'll really do it. So I help people close that gap.

Michelle: So wow, okay, so the weight is the scapegoat. Did I hear that right?

Caryn: Yeah. I think we have - it's a really acceptable problem in our culture to say, "Oh yeah, well when I lose the weight then I'll do this." That seems really normal, right? We think that's okay. Like, you hear your best

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friend say that and you're like, oh totally, I get it. But no. Like, you cannot wait.

Michelle: Yeah, I mean, you hear your best friend say it and you get it, and even though we're all - I think at least in my circles, we're all saying like, "What? That doesn't matter, you're amazing, you're beautiful." We're all kind of saying the same thing. Get on that stage or go out there and start that business, you can do it right now. But yet it feels really real. I mean, being that visible, especially being that visible, right? I'm going to be visible with all this on my body. So you're saying I'm organizing my own mind even though I've been looking at your stuff. I didn't quite catch this that like, the weight is a scapegoat thing. I really want you to say more about that and then tell me how did you get there? How did you get to that kind of clarity of a succinct distinction?

Caryn: Not very gracefully. I have called myself the reluctant weight loss coach because I didn't want to be another weight loss coach. I didn't want to do that. But then here I was coming back to it, reading the books, coming back to it again, working with somebody who wants to solve that problem again, wanting to solve that problem in my own life. It's like, it chose me, it's the thing I can't talk about all day long. I feel like I can help anybody lose weight but what I really love to do is help people lose the struggle as they lose the weight. But yeah, very reluctantly I came here and I'm still here.

Michelle: That's so funny for me because I have often called myself the reluctant speaking coach. So whole story about that too, but so I really identify with it in my own way. But so if you could like, a little bit more of that story. So you're a coach - did you start off coaching in some other realm?

Caryn: I actually decided to be a life coach and then I figured out in my own mind that that wasn't real. So I became a therapist, and I worked as a therapist for a year and a half and then I went on a really long honeymoon and realized that it wasn't fair for my clients and it wasn't fair for me to stay a therapist because I was expecting them to be life coaching clients and I

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wanted to be a life coach. So that's when I did that and that was about eight years ago I made that shift.

Michelle: So you had heard about coaching, and then you were like, what? What was the struggle?

Caryn: Yeah, some day, somebody's going to regulate that so I better go become a therapist because that seems like the closest next best thing.

Michelle: Yeah because it wasn't regulated. So you had all these thoughts about - way back then about what it meant to be a coach and - oh my gosh. So many of my dearest friends are therapists, and we have had I think over the years struggles around this very thing, and so did I initially. It was like, I was going to be a therapist. I went for a year. Anyway, so I really identify and understand that struggle, and I know that a lot of people who are listening to us right now also - whether it's about therapist versus coach or whatever, it's like, a set of beliefs that feel so true that they like, take you on a totally different course, right?

Caryn: Yeah.

Michelle: So you had this set of beliefs, you went off and tried it, and it just wasn't resonating. So how did you know to, you know - why not just stick with therapy if it's close? Close-ish?

Caryn: It's close-ish. I couldn't diagnose people. That was not how I operate. My brain just doesn't work that way. Like, just doing that and then the paperwork side of it, it was like, everything in my body wanted to revolt most of the time. The connection with the people I loved. And it was also just a little bit of a different population. I was interested in working with people who were doing pretty good, who wanted to do great, and often times when you're diagnosing people, those aren't the first people who are walking through your door. So for me, it was just - it was the wrong market.

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Michelle: Okay. So you make the decision, you go on a honeymoon, you mean a real honeymoon, right? Like, you got married and then went on a honeymoon or?

Caryn: Yeah, got married, went on a six month like, we did national parks and then we went to Australia and then Thailand and Laos, and then Argentina. And it was in Thailand. I remember I was sitting on a bed and I had that like, it's not fair for me to ask them to be coaching clients and it's not fair for me to not be a coach. And I remember my husband was in the shower and I poked my head in the bathroom, I was like, "Babe, I'm going to be a life coach." And he was like, "Okay." So it was like, I had to get far enough out of my regular life to have that light bulb come back on.

Michelle: Yeah. There is something magic about switching up our - I've never been to Thailand but I know even when I go on a working retreat an hour away and stay in like, a little cottage that's not my house, just new ideas come.

