

## Ep #27: People Pleasing



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Krista St-Germain**

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

## Ep #27: People Pleasing

Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 27, People Pleasing.

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.

Hello, beautiful. Welcome to another episode of the podcast. I wonder, do you look in the mirror and tell yourself that you're beautiful? Because if you don't, you should start. I give you permission. Go look in the mirror, look yourself in the eyes, and tell yourself you're beautiful. I learned to do this from my mentor. It felt a little awkward at first, but now it's much easier and it makes me smile.

Alright, so we're going to talk about people pleasing. I'm recording this episode about to head out of town this evening for an event with another life coach colleague of mine. I'm going to be teaching at her event. It's not grief related, but I just love, love, love her clients. Her name is Kara Loewentheil and she is just such a fantastic coach. So it's going to be a great time going to one of my favorite cities, Denver, for the weekend.

And I sat down to record the podcast, lo and behold, my microphone wouldn't work. And it turns out that the update I did to my Mac, because, you know, it said there's an update available, and so I said okay. But the update to the latest operating system somehow made my microphone not work. So shout out to Pavel, my podcast producer, for helping me figure out what to do with some strange workaround.

So, that said, I am getting this podcast to you before I leave because this is my commitment to you and I keep my commitments. We're going to talk about people pleasing. Raise your hand if you think that you have people pleasing tendencies. I can't see you, but I'm assuming that your hand is

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raised because most of us do have the tendency to want to people please. So we're going to talk about it in this episode.

I'm going to tell you why we do it, why it doesn't actually work like we think it does, and how to stop. This is something I've done a lot of work on myself. I'm still doing this work and I want to teach it to you because I know how much better my life is in areas where I used to people please and I've been able to figure this out for myself.

So, let's talk about what people pleasing looks like. I'm going to give you some examples that I see in my Widowed Mom clients. We'll talk about then what it is. So, here's what it looks like. See if you see yourself in any of these examples.

Somebody asks you at your child's school to participate in the cookie bake fundraiser. We can't buy cookies for this. We actually have to bake them because it's a homemade cookie fundraiser. And in your mind, you're thinking, "I do not have time to bake cookies. I do not want to bake cookies. I do not like to bake cookies."

But then a little voice says, "If I say no, they'll think I don't care about my kid. They'll think I'm not a good parent. They'll think I can't be counted on anymore because I'm a widow. They'll think I can't get it together now because my husband has died..." something along those lines. You start worrying about that they think. And you add baking cookies to your already long to-do list.

Maybe someone asks you out on a date, or a friend tries to hook you up on a date and you don't want to go on the date. But then a little voice says, "Yes, but if I say no, I'll hurt their feelings. If I say no, they'll think that I'm not appreciative or they'll think I'm stuck up or they'll think that I'm not handling my grief well, or I'm not healing, I should be farther along than I

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am. But I don't really want to go." And so you say, "Oh, just this once. It won't hurt. I'll just do it." Then you do it.

Or maybe, you do want to go out on the date, but then your brain says, "Yes, but I better not tell so and so because they might think that I'm rushing into this. They might think that I didn't really love my husband. They might think that I should wait longer." Or, "I don't want to tell my kids because they might think I'm trying to replace their father. They might not like it"

Or, even though it's not in your budget, your kid asks you to buy something. Maybe it's a young child, maybe it's a teenager. Maybe it's a grown child. That thing that they want, it's not on the budget, but then a little voice says, "Yes, but if I don't buy it, they'll be so disappointed and they've already been through so much. And if their father were still here and we still had a double income, I could afford this thing and so I should just buy it for them. And if I don't buy it for them, maybe they'll think that I don't have it together financially and then they'll worry about me or they'll worry about our future. They'll think that our quality of life is going to change because dad died."

Or maybe there's something you can afford and you have plenty of money. Maybe it's life insurance money. But you're worried about what other people will think if either they know you have that money, or if they know you've spent it and they will judge how you spent it and they will not like how you spent it. They will not like that you have it. Or maybe you resent how you got it in the first place.

