

Ep #64: 2 Circles to Loving Your Life



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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 64, 2 Circles to Loving Your Life.

Welcome to the *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 truly look forward to. Here's your host, Master Certified Life Coach, grief expert, widow, and mom, Krista St-Germain.

Hey there, welcome to another episode of the podcast. If this is your first time joining me then welcome. I'm glad you're here. So, I want to tell you a little bit about what's going on in my life. And then, I'm going to teach you a tool which I think is really, really valuable. It's simple, but it's valuable and it's going to help you love your life more.

So, today is the fourth deathiversary of my late husband Hugo's passing. And I record these podcasts just a little bit in advance. But today is the fourth deathiversary. And I just wanted to tell you a little bit about what my experience was like today so far. It's the middle of the afternoon.

And because not that my experience is necessarily going to be your experience. It probably won't. But because I think sometimes people look to me as someone who teaches about grief and who teaches about feelings and teaches about intentional thinking and changing beliefs and all the things that I teach as a life coach and get the mistakes idea that somehow I don't have the same emotional experiences as other non-coach people, which is just not true at all.

It's not true at all. I just now have a different set of skills that allows me to have less suffering when my pain exists. But pain still exists. It's just part of the human experience. So, today it's interesting, I wasn't really thinking all that much about it. Yesterday was the accident anniversary, and then today was the actual day that he died four years ago.

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And I've kind of been thinking about it off and on over the last little bit. Of course, it feels like such a strange time right now, even though it is summer, it hasn't felt that way, or it just hasn't felt normal with COVID and everybody staying at home. Everything's felt a little off. Heather's Camp wasn't in-person. It was remote. And so, that's usually a huge part of my summer. And no summer traveling, it's very strange.

So, anyway, I think part of that makes it just a little bit different than normal. Maybe you can relate to that. But going into it, I hadn't really been all that worried about it. I haven't really been too stressed about it. It's just kind of another opportunity for me to allow feelings.

This morning, I woke up, I was feeling pretty good as it related to the deathiversary. I was feeling a little bit stressed thinking about all that's on my plate today. It is a Saturday, but I'm leaving town tomorrow with my children and we're going to the mountains for a week. And, of course, the day before vacation, you decide all the things need to get done.

And so, I scheduled all the things for today, including a couple of coaching calls. I don't usually do those on weekends. But I wanted to make sure that my group gets coached and doesn't get impacted by my vacation. So, I was just feeling a little bit stressed.

So, I decided to do a little bit of tapping. Because tapping, also called emotional freedom technique, is just such a great thing in my life. It helps me so much. And so, I got the Tapping Solution app, which I highly recommend. There's no kickback in it for me. Although if I could become an affiliate, I absolutely would because I just believe in that app so much.

But I grabbed the Tapping Solution app. I went back and I sat on my back porch and I opened up the overwhelm exercise, which is a good go-to for me, and started tapping. And when I started, I rated my overwhelm at a

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seven, on a scale of one to 10 where 10 is high. I was starting at about a seven and I started tapping, and in the middle of tapping, I get a text from my dad. I love my dad, you guys.

I get a text from my dad that just basically said, “I think about you every day, but especially today,” and some hearts. Just the most thoughtful text. And so, I just literally burst into tears. Like here they came, out came the tears. And I put my phone down and I just went right back to tapping. And I just let it all be there. I let all the thoughts come up. All the feelings come up. I didn’t try to hold them back. I didn’t judge myself for having them. I just let them be with me and I acknowledged that in that moment, they were the truth of how I felt and I went through tapping and I just kept going.

And I didn’t time it, but I went long after the app actually stopped because I could tell I still had some things that just didn’t feel resolved yet to me. And so, I just kept tapping, maybe 10 minutes, I’m not really sure. But after I was done, I was down to a zero on the one to 10 scale. I felt like I had released it, what needed to be given its do was given its do.

And so, that’s my experience these days. The first year, it was the whole day was just – all the days leading up to that day were no fun. The actual day itself was just blah. And now, I’ve just learned that it’s okay. Whatever it is, whatever feelings come up for me, whatever thoughts come up for me, I don’t need to argue with them. They don’t mean anything about my healing, my relationship with him.

And sometimes, I just process the feelings that come up and then I move about. And that’s what happened for me today. 10 minutes of giving it some time and I did what I needed to do and I felt lighter and better. And I kind of decided, as I was tapping, how I wanted my day to go and how I wanted to show up today and how I wanted to coach today, and what I was going to

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create today. I processed what needed to be processed, and then I went about and created my day.

Now, does that mean that every one of us are going to have the exact same experience on the fourth deathiversary? Absolutely not. But I want you to please not judge your own experience. Please don't tell yourself that whatever thoughts and feelings come to you on that day mean something dramatic. Don't let your brain get away with that drama. It's just not necessary.