Caryn: It's true, yeah.

Michelle: Okay, so you're like, okay, I'm going to be a life coach and then you went off and got training?

Caryn: Yeah, so our plane landed from Argentina. Actually, I had to change my flight and within two hours of landing at SFO, I was in training at Coaches Training Institute in San Rafael, California. I did their fast track program, and luckily my in-laws live very close so I borrowed a car and I lived with them and then I was in business. And going for it.

Michelle: You do not kid around. That is awesome. Okay, so did you start off as a weight loss coach? What happened then?

Caryn: Well, I was coaching anybody I could get my hands on at that point. I think I was even charging \$20 a session. And then I felt like I was going to need something else. I needed a little something else and when I was

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doing my internship as a therapist, I had met a registered dietitian, and she was working with clients who had eating disorders and that had always been - it seemed scary for me as a therapist if I were going to encounter that, and she introduced me to the book, Intuitive Eating, and reading that book was like, somebody as telling me the truth that I already knew. And I think reading that book I lost about 30 pounds just applying those principles over a period of time. And that was really life-altering for me and that kind of changed everything. So I ended up getting - I became an intuitive eating pro I think is what they call it. So I trained with one of the authors of the books. So then that started to form my practice and I was doing some intuitive eating groups and some book club kind of stuff with their book, and my coaching started to lean in that direction probably about a year into my practice.

Michelle: And how long ago was this?

Caryn: Seven years ago.

Michelle: Okay, alright. Okay, so you started doing this and were you good with it then or - you said you're the kind of a reluctant weight loss coach. And I hear you that that's not really what you are on a mission about. But were you struggling with it then or did that over time evolve?

Caryn: Oh no, I think I struggled with it until - I didn't really own it until probably two years ago. Yeah, so I was pretty reluctant for a very long time.

Michelle: And why?

Caryn: I felt like I had to have it all figured out. I think to be able to actually work with people on this, like, it just seemed like, no there's still this part of me as an individual that feel - I don't know if it was out of integrity but something was a little bit off and it just seemed incongruent. And so I ended up doing more of my own personal work and got to a place where I felt like now I have it. Like, intuitive eating got me this far, and then working with this other coach got me through this next layer and I felt like I really

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landed in a place where I could help people and help myself, and I doing something that felt like I could do this forever and this is how I want to live my life. I had a lot more certainty around it.

Michelle: And was that what happened two years ago? So it was just sort of that evolution over time and you were still working with people during that process or?

Caryn: Yeah. I've always had clients over the time period. But I also had other jobs. I worked in restaurants, I ended up managing a restaurant, so that took me way out of my coaching practice. Then I ended up doing basically program management. So I was always in and out, but it never went away, it was always there. I was always blogging, I was always working with somebody. I was always looking for the next thing that's going to really make it work, and I think part of really honing in on this is the thing for me and this is how I'm going to do it, that's really what made the business real and made it work.

Michelle: Yeah, and I love that you're saying that. I think that so - as you know, in the coaching world, again, this doesn't exclusively apply to coaching, but I think because we're both in that world we sort of see this even more often. There's this like, idea that, I don't know, you're supposed to start this coaching business, know exactly what the sort of niche or your ideal clients, and that successful coaches just go for it and they're successful. You know, they have a ramp up period but you know, so many of us, I've done all kinds of things too over the last 10 years as I've wound my way here. And I still sort of - you know, I have corporate clients, right? I think it's beautiful to just sort of show that making our impact in the world and taking a stand for our message doesn't mean that's what we're doing all the time the whole way and we feel that kind of conviction all the time and we've never wavered.

Caryn: I mean, looking backwards it makes sense, but looking forwards, you know, I don't think I could have ever planned it to look like this.

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Michelle: Yeah. Okay, so now do you fulltime coach?

Caryn: I do, as of January of this year. Fulltime.

Michelle: So how did you decide fulltime this year - that I'm going fulltime? Was it - just sort of fit in your family or?

