**Choose to be Epic with Carolyn Buck Luce**

**Natalie Benamou:** Hello and welcome. This is your host Natalie Benamou. I am also CEO of HerPower2 Lead and the founder of HerCsuite™ an online platform where executive women come together and engage, be, and thrive. And speaking of thriving, our guest today is Carolyn Buck Luce. She's the inventor of the “Decade Game”.

She's the co-founder of “Imagine Labs” and she's a culture, shifter talent innovator, executive coach. She's a speaker. She's been a professor at Columbia business school in New York city, and so much more, which you're going to hear about and be amazed at all of the different ways that Carolyn has reinvented and invented herself over the years since the age of eight.

And I have been so fortunate to know Carolyn for many years. I met her through HBA, the Healthcare Business Women's Association and I had an unforgettable evening where I was fortunate enough to have a one-on-one dinner with her that I will never forget. In fact, every moment that I have had an encounter with Carolyn, I always treasure and remember, because she's that kind of a person there's magical people in this world, and she is one of them that you will want to hear, listen to and pay attention as you walk with us today. And don't worry, I've got all of the information that we talk about in the show notes. So with that, Let's take a walk.

Carolyn, I am so thrilled to welcome you here to HerCsuite™ radio. It has been a wonderful journey that you and I have had. You've been an incredible influence on me when I was president of HBA, but also afterwards there's things that I still apply from what I learned early on. So for our listeners who don't know you, I want to welcome you and have you introduce your, and give a little bit about yourself.

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** Well, it's just a pleasure to be with you. I still remember the dinner that we had. Way back when, as you were thinking about what's next for you and what was longing to happen for you and a sense that you had so much to give and contribute. So it's wonderful to see the different manifestations of you. I think what I want people to know about me just to get a sense is that I've really had, quite a majestic life. And when I talk about majestic, what I mean is that I've really tried to get as much out of the majesty of being alive as I can. And I've had an opportunity to see the world in many different ways, from a personal, from a professional perspective, I started my career as a diplomat in Soviet Union, back in the seventies, representing our country.

I've been an international banker. I've been a wall street banker. I've been a management consultant. I've been a professor. I've been an executive coach, but what really has defined me is what has been the people I love, I have had wonderful husbands where, and I've experienced divorce. I've experienced death and I've experienced also the ability to continue to give my heart away.

And I'm married to an amazing man now. I've had the opportunity to raise my own children and blend the children of my spouses. And I have been on a journey of reinvention with beautiful friends and both triumphs and trials. So I think probably for all of you, there's a little bit of me in you.

**Natalie Benamou:** Wow. So beautiful.

I love that. And I think, I think people are going to enjoy this conversation because of the things that you have done in your career. But most importantly, now you've reinvented yourself again and you have this new idea around the Decade Game. And I think that is so powerful to think it changed the way that we think.

And I wanted to hear a little bit about what, what inspired you and what inspires you to, to look at reinvention?

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** Well, you know, many of us, uh, there's a moment in our lives where we stop being a child. Even if we still have a child's body. And for me, I was eight years old and it was 1960. And John F. Kennedy was running for president and he said, “don't ask what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country”. And I woke up. I became a citizen of the world as opposed to a child, even though I was eight, because I felt he was speaking to me and I felt that he was calling me to take responsibility for making a world that works.

And that was actually the beginning of the “Decade Game”. I didn't know it. I didn't call it that at the time. But at the time I felt that I needed to take responsibility for who I would be when I grew up and that commitment and responsibility to. See myself in the future. See how I could do my part has been the power of the reinvention.

And over the years, a lot of what I've done now that you have a sense of how old I am is I've been in male dominated industries where I've been the first, the only woman, the first woman, and what I experienced through all of that is that we're all guilty and no one's to blame but even now it's hard for women to be, to encourage themselves and be encouraged by the system they're in to really stand up for their power and their purpose.

So that has really been my commitment is to do that for myself and then to spread the fairy dust around.

