

Ep #28: The Word “Widow”



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With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 28, The Word “Widow”.

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, everybody, welcome back to another episode of the podcast. So, I record these a little bit early, but to those of you who think that I have it all together, I just want to offer you that right now, in my living room, there are three holidays happening.

The Christmas tree is up, however, the ledge on the top of the living room still looks like fall, and there is a Halloween painting still on a shelf that requires a ladder. So, I just want to offer that what’s going on in my neck of the woods is we’re just having holiday everything right now, but I’m going to get that taken care of later, after I get this podcast recorded – y’all come first – before the holidays.

I also want to tell you – I know you’ve heard me talk about it – I am loving my Mom Goes On group coaching program. We’re only, gosh, this is four weeks in and it is amazing in there. Every time I go and I look in our online community and I look at what people are posting or I get on a group coaching call, it just warms my heart so much.

And I knew this would happen. I knew how powerful group coaching would be because, having coached widows for so long in a one on one environment, I know what you guys are struggling with and I know how often you think you’re alone in that struggle. And, of course, your circumstances are unique, your experiences are unique, but I knew the value of getting you collectively together in a supporting and encouraging environment, giving you the tools that you need to truly create a life that you love.

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And it's work, I'm not going to lie. The women in that group, they're doing the work. They're showing up for the coaching calls, they really are grabbing the bull by the horns and deciding what they want to get out of life. But I am so proud of them and having so much fun with it and couldn't think of a better way to roll into 2020 with a group like this.

So if that's something you're interested in, you should definitely go and apply. It's application only. This is serious work. I make it easy for you, but you've got to do the work. So, application only, you just go to coachingwithkrista.com, hit the request a consultation button, and that will take you to the application. You fill that out.

I review them all personally. If it seems like a good fit, then I'll let you know and we'll schedule a time to get on the phone and get all of your questions answered, make sure it really is a good fit. And if it's not, then I'll just send you some other resources that might be a better fit for what you need.

Anyway, alright, let's jump in and talk about the word widow because, holy cow, there are a whole lot of different responses and reactions to this word. When I was thinking about doing the podcast episode, I decided to ask on my Facebook page what people thought about the word widow.

And I got all kinds of different responses. Some people absolutely hate it. Some people are very proud of it. Some people avoid using it at all. Some people have fully embraced it. It definitely was polarizing, this word widow, which was so fascinating to me because, really, it's just a word.

So, I know, for me, I've been using the word widow now for three years, over three years, and I remember early on after Hugo died, I was 40 when he died, I really could not see myself as a widow. In my mind, a widow was older. My grandmother was a widow, not me.

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You know, I was a young woman in my mind, and to me I kept trying to find a different word to describe – I remember Googling, “Woman whose husband died unexpectedly,” and trying to figure out, like, surely there was another word for that because I couldn’t relate to women who had spent their entire lives with their husbands. Again, that was my grandmother. And I felt like I had still so much life left to live and being young surely didn’t qualify me as a widow.

It even took me a while to look for support with that term. I couldn’t really even see myself Googling it. So the struggle is fascinating with this word. When I polled people on Facebook, what I found out was exactly what I expected; that everyone has a different feeling about it. Some believe it’s sad and means we should be wearing black and that it means that the best years of our lives are over.

And some people really just haven’t accepted that their partner’s died and so they don’t view themselves as a widow. They are rejecting that term because they’re rejecting the loss. Some people are worrying about how other people interpret the word widow. They think it has connotations of pity and, if they use it, that they’re doing it because they’re trying to get pity from others or trying to go fishing for help or support and they don’t want to be seen as weak, and therefore they avoid that word.

One woman – and this was so true, it just made me laugh – said it reminded her of how, on Little House on the Prairie they used to put the word widow in front of the woman’s last name, like Widow Sanderson. Do you remember that? I had completely forgotten about that until she mentioned it, but it’s so true that it used to be used as a moniker that actually went in front of a person’s last name; the Widow St-Germain, which I just kind of love now. My perspective clearly has changed over the three years.

