

## Ep #11: Deathiversaries



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Krista St-Germain**

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 11, Deathiversaries.

Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, the only podcast that offers a proven process to help you work through your grief to grow, evolve, and create a future you can actually look forward to. Here's your host, certified life coach, grief expert, widow, and mom, Krista St-Germain.

Hey there. Welcome back to the podcast. What a strange title, right? But if you're a widow, I bet you have the anniversary of your husband's death on your mind; maybe not at this point of the year, but depending on when he died, at some point in the year, you are for sure thinking about it. And so that's what I want to talk about today.

Before we do that, however, I want to share a couple of listener reviews and give away one of those five \$100 Amazon gift cards. To celebrate the podcast launch, I've been running just a little fun competition. All you have to do is just review the podcast and then send us an email telling us that you did it. All of those instructions, by the way, can be found at [coachingwithkrista.com/podcastlaunch](http://coachingwithkrista.com/podcastlaunch).

So today, we have winner number two. And her review read – it was called Top Notch and it read, “Down to earth. No fluffy cloud stuff. Extremely helpful and very practical.” So, thank you, Mendy. I really appreciate that review; short and to the point, just like the podcast. At least that's how I hope it to be.

Then the other one I wanted to read – no prize here, but I still want to read another one because I want you all to know that I really do read these reviews. I value them so much. They help other widows like us find the podcast, and I hear you.

So, this next one is from Margot26. The title of the review is Great Podcast. And Margot wrote, “Love this new podcast for widows. Only six episodes in

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and it has brought me so much clarity and a new way to look at things. Krista totally gets where I'm at. It's like she's inside my head and listening to her calm clear voice when I'm in despair gives me hope and reassurance that I can do this. Thank you, Krista."

Thank you, Margot; that's exactly why I'm doing this podcast. It's funny how often people tell me I'm in their head, and I think it's just because what we go through as widows, even though we feel so isolated and alone, it is so universal in a way. It's all unique by the circumstance and the loss and the relationship that we had. But there's so many similarities that we all share in grief. And that's why it's easy for me to be inside your head because, you know, I've been through something so very similar and we all have that in common.

Okay, here's what I have got for you today. We could use lots of different terms for this. I don't even think deathiversary is actually a word. If you looked it up in the dictionary, you probably wouldn't find it. But in my mind, it's the word that works for me. So you can use whatever word works for you.

Some people just like anniversary. I did look up the definition of anniversary and the definition is just the date on which an event took place in a previous year. But I think the reason anniversary doesn't always land with people is because so often we have this idea that an anniversary is associated with a happy moment in time. And so the idea of recognizing an anniversary on the date that our husband died maybe doesn't work for everyone. But whatever works for you...

I looked up some other ways that people refer to what I call the deathiversary. And what I found were things like death day, like birthday, and remembrance day and memorial day. Some people use angelversary. Some people just call it that day. It doesn't really matter.

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But it's been on my mind because that time of year is upon us for me. My husband died August 1<sup>st</sup>, and so it's been on my mind. And it's interesting to me how much angst the anticipation of the deathiversary causes in my clients and how much stress we feel and how many expectations we put on ourselves coming into that day.

So I just want to talk about it. I also think it's interesting that in English we don't have a word for this day because there are other languages that actually have a word specifically for this day. So there's a word for it in Hebrew. There's one for it in Hindi, Japanese, Chinese. They actually have a word signifying the anniversary of the death of a loved one. But in English, we don't.

So, here's what I want to tell you about a deathiversary, if it's coming up for you. First of all, just like grief in general, there are no shoulds. So whatever the expectations you've been putting on yourself about how to deal with this day, what actions to take, how you need to spend it, what you need to do, I give you permission to just release them. There is no right or wrong way to approach this day.

Yes, people in your life will probably have opinions about what you do on that day. Sometimes, I see this a lot with in-laws. So your late husband's family perhaps may have some ideas of how you should be recognizing this day. And maybe they have some judgments about you if you don't do it the way that they want it done.

And here's what I have to say about that; so what? Let them. Listen, people are going to judge us. They do. It's human nature. We all judge one another. Even on our best days when we don't intend to be judging, we do. It's just the way that we are as humans. So it's totally fine if other people have expectations of how you should handle this day. It's totally fine if other people have expectations of how you should feel on this day. Let them.

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Just because they have expectations and ideas about how you should spend the day, who you should be on the day, it's okay. It doesn't matter. You don't have to take those expectations and conform to them. You can just allow people in your life to have expectations, and then you can do what you want.

And that's for the deathiversary or anything else for that matter. Sometimes, we just need to let people think and feel how they think and feel and carry on with how we want to do things. So if you have a should, let it go.

Honor what it is that you want to do with that day. There are no rights, there are no wrongs. And if you have a day that you want to spend the day, then do it. You know what you're up for. You know what your kids are up for. You know your husband and what he would have wanted, which is probably, by the way, for you to be happy. And maybe you do something different on that day every year.

Some people love to have traditions, but it's okay to just assess what you're up for this year and do that. And you don't have to put some great expectation on how you spend the day, what you do or don't do. If it's just another day in your world and you don't do anything, fine. All I want is for you to assess what it is that you want. Like your reasons and follow your own desires and do it the way that you want to do it.

So many of my clients have just an unbelievable amount of dread and anxiety leading up to that day. And so of course it doesn't have to be that way, right, the day is just a day on the calendar and therefore, even though it is the day our husband died, we do get to decide what we want to make it mean. We do get to decide how we want to think about that day, and so we don't have to think about it or feel about it in any particular way. It's really just all about what we want to choose.