**Natalie Benamou:** And sothe fairy dust that you're spreading now, which I think is so incredible is really having women think of things in a different way. Can you describe a little bit about that? About like, what does that look like now for the women that are involved and that are understanding and reinventing themselves with your help?

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** Well, what's really required is for women to start, to choose to be Epic.

**Natalie Benamou:** Mm Oh, that's so powerful. That is great.

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** Women shy away from that. You know, for 10 years, I, I designed and created a course that I taught at the graduate school of international public affairs at Columbia university. And I entitled it women and power because I found that women are, are ambivalent about fully embracing power and fully acknowledging how much power they've given away.

And at the same time, fully embracing ambition, because ambition is not a dirty word. It's just the desire to accomplish and grow. And. In order to be able to do that, you have to commit to an Epic story and that's a choice. That's all it is. It's a choice.

**Natalie Benamou:** And you have mentioned that, you know, through your career and some of the things that we were talking about earlier that people didn't hear about, which was you climbed at at 60, when you retired, you got married and then you climbed Kilimanjaro, which I think anyone would be thinking of is, wow, that is Epic alone.

But what, what, where are you deriving that, that. Sense of majestic, as you mentioned, power to help you do those things that most people would think of, even if they were 20 to be fearful. Well, how do you, where are you deriving that from?

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** So I love that question. Yeah. Epic is both an adjective and a noun, but it was first a noun.

It was a story, a saga, a long form, verse of daring do daring to do, and for women to be able to recognize that they are the heroines in their own story. But it's time to rewrite the fairytale. So the way the Decade Game works is you imagine what would be the most Epic identity that really reflected your greatest power 10 years from now, how 10 years from now will, you know yourself, will you be known by the people you love and be known by the people who count on you at home, at work and in the world, and to embrace that identity and make it as Epic and bold as possible, then.

To play the game. You make Epic choices today. So it's not about waiting 10 years. I want women to get out of the waiting room, waiting for something to happen, waiting for something to change waiting for, if only I could be this and not that waiting till something. Now, I, I remember being in an elevator when I was a baby banker thinking that I had to wait until I was a vice-president to get pregnant.

I was 31 years old and I was thinking, well, I have to wait until, and then all of a sudden it hit me. Why am I in this waiting room? What's longing to happen for me? And let me say yes. And that's what is Epic to be able to really lean in and listen to what's longing to happen and then not wait for it.

**Natalie Benamou:** Amazing. I, I, I'm just absorbing and taking in all the words that you're saying, cause I know it's going to resonate so much with, with our listeners. And this year has been such a huge year of change and many have struggled and been burnt out and, and feeling like they thought they knew where they were going to go, but then the world changed and they haven't seen the windows open yet for them.

So those people that are just needing that encouragement, what would you say to them to kind of, to take that leap and to know that. They need to do this for themselves because 10 years, they're going to look back and say, thank goodness I did.

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** Yeah. First of all, I know it's been a hard year and it's, uh, we can't sugarcoat it in any way, but I would say to people, which is what I say to myself is to think about whatever happens to you as happening for you, not to you, so that you can commit to making sure that every day you can discover meaning for yourself.

And create meaning for others. And you do that in three ways. You go inside yourself and listen to what's longing to happen. You listen closely to the people who you love and say, what can I do that matters to them? And then you commit to your own mastery and that requires you to lean into what's really longing to happen.

And then just try in the decade game. There is no such thing as the wrong move. It's only the next move. And I'll just give you an example of that. That just happened yesterday. A woman who has had an opportunity to go through the Decade Game, just sent out a note to say she finally came out of the closet and used this time in the pandemic to record her first song.

Now this is a song she wrote in her twenties. So it's been a song that's been inside her all this time and if want to check her out, uh, go to YouTube and look for Maura. Rampolla. And her song is “I'm going to love you”. And she just posted, it came out of the closet on that one. But imagine this has been in her for so long and she was able to take this pause where we all were sent to our room.

We were all told to take a time out and it was really a time to listen deeply. So don't let this go to waste this time. It happened for us not to us, and it's our responsibility to figure out how to make it meaningful.