Caryn: Had an agreement with myself that when I was losing money by staying at my job, then I would leave. And I probably stayed about six months too long. It was just a lot to do. Three-year-old, basically fulltime business and a fulltime job. But it was a little bit crazy. I left a job that was amazing that I liked the work, that I was surrounded by really smart women who I loved, that had great health care. My husband wasn't even working and I was like, okay, I'm leaving my job. It was like, someone's going to tell me I'm insane but it worked out.

Michelle: Did anybody tell you you were insane?

Caryn: They didn't. Everybody was like, of course you are. It's like they knew something I didn't know all along.

Michelle: So cool. So let's talk about you sharing this message. Just where - I've seen your Facebook lives, you know, and they're awesome, they're just so natural, and that's actually one of the things - I mean, I'd like to talk about all the different ways that you share your message. But starting there, you are - it feels like you're talking to me, just me.

Caryn: I am talking to you.

Michelle: So tell me about that. How do you do that?

Caryn: For some reason, I love live because I don't like editing. I think it's probably it. So I've done video where you edit it, I've done like a video training series. I don't do so well with those, with scripts and stuff. But I can just wing it just fine, and when I first started doing them, what I decided was I'm just going to talk to one person. So I used to do this - I don't do it

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anymore, but I would just kind of sit down close my eyes, think about who am I saying this to, and I would pick a client or I would pick a friend, or I would pick some very specific individual, and I would give the message to them. I would just talk to them and look into that camera eye as if it were them, and that was it.

Michelle: Yeah, I can feel that. I think you were thinking of me actually in the last one that I listened to. But I really do identify. I too love Facebook live. Oh my gosh, I think back to 2010 or 2009 when I used to create videos, I'm going to say, I would do 100 takes and I'm actually kind of lying. I mean, I'm not even sure. It might have been 150 just because you knew that you could. So there was this thought that there was an expectation that it would be perfect because you can, right? With Facebook live, there's just such freedom for me in hey, this is live anyway.

Caryn: Yeah, I love it. It does feel very free and then also in my lives, in my own newsfeed later I'll be like, wow, look at all that grey hair. I don't even notice it because I'm just looking - I'm trying to look in that little camera dot.

Michelle: Yeah, because what you're really seeing and I love - you know, I do love video, I do love doing video also and I feel very similarly in that I'm sort of like, okay, there's a camera here but really it's just my - it's like a tunnel.

Caryn: It's a portal.

Michelle: It's a portal. What clients will say to me is, "But as soon as a camera goes on, I get stiff," and I'm like, "I'm sorry, what camera?" Really. So I love the way you're saying that. You literally - now, you don't do that anymore where you think of a person. What do you conceptualize then?

Caryn: I think it's probably the same process, it just happens way faster. So I'll have an inspiration and it will make me think of someone and I will go put the video out. I try to do that really quickly, not think about it too much.

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Just take action while the inspiration is still alive, and I think that probably helps have it come across in a clear, nice way.

Michelle: Yeah. Okay, so what about other speaking? Do you use speaking in your business and how do you use it to make a difference, attract clients, you know, whatever?

Caryn: Here is a thought that I've identified that's very helpful for me is that when I speak, then I get a client. And so if someone's like, "Oh, do you want to come speak?" I'm like, "Yes I do," because then I get a client. So I have done like, luncheon learns, I've done speaking to four people, I've done speaking to 20 people, but usually it's an hour. I do a lot of Q&A. I'm a really open like, please interrupt me, please ask questions, but I love doing it. I love getting to connect with these people in person. I think it's so much fun.

Michelle: Yeah, and do you ever - back to the concept of weight loss and women and weight loss, and I know there's a lot of conversation now about - so I'm thinking even in these live rooms, although I guess you're probably already speaking with people who have decided to gather on this topic, right?

Caryn: Yes.

Michelle: So that wouldn't come up so much then, but I still want to ask that question. Take us back and forth a little bit. Because I know that one of the things that a lot of speakers struggle with is taking a stand about whatever their topic is because we all come up with reasons why ours is scary and dangerous, and I know that this conversation around women and weight loss can be so tricky right now. There's the body positivity, there's health and wellness, and you know, whether it makes sense or is right to talk about the dangers of being overweight. I mean, just all of it can feel very complex. How do you navigate that?