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I always think that it's so useful, when we're going into any sort of day that we know has the potential to be emotional for us, that we make space for all of those emotions, that we expect all of those emotions, and that we give ourselves the gift of making a container where any and all of those emotions are acceptable.

We can laugh. We can cry. We can feel all the feelings and we can be on that rollercoaster ride and that can be okay. And we don't have to make it mean that because we're feeling all of these emotions or because maybe we're more emotional than normal, we don't have to make it mean that anything has gone wrong.

We can just be gentle with ourselves and hold that space for us to experience all of the emotions that might come about. And it doesn't even matter if we're talking about the first anniversary or if we're talking about the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We can still make space and I encourage you to do this for yourself to feel all the feelings.

Even if you're remarried, let yourself have the experience that you're having and it will be so much more pleasant for you when you can do it from a place of compassion for self, of love for self instead of judgment, I promise you.

So, what are some ways that you can choose to spend the day? Again, no grand expectations necessary, but here are some of the things that some of my clients have done, things that I have read about, things that we talk about in my closed Facebook group. So maybe some of these ideas will be useful to you.

I love the idea of memory-sharing. And I think you can do this in any form that works for you. But even if it's just sitting around as a family sharing memories about your husband, love, love, love doing that. You can also do

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it online. You can create an online memorial and ask friends to share memories or tell stories.

Facebook's always so good about sending us memories, right, last year this time, whatever. Post something on Facebook. Maybe it's a memory from a prior post or maybe it's just a bunch of pictures of your husband or your family. And ask people to share in the comments their favorite memories about him. If your children aren't on social media, you could read those memories to them so that they can hear the stories that other people have about their dad.

You could hold a ceremony if you like. It could be something very small where maybe you light some candles. It could be something very large where you invite a lot of people. Some people – I've never done this but I love this idea – do butterfly releases. And I've also heard of balloon releases, but for environmental reasons I don't really suggest that one so much. But I love the idea of a butterfly release.

Amazing what you can find these days in terms of jewelry options. I don't know if you've investigated jewelry as something that you can do to memorialize your husband, but wow, the options that are out there...

If he was cremated, they can take his cremains and make jewelry out of that. They can make diamonds out of it. It could be something as simple as maybe a word that reminds you of him or his name or date of birth, any of those kinds of things are lovely.

You could take some time for reflection; quiet reflection. Maybe write him a letter. Children could do this too. Or if they're too little to write, maybe they could draw him a picture and they could talk about why they drew what they drew, if you like. Or maybe you could all do one of those paint the town kinds of nights where you go together and do a painting, work with the company and ask them if they would do something that is unique and

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special for your husband. Maybe it's a painting of something that he liked or a collection of different types of things that he would have enjoyed.

I love telling jokes. If your husband was a jokester, if he had the corny dad-jokes going, share some of his favorite jokes together, share some of those funny stories or things that make you laugh. Plant a tree. It could be in your yard, it could be in a park. Sometimes you can even memorialize the tree, depending on where it's planted, with a little placard.

Maybe he had a favorite event venue. What if you bought a seat at that event venue and got a little placard on one of those chars with his name on it. Maybe he loved sports. Maybe his high school offers that or his middle school or his college or a particular event venue in your city that he liked to frequent. Maybe you could buy a seat in his memory.

Or maybe a particular building or a place that he loved in the community, you could buy a brick in his memory and have his name put on there. Where did you go together as a family? What types of activities did he love to do that you would do together as a family? Go there. Maybe there's a particular park or maybe there's a zoo that you loved to go to or maybe some sort of volunteer work that you would do together as a family. Go there.

Of course, you can always visit the grave site. Or if he was cremated, go to the place, perhaps, where his cremains are. Maybe you spread them somewhere in nature. You could go there.

What was his favorite hobby? Did he like to cycle or run or fish or play sports? What could you do actively as a family that would be a fun and fitting tribute, even if you aren't good at it, even if you're all terrible at it?

What was on his bucket list? What did he want to do that maybe he never got to do? And could you do that as a family? What if you made a cake,

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made his favorite dessert? I love eating carrot cake and cheesecake in honor of my Hugo because those were his favorites. I love drinking a glass of red wine because that was what he loved.

Maybe you cook his favorite meal, light some candles. Maybe you treat yourself. Maybe you go get a massage, get a facial, go get a pedicure or a manicure or do something that's relaxing to you, knowing that it's not an easy day.

What charity did your husband love? Was there a particular charity? What if you did a GoFundMe on Facebook in his memory or you just make a contribution in his name. What if, as a family, you decided to pay it forward in his memory and did some random acts of kindness or some service for people in your community or people in your church or even just strangers who you've never met?

What if you go through a drive-through and pay for the person's meal behind you? Maybe it's his favorite fast food restaurant. Come up with a way to memorialize him by doing good in your community.

Those are some of the best ideas that I've heard, and so maybe you can find something in that list that really works for you, that brings your heart happiness and joy and honor in memory of your husband. And remember though, there is no right or wrong way to spend this day.

There's no right or wrong term to call this day. I say deathiversary. It feels appropriate to me. You say whatever you want. This is your day. And I also want you to remember that this day has no power over you. Your experience of this day will be determined by how you think about it.

So you don't have to worry that this day somehow can control you. It can't, I promise. But you can also make space for all of the emotions. You can

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decide, with intention, how you want to spend the day, what's important to you, what's important to your family, to your kids. You be the boss.

Alright, ladies, go out there and spend that day how you want to spend it, alright. I hope you have an amazing week. I want you to remember that, no matter what you're going through, that you are not alone, that I love you, and you've got this. I'll see you soon. Take care.

Thank you for listening to this week's episode of *The Widowed Mom Podcast*. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, head over to [coachingwithkrista.com](http://coachingwithkrista.com).