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But I wonder how you feel when you think about the word widow. What is the emotion that comes to you when you think about that word? I want to talk about that, and then I want to talk about the real truth behind the word, so that if you don't like the way that you see it, you have something else to consider.

So, how is it that you feel when you think about the word widow? Does it make you feel sad? Maybe it makes you feel angry. Maybe you're still feeling angry because you're thinking that this wasn't what you planned, this wasn't how your life was supposed to go down. Maybe you're angry at your husband.

I have a lot of listeners and clients whose husbands or partners died by suicide. Maybe you're angry with him. Maybe you're angry with god or whatever your religious beliefs are. Maybe you're feeling just disappointed. Maybe some of us feel guilty when we think about the word widow. Maybe you think it's your fault and that there was something that you could have done or should have done.

Maybe you feel resigned. You've accepted it happened, you don't like it but it kind of is what it is, so it just comes with this feeling of resignation. Or maybe you're in a place where you feel just kind of neutral, it's kind of not a thing anymore, you don't really give it much thought, it's just a term. Maybe you associate yourself with it but it doesn't really define you and so it doesn't really have an emotional charge when you think about it.

Maybe you feel grateful when you hear the word. Maybe you love that you had the chance to be in a committed relationship or in a marriage with your person and you're so grateful that they crossed your path and that you got to do life with them. Or maybe you feel proud because you know what you've been through and you're so proud of how you've handled it, how you've come out stronger, how resilient you've been, how you've stepped up and been a mom as you grieved.

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Here’s the real truth though. The word widow doesn’t cause any of these feelings. It doesn’t cause feelings at all, actually. That’s not what words do. The word widow is just a word.

I looked it up in Merriam-Webster and the definition that I found there was, “A woman who has lost her spouse or partner by death, and usually has not remarried.” That’s it.

So, this definition doesn’t have anything to do with age. It doesn’t reflect the way a woman’s husband died, or partner. It doesn’t have anything to do with whether or not she has or hasn’t accepted it. It doesn’t mean she’s stuck or that she’s moving forward. It doesn’t mean she is fishing for anything. It doesn’t mean she should be pitied. It doesn’t mean she should be, or necessarily is, any particular feeling.

It just simply means a woman who has lost her spouse or partner by death and usually has not remarried. So, what does cause this strong emotional reaction that people have? It’s just our thinking. It’s just that we each think differently about the word and so we have a different experience of it. That’s all it is. It’s really nothing any more complicated with that.

It’s just like anything else in our physical world. Things outside of us don’t cause our feelings. It’s the way that we interpret those things that creates our emotional experience of them. And the word widow is just a fantastic example of that principle in action; thoughts creating emotions.

Because the word is the same, right? Five letters, widow, it’s the same word for everyone and yet, when I ask, I get comment after comment after comment and all of them are incredibly different, wildly varying. But the word is just five letters put together.

And that’s the good news that I have for you. Whether you hate the word, love the word, whatever, that’s all caused by what’s going on in your brain,

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which means the word in and of itself has no power over us, ladies, none. It can't make us feel anything and if we don't like the way that we feel when we think that word or think about that word, then we can change the way we think about it.

We can decide on purpose what we want to make it mean. And this is what I want to offer to you that you can do. You can decide what it means to be a widow. You can decide that it means that you're strong and resilient, or independent, that you're brave, courageous. You can make it mean that you loved someone with everything that you had. You can make it mean that you're a person that now knows what's important to her, that you are a woman who can let the little things roll off her back like water off a duck.

We get to decide. You can make it mean that you loved fiercely and without apology until the very end. For some of us, it means that we're someone who has empathy and love for those around us because now we've had a hard time, now we know what it's like to have a broken heart, now we know what it feels like to have your heart cracked wide open.

