

Ep #33: Forgiveness



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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 33, Forgiveness.

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 another episode of the podcast. We're going to talk about forgiveness today because there seems to be a lot of suffering around this subject and a lot of misunderstanding about forgiveness, what it is, what it isn't, when it's appropriate. And a lot of people ask me when they should forgive. And so we're going to talk about that too.

I'm also going to tell you some of my stories as it relates to forgiveness in hopes that will be of use to you. So, before we do that though, I want to read a podcast review. And if this podcast is valuable to you, if you like it, I would sure be grateful to read your review in Apple Podcasts or wherever you're listening to the podcast.

But this one comes from Apple Podcasts and it's from a listener whose name I hope I'm pronouncing correctly, is Zaynab1398. And the title is My Favorite Podcast Hands Down. And Zaynab wrote, "I was thrilled to come across a podcast addressing the unique experience of widowed moms; women who've lost their husbands at a young age and are raising their children alone when that just wasn't part of the plan. Krista is warm, caring, smart, and funny. And her lived experience as a widowed mom is proof that it's possible for women to go on after such a tragic loss and actually find joy and happiness. This is something I desperately needed to hear after my own loss. I look forward to Krista's newsletters and weekly uploads and have learned so much from her organized thoughtful approach. Best of luck to Krista and her listeners."

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Zaynab, thank you so much. Really, truly, it feels like sometimes I'm talking to no one on this podcast. It's a very strange thing. So reading your reviews and actually hearing from you as a listener means a lot to me. And it helps me understand what you like and what you don't like and how I can make the podcast better. So thank you for all of you who have taken time to write a review. I just really appreciate them.

Okay, so, forgiveness, here's the deal; I think we misunderstand forgiveness a lot, so I want to talk first about what it is, and what it isn't. Forgiveness is something that we do for ourselves. It's something we do when we are ready to let go of anger and let go of resentment. It's not something that we do for another person.

Not forgiving another person doesn't actually hurt the other person. It hurts us. We are the only ones that ever experience the anger and resentment that is present when we haven't forgiven. And you'll know, from future podcasts, or prior podcasts I should say, that I teach, that our thoughts are what cause our feelings. Our thoughts cause our emotions.

So if we are feeling angry or resentful, or if we're feeling hurt, another person can't actually feel those feelings. They are ours and ours alone. So, so often, we hold onto a grudge. We hold onto a story that is causing ourselves hurt because we think that it's somehow hurting the other person. And when we're hurting, sometimes we want to hurt others. And so we think that by not forgiving, we are in some way punishing someone else, that if we feel good then they won't feel bad. And if we want them to feel bad, then we think that we need to feel bad so that they'll feel bad.

But really, what's happening is that our thoughts are causing our feelings and their thoughts are causing their feelings. And so our feeling bad doesn't actually make them feel bad.

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Another thing we get wrong about forgiveness is that we think that in order for us to forgive, that the other person needs to be remorseful, that they need to apologize, they need to express regret, they need to somehow show us that they have remorse for whatever has happened in order for us to forgive them. And this simply just isn't true.

The other person's thoughts about whatever it was that has happened are really not relevant at all to our choice to forgive or not. In fact, the other person doesn't really need to know anything about it. It's not something we have to tell them about. It's not something we have to share with them. It's not something we have to discuss with them. It's really just a decision that we can make in our own mind because we don't want to feel angry or resentful. We don't want to carry around those heavy emotions anymore. We want to let them go.

We also confuse forgiveness with behaviors. So just because we forgive someone, doesn't mean we have to behave differently in any way. We can forgive someone and we don't have to spend time with them. We don't have to have a conversation with them. We don't have to invite them over for dinner or for the holidays. We don't have to start involving them in events. We don't have to be involved, in any way, in someone's life in order to forgive them. They don't even have to know about it.

And they don't even have to be alive. We can forgive someone who is deceased. Forgiveness comes from our thinking, which means it can be very one-sided. It happens in our mind. And sometimes, it might look, from a behavioral perspective, as though we have forgiven someone when in fact we haven't.