Maybe your boss asks you to take on an extra project at work and you want to say no because you know that you don't have the bandwidth right now, but you think, "My boss might not think I'm as good at my job as I used to be. If I say no, they'll think there's something wrong with me, that I'm not coping well, I don't have it together, I can't multitask like I used to be able

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to. They'll think I'm not doing as well as I should be. They'll think that I've lost my edge."

These are the types of examples that I see all the time. I feel tense just talking about them. This is what people pleasing looks like and I have done so much of this. People pleasing at its core is when we prioritize what other people think over what we think. It's when we make somebody else's opinion more important than our opinion.

And the bad news is that it's a game that we are playing and there's no possible way to win it because even if people are pleased with the decisions that we make, if we aren't pleased with ourselves, then we can't win.

So let's talk about the three main reasons that we do it in the first place, because I want first for us to show some grace and compassion to ourselves and understand why we do this. I'm always going to teach you why we're doing what we're doing because whenever we get caught in judgment, we just start beating ourselves up for doing something we don't want to do, we lose our ability to make any change.

We can't change behaviors when we're judging them. So let's understand why we're doing this. The first reason we're doing it is because our brain is wired to want acceptance. It's a survival mechanism.

If you haven't listened to the episode that I did on the Motivational Triad, go back and listen to that one. Our brain wants to be part of the clan. It wants to not experience rejection because it associates rejection with the risk of death.

Our primitive brain just hasn't caught up with the times. And that's okay. We don't need it to. We just need to notice that sometimes we have an

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irrational fear of rejection and our brain is going to want to offer that we should do things to be accepted. So it's just there.

Another reason is that, especially as women, we've been conditioned to believe that it's our job to please other people, that we should go along to get along. We have been taught that this is the way, that we should edit our own opinions.

We've been marinating in a culture that, although it's changing, has sent us these messages for a number of years. And so we tend to believe that what we want is less important than what other people want, what we think is less important than what other people think and that we should put ourselves last. We should put everyone else first before ourselves.

So we've got a brain that's wired to want acceptance. We're conditioned socially to believe that, as females, it's our job to make other people happy, and now we're going to throw in some grief fun in the mix and complicate things, as if it weren't difficult enough already.

Now, we throw in the grief. So now it's even more messy because our entire foundation has been rocked. We're likely struggling with more overwhelm and stress and worry than anxiety than we've ever had before. And we might be experiencing less self-confidence than we've ever had. We might just be realizing that much of our self-confidence came from our thoughts about our relationship, our identity as a couple, our husband's belief in us.

And so we want to feel valued and we want to feel accepted and loved in an entirely new way. We're feeling lonelier than ever. I'm generalizing here. You're going to be in a unique space. I don't know exactly where that is, but I'm just generalizing what I see. And depending on where you are in your grief, it's going to be different from you.

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You might still be in that stage where you are depleted physically, where it's just physical exhaustion. The impact of grief on your body is still felt, and sometimes you want to go along just to get along because you're so tired of thinking you have – your bandwidth to make decisions is so limited that it just requires less energy in the moment to figure out our own opinion and it's just easier to just go with what the other person wants, even if it's not what we want, we just acquiesce.

And we might even be telling ourselves we don't know what our opinion is. This happens all the time, that we don't know what our preferences are or who we are or what we want. And we think all of these thoughts about not knowing who we are and what we want and we actually block ourselves from the inner knowing that does exist, and that prevents us from taking the kinds of action that would help us figure out what we want and who we are. That's probably a whole podcast episode on its own.

So I want you to show yourself some grace when it comes to people pleasing. There's no sense in making yourself feel bad if you relate to this. There's a reason for it – reasons. Our brain is wired to want that acceptance. We're conditioned socially to please others and then we complicate things with grief. So let's be kind and compassionate and understanding to ourselves for how we got here in the first place. And then we can talk about what we can do about it.

So, obviously, people pleasing doesn't actually work, and we want to get out of this pattern when we can. So first we have to be honest with ourselves about what people pleasing is and isn't. People pleasing just isn't possible. It doesn't actually work. The only way it could work is if we could think other people's thoughts and create their feelings because, I've taught you in other episodes, that our thoughts cause our feelings.