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Caryn: There's a couple things that come to mind but the first thing that comes to mind for me is we think it's this scary thing. We're showing up in a room and people are going to see us speak and they're going to have all these thoughts and feelings about what we're doing. But at the truth, I think, is that when these people show up to hear you, that's the vulnerable step for them. This has nothing to do with us. If they took the action to show up in the room and to be willing to say I'm interested in doing life different, in whatever way that is, that is a big deal. So like, I think that helps me get out of my own way a lot of the time. The other part on the body positivity, weight loss, like, what is right, what should people do, I think that's something that affects me speaking my truth, for sure. Because if I get caught up in the I don't want to do it wrong, then I stop talking. And the thing I heard recently and I know I've heard it a million times is like, you're going to do it your way and your way is the right way for you to do it. I heard it again and I was like, right, okay, so I have to do this my way because that's going to be the right way for somebody. And clearly, it's working for the people that I'm helping. And I know that there are people who are going to come at this struggle and have the desire to lose all their weight, and then figure out how to love themselves, and that's going to work for them. Then there are people who want to come at this struggle and never lose a pound and learn how to love themselves there, and that's going to be perfect for them. And then there are my clients who are somewhere in the middle who know that life in their body feels a little bit off, they know they have weight to lose, maybe they're fearing the type two diabetes diagnosis or they just want to wear smaller pants, like, whatever it is, they know they have somewhere to do and along the way they're going to learn to love themselves. So I just prefer kind of the intensity of we're going to do the weight loss journey and we're also going to do all the other stuff too, and we're going to do it at the same time because why not.

Michelle: Yeah. Well, and I mean, at least it makes sense in my mind that there is the story. I realize not everybody does it this way just as you were just saying, but there is the story that learning all of that does help support you taking the best care of yourself. And often, but not always, that ends up

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looking like a trimmer body if you have extra fat on your body, extra weight on your body.

Caryn: Right.

Michelle: Yeah.

Caryn: I think it's really interesting, and I have clients who get down to a certain number on the scale and then they say, "Okay, I think this is good. I think I'm going to stay here." And I'm like, "How about we just put your brain aside and let your body figure out what's going to work best for it?" Like, you just keep doing what's working. Your body will take care of you. Your body knows where it needs to go and what it needs. We're going to work on the part of your brain that just decided it's too scary to get any thinner.

Michelle: Yeah, that's so fascinating. We can make this decision and then sort of organize all these actions around this decision to, "I better stay here."

Caryn: Yeah, because we're so used to using our brains to figure everything out, right? But this is actually a body thing. So I think like, if we can create the atmosphere in your body that allows it to release the extra weight, then you can go worry about doing your life, and that's the fun part.

Michelle: Yeah, I just love that. I mean, I love that when we first started this conversation, you didn't even say anything about weight loss really. I mean...

Caryn: I know.

Michelle: I'm the one who brought it up.

Caryn: Right, right. Yeah.

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Michelle: Yeah, I mean, it really makes sense to me, and really, as someone who has struggled with this, who also has three daughters and I'm thinking about it so much, just how do I model for them given my own struggle and my own totally different generation of thinking about weight, weight loss, women, bodies, all of it, and also you know, give them room to kind of have their own process around it because they too are just up against media. It's not everything about the way I talk about my body at home, which I have done a whole like, I don't talk about it. Anyway, it's just - it is a really fascinating world and I feel like when we go back to the message that you said at the very beginning of this conversation, which is just about loving your life and living - actually, not just loving your life but living your life today, right now in fullness. Yeah. So do you ever get like, negative thinking?

Caryn: Oh yeah.

Michelle: Yeah, so what do you do? What do you do when it feels like, you know, it's too scary to get out there with this or it all feels too complex, or this isn't working or whatever?

Caryn: Well, naturally, I feel the urge to overeat because I am an emotional eater, and that's part of the reason I'm doing this work, right? So that's - I think of it as a gift at this point. It's like, oh, it's my check engine light is on. Time to go do some self-coaching. So I do some journaling. I write questions in my journal and I answer them. I think it's fun to slow our brains down to the speed of our pen. I'll get coaching. I always have a coach or two. I'll go for a walk, I'll listen to a podcast to try to kind of just change my energy. I'll take a break, I'll go watch Scandal, whatever the show is that week. But absolutely, it happens, and I think it's just not fighting with reality that - we're not going to feel good all the time and that's okay. And it's not a reason to eat over it.