We might say to ourselves, "Well I've forgiven them." Or we might tell other people, "Well, I've forgiven them." But really, we're still walking around feeling resentful or angry and carrying that with us and just kind of faking it

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and behaving as though we feel love towards someone when we really don't, when we are actually kind of seething about it.

So, please don't confuse forgiveness with behaviors. We also seem to think that forgiveness is akin to condoning someone's behavior. And so we will hold ourselves back from offering forgiveness. We'll hold onto anger and resentment we really don't want to carry because we think that if we forgive someone then what we're also saying is, "What you did was okay and you can do it again." And we worry that that will turn us into a doormat, that that will put us at risk of being hurt.

So now that you understand what forgiveness is and what it isn't – it's something that we do for ourselves when we are ready to let go of anger, to let go of resentment. It has really nothing to do with the other person. It has nothing to do with our behaviors. It has nothing to do with their remorse or lack of remorse. And again, a reminder that emotions aren't contagious. Whatever we are feeling is only for us to feel.

And so when we're feeling angry, the other person isn't. It's just us. And this is why we suffer so much around forgiveness because we just misunderstand it.

So, I want to tell you a little bit about my experience with forgiveness, and then I want to give you five steps, or five things to think about as you go about a decision to forgive.

So, for me, there are really two main things that stick out as I think about forgiveness as it relates to my husband Hugo's death. So, if you've listened to the podcast you'll have heard me talk about this, but Hugo died after an accident that was caused by someone who had alcohol and meth in his system.

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He was changing the tire on my car and the driver was intoxicated, did not brake. I have no idea what was going on in his mind but he ran right into the back of my husband's Durango at full interstate speed, no brakes. I don't know his intentions. I don't know what was happening in his life before. But as you can imagine, I was pretty mad for a while.

And at a certain point, I decided, for me, I didn't want to be mad because there was no value in it for my life. It didn't contribute in any way to my life. Now, did I condone his behavior? No. Did I not want to see him receive the punishments that our law offers? No. I wanted him to pay the price, legally speaking, for what he had done. I wanted him to not think that what he did was okay. I certainly didn't want him to do it to any other family.

But I didn't want to walk around the world being angry and resentful. And so it was a decision that I made to forgive him. And I had the opportunity to do that in person at his hearing, or trial – obviously, I'm not an attorney so I don't remember, I don't know what you call it. But basically, you have the chance to speak your mind.

And I think we were actually supposed to speak to the judge as opposed to him. But I decided to speak to him in that courtroom. And I had no idea how he would be. I'd never met him, obviously. And he seemed quite remorseful to me. But it really didn't matter. I had decided before I met him, I had written out what I wanted to say and I had decided that it really didn't matter what he thought about it. I knew what I wanted to tell him.

And what I basically wanted to tell him, the Reader's Digest version is that I forgave him, that I didn't think that he did it on purpose, that I wanted him to know what an amazing life he had ended, but that I also didn't want it to define his life going forward.

I wanted him to learn the lesson and move forward because that's what I think all of us as humans want to do. That's what life is all about. None of

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us are perfect. He made a mistake. I hoped he would be remorseful for it. I hoped he would learn from it. And I hoped he would move forward and do it with my husband in mind. And that was my choice.

And the second thing that I had to work through for forgiveness had to do with what happened at the hospital. So, long story again, Reader's Digest. And I know that if you're listening, you probably have your own stories. Maybe they are similar.

But in the hospital, when they were working so hard to save Hugo, there was a procedure that didn't go well. And without going into a lot of details, the doctor came in after Hugo had died and basically apologized. And he was – you could tell – heartbroken, very upset. And I think he did everything he could do.

I think, of course, at the time in the room, my family had lots of mixed reactions. It wasn't just me. Family members were basically accusing the doctor of killing my husband and it was not pretty, let's just say that. But he basically said, "Something didn't go right. We tried, tried as hard as we could." And he felt awful.

And I could have been really angry about that for a long, long time. And I think a lot of people, like if I would tell the details of that story, might agree, might say, "Yeah, you're justified in feeling angry." But it doesn't really matter. And that's what I want to offer you.

