

Ep #15: Why Confidence Is Overrated



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Michelle Barry Franco

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You are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast episode number 15.

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, hello, my speaker friends. It's so fun to be back here with you, as usual. I was in Alaska this past week. I got to spend some beautiful time with my sister and brother in-law and their amazing dog, Hatcher Jack. I got to see my nephew. It was so awesome.

But I also got to meet, in real life, one of our listeners, Mave; who I have had the pleasure of meeting once before. But she's been a beautiful part of the Gold Star Peak Mission, which is a non-profit that my brother in-law, Kirk Alkire and my sister Angie, have started with this group of amazing people and Mave is one of those amazing people.

And I will tell you more about Gold Star Peak at some point because I'm hoping to get Kirk on the podcast. He's such a beautiful example. Their whole mission is such a beautiful example of making a powerful difference in the world by sharing a message. But it's so fun to get those little moments with a listener from the *Beyond Applause* podcast.

So I saw Mave unexpectedly and she said, "Oh my gosh, I've been listening to the podcast and learning so much. You're helping me so much." And I just wanted to shout out to Mave; thank you so much for that feedback. You have no idea how much that lights up my heart. And, you know, Mave, you light up any room, so I love that I get to contribute to that bright light that I know you're bringing, and I know you're bringing it on behalf of the Gold Star Peak Mission, in many cases, when you're out there speaking.

So I can just imagine Mave on stage and I just want to thank you, Mave, and all of Gold Star Peak – the whole Gold Star Peak family – for your beautiful work and, Mave, for your generous compliments.

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So today, we are going to talk about feeling confident as a speaker. And really, what I want to say is, feeling confident as a speaker is overrated. I hear so much about, what do I do, I just don't feel like I'm confident when I get put on a stage. I'm not confident that I can deliver a great speech or a great workshop or get up in front of a room full of people.

And here's the thing that I now know deeply, and that is that feeling confident is not the issue at all. It's just overrated. That's not even a thought that we want to entertain. So I want to talk with you more about that by taking you into the world of the greenroom with one of my speakers.

So the energy in his body was just palpable as we stood at the door of this greenroom and he was ready to get called to the backstage area, where he would get all mic'd up to go out on this big stage in a very, sort of, traditional scene, you know, stadium seats. There were even balcony seats.

So I could just feel his energy as he's waiting. We'd been working together for months for this one day; this one 20-minute talk. And he'd been putting in countless hours beyond our work together this whole time.

Now, this is not a guy who's new to speaking. He speaks often and he's often speaking in high-stakes circumstances. He's not a guy who gets highly anxious about many things. He's in on very big decisions regularly, you know, all of that stuff. He runs a whole organization, but today, the anxiety is almost, but not quite, intolerable.

Luckily, he does know that these feelings will evolve dramatically over the next 20 minutes. That's one of the gifts of having spoken before and spoken regularly. That's one of the great gifts of just doing it is that we can know, okay, whatever this feeling is, I know that it shifts over time, so I know that he was carrying that with him, but in this moment, it was just overwhelming; emanating from him, this, sort of, high energy.

So his name is called to go into the backstage area to get mic'd up, and he then is on his way to delivering the TEDx talk of his life, or at least his life

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so far anyway. So it wasn't confidence he was bringing in that moment. He wasn't bringing confidence onto that stage or even as he sat there in the greenroom or in the backstage area.

And he wasn't really bringing the feeling of confidence during many of our hours of preparation. In fact, that's the case with many of my clients. It's not confidence – it's not just a lack of confidence that they're often referencing and feeling. It was something else that was way more important, because feeling confident isn't what drives us to deliver an awesome talk.

Feeling confident is overrated, and here's why; first of all, feelings are fluid. So have you ever woken up one day and looked at your partner – either your current partner, or maybe more likely, one in the past – and just not been that into them? You're like, "Huh, maybe I'm not really into them anymore. I wonder if this is really going to work."

Then the next day or later that week, you see them across the room and they're, like, playing with a child or a puppy or they're being amazing at that thing that they love to do. And feeling your whole heart swell with love and gratitude that you get to share your life and time with this person, yeah, that's feelings for you; they're fluid.

One minute we're feeling one thing, and we really can, in just the next set of moments, be feeling the exact opposite thing. Feelings are fluid, so they are not markers of anything static, of anything certain.

So Eckhart Tolle tells this great story about a woman who he was renting a room to when he didn't have a zillion followers and enough money to cover his mortgage. And this woman woke up on her first full day at his house and said, "I'm sorry, I just can't stay here. It just doesn't feel right and I have to trust my feelings."

And because he's, you know, who he is, he didn't resist the circumstances that she was in and he said, you know, he'd asked her why and she just said, "I don't know. I just have to go with this." And he said, "Well, okay. So I will put an ad out and I will get another person." And she was very

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surprised by his lack of resistance and his willingness to even refund her the money that she had paid for rent.