Feelings aren't contagious. I can't make you feel anything and you can't make me feel anything. Unless I could jump into your brain and somehow

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program your thoughts, I cannot control your feelings. But most of us don't know this. And so first, we have to acknowledge it. We can't actually make people feel happy. Impossible. Only they can do that with their thoughts.

And so it doesn't matter if you are the best chameleon in the world, people are still going to think whatever they will, and there's nothing we can do about it. My teacher, Brooke Castillo teaches that people pleasers are liars. And it sounds a little harsh when she says it, but she's right.

I think it comes from a good place though. It's not like we wake up and we're like, "You know, I'm just going to be really dishonest today." That's not what it is. But when we are trying to people please, when we are putting other people's opinions over our own, it is dishonest because we're acting as though we think something that we don't.

We're being a chameleon. And we're doing it because we're trying to control the thoughts and feelings of other people. I look back on all the people pleasing I've done in the past and I'm still working on it. I know that every time I've done it, my inclination was to try to control what other people thought of me so that I didn't have to face my own self-doubt inducing thoughts because my brain would tell me, and still tells me, "If they like me, I can like me. If they agree with me, I can agree with me."

That isn't how it works. It really doesn't matter what other people think of me. What other people think of me, honestly, is none of my business. And this is how I know; if my brain and your brain is thinking a thought and convinced that it is true, that makes me feel self-doubt, then it doesn't really matter what someone else thinks, feels, says to me.

They may think amazing things about me, but their positive thoughts about me will not stick for me. They will not stick for me if I disagree, if I'm thinking other thoughts. If you haven't listened to the episode I did on cognitive bias, this is what I'm talking about.

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Your brain will just keep finding evidence that matches your thoughts about yourself. So if someone gives you a compliment but your belief is that it's not true, you won't be able to accept the compliment. You will excuse it. You will dismiss it. You will say, well, "If they really knew the truth about me, they wouldn't see that. If they could see what a hot mess I am, they wouldn't say that. They're just saying that to be nice. They don't really mean it. If they knew the real me, they would change their minds."

So the answer never lies outside of us, and that's because the problem never lies outside of us, right? the core of what we're seeking, which is to feel better when we try to people please, is only available by changing our own brain. There is no amount of doing what other people want us to do or being the person we think other people want us to be that ever results in our feeling the way we want to feel.

Because if our beliefs don't line up, if we don't actually think about ourselves in the ways that generate the feelings that we want to feel, if we don't think thoughts that create self-confidence, if we don't create worth with our brain, we will never find it outside of ourselves. But it makes sense why we're trying to get it.

We think we need that validation from some external source, but the truth is, our brain won't accept it. And even if we get it, it won't stick. It has to be an inside job. It's always been.

So I want you to ask yourself, how often am I thinking about making someone else's opinion more important than mine? How often am I thinking about putting what is important to someone else over what is important to me? How often am I trying to control what other people think of me and why?

Why should the preferences of others be more important than my own preferences? And the truth of that answer, for most of us, is because we're

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just worried that we might actually agree with someone else's negative thoughts about us because nobody's taught us how to manage our mind.

Nobody has taught us how to believe on purpose. Nobody has taught us that all those terrible things we think about ourselves don't actually have to be our reality. Nobody's taught us how powerful our brain is. So we're left perpetually trying to people please and feeling perpetually frustrated because even when we get the validation that we want, it doesn't stick and we don't like who we are in the process of getting it.

And then, of course, the next question to ask is, what is it that I want to think and feel that's really at the root of all of this people pleasing? What is the feeling that I really want to have? And what would I need to believe to create that for myself? Because that's the root cause, there is a feeling you want and you think that you can't have it unless other people think and feel about you in a particular way. That's all it is.

So I want to offer you three steps to this, to dealing differently with a habit or a tendency to people please. The first one is just to become more aware. Become more aware of when your brain is offering you thoughts that you should choose someone else's opinion over yours and just show some compassion to your brain when it does that, to yourself when you notice that.

Understand that it's just an outdated survival mechanism and it's totally okay. And in order to change it, you're going to have to feel uncomfortable. So you're going to feel uncomfortable when you start putting your opinion and yourself higher on the list, and that's okay, that's just the way of it. So become more aware of how often it's happening, what's going on in your brain. That's step number one.