It's different for every one of us and whatever it is, you'll be able to handle it. But it will be so much more – I don't even want to say more. There will be so much less suffering if you just allow it to be what it is instead of judging it. And that's what I want to offer you.

Okay, let's talk about two circles to loving your life. This is a really simple concept to understand and it is something you can use to seriously change your life. I learned it, sort of, kind of a version of it from Stephen Covey, who wrote *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. And he teaches it a little bit differently than I do. So, I want to explain how he teaches it first, and then I want to explain how I use it, so that you can consider whether you'd like to use it too.

So, he teaches that we can fit everything that we care about in one giant circle. If we could document everything that concerns us and put it all in one circle, there would only be a smaller sub-circle, an inset into that larger circle, that we can actually control.

So, there are things we care about that we cannot impact. For instance, we might care about the weather. But there's really nothing we can do, if it's raining outside, to make it stop raining. We might care about what a

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politician said, but there's really nothing we can do to make that politician say anything differently.

So, there are things that we care about and we have thoughts about and we have feelings about, but only a smaller subset of those things can we actually influence. And Stephen Covey calls this the circle of influence and the circle of concern.

And so, what he taught was that the largest circle is our circle of concern, everything we're concerned about is in that circle, and then the smaller interior circle is the circle of influence. And inside that circle exists the things that we can actually influence.

And what I loved about his teaching – and I think I learned this in my early 20s maybe, was that that inside circle, that circle of influence is never static. Meaning it is always either expanding or it is contracting. And it's doing so, getting bigger or smaller based on where we choose to put our focus.

So, if we put our focus on the things that we can influence and we're concerned about, then our circle of influence increases. It grows. We're able to influence more things. If, in contrast, we put our focus on things we are concerned about but cannot influence – the weather, gravity, politics, et cetera – then we spin our wheels. And as a result of that, our circle of influence shrinks. Does that make sense?

So, our ability to influence is either getting bigger or getting smaller, depending on where we put our energy. So, I love that concept. And as I have become a master certified coach and I have learned so much about coaching and incorporated lots of new things and new tools into my life, new concepts since I was first introduced to Covey's tool, I've kind of

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merged them a little bit in a way that works for me. And that's what I want to share with you.

Because once you understand these two circles in the detail that I'm about to offer them in, and you can simply identify which circle you're in, then you will be positioned to take your power back. You will be positioned to start living your life intentionally. You will know exactly why what you're doing isn't a useful use of your energy and you can switch circles.

So, first I want to explain the details behind the circles so that you'll be able to tell which one you're in, and then we'll take it from there. So, again, same concept. Everything we care about exists inside of this one circle. Everything we do, everything we think, everything we feel exists in this large circle.

Some of the things that we do contribute to our circle of power, and that's the inside circle. That's the one that's either getting bigger or smaller. Some of the things that we think and do don't contribute to our circle of power. They actually take us out of our power. And they take us into that outside circle, which I call the circle of waste. The circle of waste, because it really doesn't take us anywhere. It really doesn't produce any sort of intentional result that might be aligned with our goal.

Instead, it's just kind of a waste of our energy. But sometimes, we think that we're being productive when we're in that outside circle of waste. So, I want to walk you through some of what I see in that circle, so that you can make sure that if you notice you're doing these things, as soon as you catch yourself, you're not mean to yourself about it. You don't berate yourself for doing it. You just pivot. You just get yourself back in your power. You just notice, "I'm doing something that has me in waste and I want to get back to power. So, I'm going to switch gears," and you pivot.

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So, here's what that outside circle of waste looks like. In that outside circle of waste is when we are past-focused. A lot of us spend a tremendous amount of time thinking about the past. Now, sometimes that can be enjoyable because we're remembering happy memories and we're reminiscing and we're feeling nostalgic. And I'm not talking about that.

What I'm talking about is when we continue defining ourselves based on our past, when we limit ourselves based on our past, when we limit what we believe is possible based on what we've accomplished based on our past because we are using the past against ourselves. That's the kind of past-focus I'm talking about. Or when we are focused on the past and retelling an old story that doesn't serve us, that actually makes us less powerful, when we tell a story where we're the victim and we can't see anything good in the story and we can't see anything useful in the story, we're just kind of recycling the same old past-focused story which keeps us stuck in victim land.

That's wasteful if we want to be creating, if we want to be using our time and creating more of what we want then past-focus is useful. Worry, my teacher Brooke always says that worry pretends to be necessary. And when we're worrying, it does kind of feel necessary. But really, it's not so effective.

Good decisions don't come from worry. Productive actions don't come from worry. Worry just gets us all locked up and spinning and second-guessing and full of doubt and doomsday everything. And it really doesn't lead to anything productive. So, worry belongs in that outside circle of waste.

People pleasing belongs in the outside circle of waste. Trying to get other people to approve of us, to like us, is really such a waste of our time. Because the only way we can ever get someone to approve of us or like

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us, honestly, would be that if we could somehow surgically remove or implant thoughts into the brains of other humans.