**Natalie Benamou:** So powerful. And I think when you hear I'm going to definitely have the show notes, the link in the show notes, so people can listen and I want to listen.

As soon as we're done, I'm going to look it up because I'm so intrigued. But are there other things that have come about with your experience when you're helping women kind of evolve? Cause the decade game is a plan, not everybody's at the they're planning out the 10 years. Right? I just want to clarify for our listeners that it's kind of, you're looking forward to look back and.

You're evolving as you go.

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** And it's actually not a plan.

**Natalie Benamou:** Okay. Sorry

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** In the sense that women have enough plans, goals, they have enough lists, all that stuff. And that's because we were all born to be good girls. I want you to forget being a good girl and I want you to dream not plan.

**Natalie Benamou:** So good.

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** So the decade game is about dreaming.

What really is wanting to happen. And that if I really was committed to swing for the fences. In 10 years, how might I be known in 10 years in a way that's of service, but you play it right here. So what it really is, is a shift in thinking it's moving from the psychopathology of not enough or I’m not enough.

There's not enough time. We are not enough to the psycho mythology of imagining you as the heroine of your story. And I'll just give you an example. So the decade game right now in its current form, I teach it as a masterclass. And just yesterday, we finished the eight weeks of the masterclass where everyone builds their game board.

That's all you need. Once you've got the game board, once you actually have a sense of the Epic paths you can go on, then you're playing the game and then you play the game in the shift, in your mindset so that you look. At your choices differently and you don't wait. So we just finished yesterday and I'll just, I asked people, okay, just in this short eight weeks, now that you have a dream board of what's possible, what has been the shift for you?

And I'll hear some of the things that came back to me. I'm now limitless. I trust my gifts again, I'm moving from cautious to Intrepid. I'm shifting from all the self-doubt I've always lived with to the self-truth of who I am. I'm owning my female power. I'm trusting myself my own knowing, and I'm willing to play to win as opposed to play, not to lose.

So that's, that's the real game we're going for. And then there are no lists or goals. There's just dreams.

**Natalie Benamou:** Dreams, I think is such a much better way of phrasing it, then the list, because you're right, we have these lists and then we feel disappointed and hard on ourselves when you have that list and you've got those objectives and you're striving to that list.

And then you're like, Oh, you know, it's too much, you have too much on your list. So you start to start, you know, feeling bad. And then all those things that you mentioned earlier about the, you know, the noise in your head call this self-help.

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** I don't know what I'd like to say to women is it is okay to be self-centered.

Hmm. That's not a bad thing to be able to center on your greatest dreams center on the best possible story for yourself and center on the fact that it is your choice to be Epic.

**Natalie Benamou:** Carolyn, that is so beautiful. I am. So I would love to talk to you forever because I could ask a million questions, but I know that we want people to take a walk with us and it's hard to hurt the end, such a wonderful conversation for our listeners.

But if people want to learn more about the Decade Game and you, where should they go? Where would they go to find out more?

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** Very simple. Just go to MyDecadeGame.com.

**Natalie Benamou:** That is great. And I will have that in the show notes as well as information about you. Carolyn, thank you so much for this episode has been so lovely speaking with you.

**Carolyn Buck Luce:** It's been great and thank you for reaching out. It's so good to be reconnected.

**Natalie Benamou:** So true. Thank you for listening to that episode with Carolyn Buck Luce. Wasn't it amazing? I hope you'll join me. I'm going to definitely be looking into the Decade Game that she mentioned and look into it in the fall when she opens it, because I think it is transformational.

### Referred to in this Episode

* [Decade Game](https://www.mydecadegame.com/)
* [The Decade Game with Imaginal Labs](https://www.imaginal-labs.com/the-decade-game-1)
* [Healthcare Business Women's Association](https://www.hbanet.org/)
* [Imaginal Labs](https://www.imaginal-labs.com/home)
* [John F. Kennedy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_F._Kennedy)
* [Mount Kilimanjaro](https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/kilimanjaro/)
* Song by Maura Rampolla on YouTube: “[I’m Gonna Love You](https://youtu.be/BOnY8YKRMys)”