Step number two, tell yourself the truth. Be honest with yourself. You can't actually cause other people's feelings. You can't think their thoughts.

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they're going to think their thoughts and feel their feelings with or without our permission, whether we like it or not. But we can choose to show up as us.

And let them think and feel however they choose. They're going to do it anyway. We might as well be the version of us that we want to be and let them have their thoughts about it because they're going to have their thoughts anyway.

I've told this story before but, you know, I've been told online – there's some really interesting characters online and, you know, that I prey on widows. Okay, it doesn't matter, if somebody has decided that I prey on widows, it doesn't matter what I do. That's a thought and opinion that they have and maybe they've had a bad experience with being taken advantage of and that's where that's coming from.

I don't know, but I know who I am and the type of work that I do and why I do it and what's in my heart and I know that I'm not preying on widows, so I can just let them think that. I don't even need to change it. And I certainly don't need to let it influence who I am and how I show up in the world, and you don't either.

But we have to be honest and tell ourselves the truth first, which is that we can't control other people's thoughts and feelings. There's nothing we can ever do to think their thoughts for them. It's just impossible.

And then thirdly, notice what it is that you really want and give yourself permission to have it. What is the thought or feeling that you're wanting to have? What do you have to believe to generate the emotion that you want? It's coming from your mind. If you want to believe you're a good mom and you think that you need to act or behave in a certain way or get somebody else's approval for you to believe that, I promise you, you don't have to.

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It won't work. If you want to believe you're a good mom, you can, even – and this might blow your mind – if you've just yelled at your kid. Even if you just yelled at your child and lost your patience and anger fueled your behavior, you can still decide to believe you're a good mom, and in doing so, that will be what helps you not yell the next time. That will be what helps you become an even better mom.

And that doesn't need to come from anybody else but from inside of your mind. If you want to believe that you're a kind person, you can. You can choose to do that. And when you do, you'll be even more kind. If you want to believe you have it together, if you want to believe you're organized, you can choose to do that, and then, when you do, you'll be even more together.

You'll be even more organized. You can actually just decide that you know what's best for you. You can choose that belief. You don't need my permission. You don't need anyone's permission. You don't even need any evidence. You just need to choose what you want to think about yourself, and then guess what will happen; you'll go create more of that and you'll start to see evidence of how it's true and you'll create more of what you want and be more of who you want to be.

Meanwhile, other people are just out there having their own opinions and their own thoughts and their own feelings and it's all okay, and you can relax. And you can let people think what they think and feel what they feel because they're going to do it anyway.

Alright, you picking up what I'm putting down, friends? I get a little riled up on this one, only because I have really just struggled with it myself for so long and I am so good at being a chameleon, or I have been, and it has been such a challenge for me to really put my opinions higher on the list, not just be who I think people want me to be but be who I want to be.

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And I think that we just get this one chance to live the one life that we want. And we want to show up authentically as us because hiding who we are and what we want, it doesn't serve us, it doesn't serve the world. Playing small, being a chameleon, it doesn't help you. It doesn't help anyone else. And I think that the most amazing version of you is the one who is honest about who she is and what she wants. Not perfect; honest.

And it's totally okay to feel uncomfortable as you learn to figure out how to be more honest and to step into that next version of you. Alright, if you want more help with stuff like this, this is the kind of work we're doing in Mom Goes On, in my six-month group coaching program. This is the kind of work that I love, love, love to do.

So if you want more information on that, you can just go to my website [coachingwithkrista.com](http://coachingwithkrista.com) and you can request a call, apply, see if the program is a good fit, alright. So I'm going to go get on a plane. I'm going to go fly and see some of my friends and meet some new friends and do what I love to do, which is to coach.

So, remember, I love you, you've got this, and I'll see you next week. Take care.

Ready to start building a future you can actually look forward to? Get a free copy of Krista's Love Your Life Again Game Plan, and learn her three-step process so you can stop feeling stuck and start creating your next great chapter. No matter what you've been through, your past does not have to define what's possible in your future.

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