And so we have so much empathy and love for those around us who are hurting on a level we never had before. And some of us now know ourselves on a much deeper level, a more spiritual level than ever before because we've had the walls crumble down to the foundation, and that, believe it or not, is an opportunity that a lot of people don't have, when everything does come crashing down, when even the foundation itself is shaken, you really get to examine, what do I believe?

If you've gone through life and you've just been accepting whatever beliefs you picked up along the way, as most of us do – who knows where they came from, society, parents, school, who knows – we don't really give them a lot of thought. We didn't really question them.

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And something like becoming a widow gives you, whether or not you asked for it, the opportunity to evaluate, to choose on purpose instead of just regurgitating the same unconscious beliefs that you've been thinking for who knows how long.

So maybe the word widow means you really do know the answers to the hard questions because you have asked them and you have come up with your own answers. Why are we here? What do I want out of life? What is the purpose of my life? How can I create a life that I love?

So those are all options. You don't have to choose the sad lonely rejected wearing black Widow Sanderson options, right? You can choose to believe that widowed means strong and amazing and capable and resilient.

I also think it's interesting that the word widowed really doesn't have anything to do with one's availability, as it were. So I think it's interesting that you can view yourself as widowed and still married, or widowed but also single, or widowed and remarried, right?

I know, for me, I'm at that point where, for a long time, I viewed myself as widowed and still married to my late husband. And now I'm kind of seeing myself as widowed but also single, even though I'm not currently dating. That's probably a whole lot of other episodes, not that there's anything wrong with it, but I just haven't chosen to date yet myself.

But I do view myself as emotionally available. So I'm kind of widowed but single. And I imagine for me that should the day come when I get remarried, I'll still probably always view myself as a widow, but also married, right?

And Hugo was my second husband, so I know what it's like now to be divorced, and widowed, and yet oddly single. And I don't think there's any right or wrong in any of it. It's just personal preference.

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You get to decide how you want to see yourself. I also think it's fascinating that what we tend to do with marital status and social media – I never changed mine. I still show married. When will I change it? I don't know. But right now, I haven't memorialized Hugo's Facebook page. I don't really want to do that, at least not right now. I might change my mind.

But for the longest time, I definitely didn't want to call myself a widow on social media because I worried it would open myself up to a lot of creepy people who are out there looking for that and kind of trying to pull one over on someone they perceive might be emotionally frail. And I just wasn't interested in that.

I also just felt proud of being Hugo's wife and really didn't see myself as anything but his wife and so I just wanted to keep it. So, to each their own. You get to decide.

And that's what I want to leave you with, right? The conclusion really is that the word widow sparks so many different emotions for different people simply because each human has their own thoughts about the world. Everyone feels, and therefore thinks, differently about the word widow, which is why it creates a different experience for different people.

And the good news there is that we get to decide for ourselves. The word doesn't cause our feelings. It has no power over us. It has no power in it. And I want you to decide on purpose. Decide on purpose if you want to use this term. Decide on purpose, how do you want to feel when you use this term? It's totally up to you.

No one can tell you what this word means or how you should feel about it. decide for yourself and do it powerfully, alright? Okay, so, if you're benefitting from this podcast, would you do other widows a favor and share it?

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If you're on Instagram, tag me, @lifecoachkrista – I would love to see it. and that just really helps other people find the podcast and that's going to help us accomplish the goal of reaching a million women with this podcast. That's my goal, a million widows.

Alright, that's what I have for you today. I hope you have an amazing week. Alright, remember, I love you, and you've got this. I'll see you next week. Take care, everybody, bye-bye.

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.

Text the word PLAN to 1-858-widows-1, or visit coachingwithkrista.com/plan and get Krista's Love Your Life Again Game Plan delivered straight to your inbox. A future you love is still possible and you are worth it. Text the word PLAN to 1-858-widows-1, or visit coachingwithkrista.com/plan and get your free game plan today.