Michelle: Yeah. You know, as you were just saying that, I was coming back to - I was thinking about this process and how it can just kind of bring us back to maybe more positive thinking or at least getting out of the ditch of

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negative thinking when we do these mind or state shifts. And I'm thinking back to this fear of getting on a stage and how you have this one thought that you can come back to, which is like, every time I speak I get a client. And is that true?

Caryn: It is true.

Michelle: Yeah, I just love that.

Caryn: When I show up in person and usually I'm doing some speaking, I always get a client. It's exciting. It's like, who's it going to be? I wonder which one it's going to be? Are you my new client? Are you my new clients?

Michelle: I hope everybody who's listening is just like, really hearing this because I think it is also that mindset that - you know, that's not like okay, I got to go sell this room mindset. That's not a like, strategically and kind of without them realizing it close them. I mean, that is like, I'm about to go into a room full of human beings and there's someone there who's going to recognize that I can serve them. Like, in a really meaningful way, and I can't wait to learn who it is.

Caryn: Yeah.

Michelle: Yeah, I mean, you know, one of my mantras is - because it's also been true for me and so many of my clients, there is no more powerful way to serve a whole room full of people than authentic powerful speaking, for sure. And I don't know of a better way to get clients just naturally, to just naturally attract the right people we're meant to serve than serving in that way. It's a natural way. And it's cool now that we can do that. Like, you do that at these luncheon learns and in these intimate settings, we can do them at conferences, we can do it on Facebook lives, right?

Caryn: There's so many platforms.

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Michelle: So it's so inspiring, Caryn, and I really do - I really love your message and I so appreciate that you're out there sharing it. It impacts me, it's a good reminder for me regularly.

Caryn: Awesome, thank you.

Michelle: Yeah, to right now, live all the things that I think I'm going to do in two years when I'm all the things I have planned.

Caryn: Exactly.

Michelle: Yeah, so thanks so much for just showing us this with just kind of this - you have just such a peaceful confidence about your message. I think that's inspiring.

Caryn: Thank you.

Michelle: So I know that our listeners are going to want to check out your work online, and I believe that you said they can get a copy of your book, is that right?

Caryn: That's right.

Michelle: Tell us about that.

Caryn: I have a link for you and you can put it in the show notes. We can share it when this goes out. Put a copy of my book in there, I just teach everything that I do with my clients about how to lose the weight and some tools for how to live your life on the way.

Michelle: So that's what the book is about. So basically, now that we're all inspired, you can go get the book that tells you, you know, how to do it, or gives you steps or tools on how to do it. That's perfect. Awesome.

Caryn: Yeah. And thank you, thanks for having me and for creating a place for people to share their message. I think that's how we change the world.

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Michelle: Thank you. Well, I know this conversation is going to serve so many others who want to take a stand as powerfully as you do. So I loved our conversation, thank you.

Caryn: Me too. Thank you.

Oh my gosh, I just loved that conversation with Caryn. She shared so many rich gems and I also love that she was so willing to share the not so perfect adventure of it all too because that is what it's like. The decision to make a meaningful difference to our message can absolutely be uncertain at times, but the fun and the beauty of it just keeps on winning if we just keep being willing to put ourselves out there and let it unfold in front of us.

And if you want help getting clear on your message, would love things like the only presentation outline you'll ever need, like as a template, if you want tips on reducing or managing speaking anxiety, an outreach tracker so you can keep track of all the places that you're offering to speak, all of that and more is in this free guide I created for you at michellebarryfranco.com/start. It is called the get started speaking guide.

Even if you're already speaking, there's so much in there that will help you get out there even more often, and maybe with an even more powerful message. So again, michellebarryfranco.com/start. Thank you so much for being here, my friend. I already can't wait for us to connect again next week. Meantime, take your stand, change some lives and enjoy the beautiful satisfaction of living into the work that you're meant to do in this world. See you next week.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Beyond Applause*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more, head on over to michellebarryfranco.com/start to get your free complete guide to stepping into leadership speaking right away.

[Beyond Applause](#) with Michelle Barry Franco