So then, she stayed the next night and two nights, I guess, as she was figuring what she was going to do next and, in the meantime, he had put an ad in the paper to get another person in. So then these couple of nights later, she comes back downstairs and says, “I’ve changed my mind. Actually, I think it’s wonderful here, or it’s going to work anyway.”

And he said, “Oh, okay, well then that’s great. We’ll keep going forward with this.” And once again, she’s surprised by his reaction because she’s expecting him to say, “Well great, I just put an ad out, I paid to put an ad out and people have been contacting me about this new space.” Kind of, like, make up your mind, but he didn’t say any of that. He said, “Okay, we’ll go with that then.”

So that’s the thing, it’s sort of like, you know, here’s this woman who was using her feelings as her guide. And we hear this a lot, right. We hear, “I’ve got to trust my feelings.” And so, she was using that, “I’ve got to trust my feelings...” thing. And then two days later, she was also using the, “I have to trust my feelings...” thing.

So the first time, it told her she needed to leave. The second time, it told her that it was right to stay. So which of those are accurate? Which of those are the accurate guide?

So in this video that Eckhart Tolle is sharing – and we’ll put a link to it in the show notes – I can’t remember the name of it right now. But he’s basically saying, you know, it depends – we need to look and see where those feelings are coming from. Like, our feelings are fluid. Our, sort of, like, high-level feelings are fluid. They change all the time, but they’re not the same as intuition.

Feelings do not equal intuition. And I know this is a little bit of a nuance and dance, and it’s really not what this podcast episode is about, what is the difference between feelings and intuition, but there’s a place in us that

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knows. And it's a deeper place that has a lot more, kind of, central grounded feeling of knowing. And it's that place that has a lot more information that can help guide us.

But we actually have to release our connection on those high-level very fluctuating thoughts and feelings that can confuse what we really want. So feelings are fluid, especially at that higher level of feelings and thought.

And so to focus on a feeling of confidence – if you're counting on a consistent feeling of confidence throughout your preparation and delivery of a talk, you'll never prepare, practice, and then deliver because there will be too many periods of time when your feelings say, "I'm not good at this and I can't do it." So we can't use that as our guide.

So second – feelings don't have inherent meaning. Similar to what we were talking about earlier, this, "Oh, I'm having this feeling so it must mean I have to leave..." like in the Eckhart Tolle story. They actually don't have this inherent meaning that we often give to it, and that's largely because of pop-psychology, you know, memes and things that you'll read online.

We don't know exactly why, but for the vast majority of us, feeling significant fear and anxiety about public speaking, for example, is pervasive and it can actually be almost paralyzing, especially if we put all of our attention and focus on those feelings.

It's so pervasive that – you've probably heard that – studies have shown that people are more afraid of thinking about public speaking than thinking about their own death, for example. So, you know, we know that when we focus – first of all, when we experience these feelings in our body and then when we focus in on these feelings of anxiety and just overall public speaking fear, then we get stuck in it. It's easy to get stuck in it.

But how many of us are in real danger when we speak? People ask the question, why is public speaking fear so pervasive? And there are theories, and there are some that make sense to me that I sort of subscribe to, which is we've got this place in our brain that says, "If I'm not still a part of the

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tribe, if I get kicked out of the tribe then I might die.” And being kicked out of the tribe is a lot more possible and likely, potentially, if you’re standing up and taking a stand for something that others might disagree with and therefore oust you.

I did a whole podcast about public speaking anxiety and we’ll put that in the show notes as well, that sort of talks about that further. But the fact is, if I listened to my feelings on any given day, even if they are based on some primal part of my brain, first of all, I’d never get on a stage because I too feel speaking anxiety and have felt it the whole time since I was in high school, when I started speaking.

Most – the vast majority – of my clients do, even those that lead companies and speak regularly. I would never have written a book because, frankly, writing was painful for me. So if I said to myself, “Oh, this is hard. This is super-hard, like uncomfortable, and I’m feeling really stuck. So that must mean that I shouldn’t be writing this book...” well, then I would never have written it.

Now, luckily, that whole thought/feelings sequence of writing is painful for me is changing, which is further evidence, by the way, that feeling evolves. It’s fluid. I would never have gotten married again because I was super-afraid of that and thought maybe I wasn’t good at marriage, right. So I had this feeling that I maybe wasn’t good at it.

I would never have moved back to California. I can think of all these things in my life – and so many other decisions that I’ve heard and seen other people around me make and I wonder, what do you have in your life that you felt was hard, painful, anxiety-provoking, but you did it anyway? If you had said to yourself, “Wow, that I feel this way means that I shouldn’t do it...” then we would never do so many hard things, right.