Whether or not we feel we're justified to feel a certain way, still doesn't make it feel good. Feeling justified actually feels kind of terrible. I didn't want that. I also sincerely believed that that medical team did try their best. I don't think any of them intended for something to go wrong. I think sometimes these things happen and I didn't want to carry that around. I didn't want them to carry that around. And so that's what I decided to do is

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to not carry that anger or resentment around, because I don't want that heaviness in my heart.

I know how it feels. I know how it influences me. I know what a different person I am when I'm acting from anger or feeling resentment and just carrying the weight of it. and I don't want that for me. And I don't want that for you.

So if you're asking yourself, should you forgive? It's up to you. It's not a moral issue. It's a decision about how you want to feel. Yes, I realize that there are lots of opinions and religious texts about the subject and whether it is morally right or wrong. But I want to offer that thinking about it as a moral issue isn't going to serve you.

You will know that you want to forgive if, for yourself, you don't want to carry around those heavy emotions. You'll want to be able to move forward without them. That's when you can decide to forgive. You know I'm not a fan of the word should. I don't think it's all that useful. Kind of a red flag for me.

Forgive if you want to let go of anger and resentment. And you will know if you have truly forgiven, not based on your behavior. You will know based on how you feel in your body. Only you will know.

So, should you, if you want to let go of anger and resentment? Have you? Only you know. Okay, let me offer you a couple of things to consider here, five specifically. So first, I want you to just ask yourself, am I feeling anger and resentment? One or the other, am I feeling that? Become aware because you may not notice – sometimes we walk around, especially with resentment, and it's just kind of like an underlying backburner feeling that just simmers and we don't even really ever – it doesn't have peaks and valleys. It's just kind of a steady presence. And so we don't really give it much thought or know that it's there.

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So I want you to go looking around in your life for it. Is it still there? Because you may think it's not. And once you look, you may find that it is. So ask yourself, am I feeling anger or resentment? Increase your awareness there.

Then, if you are, ask yourself, am I ready to stop? Am I ready to let go of this for my sake? Am I ready to give myself this gift? And if the answer to that is yes, then look for the thoughts that are causing those feelings because all thoughts, they're all optional. We can change any of them.

And so if you have a thought or thoughts that are causing you to feel angry or resentful, it's time to take a look and decide. Because, clearly, if you want to let it go, those thoughts aren't serving you. And in order for you to create something else, you're going to need to think about what has happened differently. So that's the fourth part is that you actually want to decide how you intentionally want to think so that you no longer feel the anger and resentment.

Make a conscious choice. All options for thoughts are on the table of all the thousands of ways for you to look at what happened, choose it on purpose. For me, I just always choose to believe people do the best with what they know. Nobody waked up in the morning trying to suck at life.

If you are drinking and using meth on a Sunday evening at five o'clock, something in your life is not going well and you are coping the best way you know how. And that's what I chose to believe about the man who caused the accident, that his life was not going swimmingly. He had a record of other things, but I think he was doing the best he could with what he knew, even though it fell terribly short of my expectations.

So, ask yourself, am I feeling anger and resentment? If it's there, find it. Decide, do I want to stop? If you do, what are the thoughts causing me to feel angry or resentful? And then decide how you want to think on purpose.

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Then, once you've done that, you can decide how you want to behave. Remember that how we think, if we think and forgive, doesn't determine how we behave. So you decide on purpose, do you want this person in your life?

Do you want to tell them that you've forgiven them? You don't have to. You don't have to have that person in your life and you don't have to have any reason other than, "I don't. I don't want them in my life." That can be your only reason, and that is good enough. If you like, write a letter to that person to let them know your thoughts and your feelings. Give it to them or don't, your choice.

So, in summary, ask yourself, am I feeling angry or resentful? Become aware. Decide, do I want to stop? Figure out the thoughts causing the anger and resentment. Replace them on purpose. And then decide how you want to behave. There's no reason that we have to carry around anger or resentment or any feeling that we don't want to feel.

We don't have to be victims of anything that has happened in our past, it really is our choice. It's not a moral issue. It's not a right or wrong thing. It is you deciding, how do you want to feel in this one precious life that you have, alright?

That's what I have for you this week. I hope you're doing amazing. I hope your January is off to a great start. And, you know, just remember, I love you, you've got this, and I'll see you next week. Take care, 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.

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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.