As one of my teachers often says, “We live in the feeling of our thinking.” We live in the feeling of our thinking; so all this means is that we’re kind of think-feeling. So sometimes, I translate this in my mind to mean, I’m feeling this thing and it must be because I’m having a certain thought that’s

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causing that feeling. The truth is, for me, sometimes I wake up in the morning feeling and I don't even have a conscious thought yet.

So I don't even necessarily think of it as that linear anymore, we just are think-feeling people. We're human. It's what we do. Feeling does not have inherent meaning; it's when we impose meaning on it that we actually get in our own way of doing the things that that deep knowing in us knows that we're meant to do. And for those of us who know that we're called to use our voice to make a difference in the world, that can be a real problem, right.

It's that deep call – that deep knowing – that we need to be listening to far more often. And this leads me to the third point here, which is that it's not your feeling of confidence that counts; it's your commitment that counts.

So the question isn't, are you feeling confident about your speaking? The question is, are you feeling committed to your speaking, maybe overall, or even about any one talk or presentation. It is that commitment that will drive the beautiful powerful outcomes that change people's lives and make a difference in our world.

I'll never forget the moment that I decided to do whatever it took to begin sharing my own stories and lessons learned in a much more authentic way with real vulnerability. And that's when, after one of those dark nights of the soul – literally one night and woke up at 3:30 in the morning – that's when I started Marin Storytelling Circle. It's a really funny story. I keep saying I'm going to share it. At some point, I will. I think it's funny.

It just, sort of, started on a whim. I didn't really mean to. I didn't know what I was doing, but that beautiful momentary, like, I am doing this and I know that what I need to do is practice telling my most vulnerable stories in a place that feels safe to me. I spent the next 18 months with a group of these beautiful souls practicing sharing true stories from our lives.

And it was really hard for me at first. It was hard for me to be that vulnerable. And I know this is wild; I'm a speaking coach and a huge part of

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what I do and have done for many years, like a decade, is help people tell their most vulnerable stories, but I wasn't doing that. And I realized that to be an integrity for myself, and with my clients, that I needed to be willing to do what I was continually telling them they needed to do.

So it was very difficult for me at first, but then, it got so fun. And I'm telling you, it was not feeling confident that had me start Marin Storytelling Circle, that had me start telling those first stories in the group; it was commitment that led me through all of that early part. And now, I've shared some very personal vulnerable stories quite publicly in my business and just in my life overall and it feels really right and good.

It feels like it comes from a place of service. And it doesn't mean I don't get scared. It doesn't mean that I don't feel super-nervous having things – like, I'll make videos with those stories and who knows what's going to happen to them then? That can be very scary, right, but it's not the feeling confident that this story isn't going to, for example, be judged by someone else or that I won't be ridiculed or thought less of or whatever.

That could very well happen, so it's not the feeling of confidence that drives me; it's the feeling of commitment. And that is true for so many of the speakers that I work with, especially the ones that are willing to tell those scary stories, those really hard stories of failure and making bad choices and all of that, lessons learned.

So this kind of commitment is what makes us turn a good presentation or speech or workshop or book into a room-moving captivating one. We decide to put the time, energy, and effort into the process. It's a decision. We decide and commit to learning what we need to learn and doing what we need to do to make it happen.

And then we commit to moving through all of those intense emotions in the greenroom or in our car before we walk in or sitting at that round table in the conference room before they call our name to take the stage of whatever size it's going to be. We commit to making that impact, even when we don't feel confident.

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We commit to making the impact and all that we have to move through to get to that outcome. Here's the thing – I love feelings. They are the texture and energy of life. I'm a very feeling person, but feelings aren't what drive the greatest contribution.

If you ask any high-level athlete, scientist, parent, speaker, really anyone who is devoted to doing things that really matter in our world, feelings are fluid. They don't have static meaning that we should use as a guide for behavior. Feelings are different than intuition, which comes from a deeper place and is a far more powerful driver of commitment, which is where all of the magic happens.

So release that voice in your head that keeps telling you that you need to be more confident in order to serve at the highest level as a speaker. It's way more a decision that you make and that you actually continue to make, no matter what you're feeling in any given moment.

Once you've made that decision, I've got so many resources to support you. The perfect place to start is with the Get Started Speaking Guide, which gives you things like The Only Presentation Outline You'll Ever Need – which we call TOPOYEN for short – plus some of my clients' favorite anxiety releasing practices.

You can get that Get Started Speaking Guide, which is also an uplevel your speaking guide; if you're already speaking, there's all kinds of tools in there no matter what your level of speaking. You can get all of that at michellebarryfranco.com/start.

Okay, my friends, that's what we've got for today. Listen to that deep place in you that knows and heed its guidance to make your difference in our world. I already can't wait until next week. In the meantime, get out there and share your voice; you were made for this.

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

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