And because we can't think their thoughts and because their thoughts about us having nothing to do with us and everything to do with them, trying to get their approval is a big far waste of our energy. And really, what we're better served to do is make sure that we're giving ourselves our own approval so that the approval of others just doesn't matter. It just doesn't matter.

When we're spending time in indecision, when we're spending time in confusion, both of which are caused by thoughts in our mind. I don't know. I might make the wrong decision. Ladies, if I could quantify how much time in my life I have spent in confusion and indecision, I would probably have to coach myself on it. It's a lot of time that I have spent there. And we don't need to spend our time there. It's wasteful. It doesn't lead anywhere productive.

Confusion is always just a lie. We're never truly confused unless we listen to the thought that we are. And to kind of lay there in confusion, of course our primitive brain might like it, confusion and indecision. Because those things keep us inactive. Those things keep us safe and in the cave. And in terms of our survival, our primitive brain loves that. It would prefer that we just stay on the couch and don't do anything risky, just spin around in indecision and second guessing ourselves.

But it's wasteful if we want to live on purpose. If we want to create the next chapter and we want to love life again, confusion and indecision are not our friends. They are wasteful.

Judging and gossip, also in that outside circle of waste. Judging others, judging ourselves, gossiping about others, gossiping about whatever, those

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don't actually take us anywhere productive. Now, don't hear me say those words and think that I have a moral high ground here. That's not what this is about.

I'm not talking about morality. You can decide what your values are. I'm talking about a useful use of your energy, of your brain space, and judging and gossip just simply don't produce results. Emotional childhood also does not produce results. When we're in emotional childhood, it's when we think that someone else's actions or words are causing our feelings.

And when we realize, there's nothing anyone can do or say to us that causes us to feel any particular way, without our consent, meaning we have a thought about it, we get to step back in a powerful place and we don't need other people to change in order for us to feel better.

But when we're in emotional childhood, we don't know this. We have lost sight of that. I'm going to do an entire podcast episode on that at some point.

Some other things in the waste circle. Arguing with reality. Something is, and we argue with it. Think about last week's podcast episode, How Life Was Supposed to Go. This is an exact example of what I'm talking about. When we spend our precious energy arguing with things that have already happened, that energy is not available to us to use to create what we want next. So, we don't want to argue with reality, as much as possible.

Shoulding, also a wasteful use of our time. How many of you – and if you're like me, there should be a lot of hands in the air – should on yourself on a regular basis? Do you notice these should thoughts? Oh my gosh, so many should thoughts. You should do this, you should do that. You shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do that, you shouldn't have done this, you shouldn't have done that. All the should thoughts. They shouldn't. It shouldn't. So

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many should thoughts. None of the feel good. All of them are focusing on things that we can't control. And they're just not a useful use of our energy if we want to create a life that we love.

Self-loathing, it would seem like something we wouldn't actually intentionally spend our energy on, and I'm sure that we don't go about consciously choosing to spend our energy in this way, but a lot of us spend a lot of time being mean to ourselves and criticizing ourselves. And it takes us away from anything that aligns with our goals.

And sometimes, it would seem like it's useful. Sometimes it would seem like, "Well if I just tolerate this behavior of mine that I don't like, that means I'll just keep repeating it, so I have to be mean to myself if I want to change." No, no, no. That is not the way that it works. When you are mean to yourself, it actually prevents you from changing. You cannot hate yourself to a goal. It doesn't work. It just doesn't work. And it feels terrible.

The other thing that's wasteful is overwhelm. And just like confusion and indecision and worry, overwhelm is also created by our thinking. And it's optional. Whenever you notice yourself in overwhelm, you will be blocked from taking any sort of productive action. It will make your wheels spin. You will spend a lot of time second guessing what you should do next, whether you're doing it right, should you have done something differently, telling yourself it's too much, that you can't handle it. And therefore, that's what we create when we think those kinds of things.

Regret, again, is part of being past-focused. But when we spend time thinking would have, should have, could have thoughts about how we should have done it differently in the past and regretting past behavior, we're wasting our energy. Because we know this, it's over. There's nothing we can do about it now. There's nothing we can do about it. And regretting it doesn't actually help.

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So, if we want to talk to ourselves about how we're going to do it differently in the future, I'm all for that. But I'm not for the, "Ain't it awful," pity party regret club. It's just not productive. It keeps you from loving your life. And I want you to love your life.

Okay, so that's that outside circle of waste. Those are the things, along with all of what Covey teaches, you know, focusing on things we can't control, time spent in that outside circle is brutal in terms of how it impacts our ability to be effective in life. It takes our power away. It shrinks that inner power circle.

So, what's inside the power circle, the inner circle? What's inside that is intentional living, intentional thinking, intentional feeling, intentional behaviors, goals, dreams, massive action, commitment, bravery, courage, figuring it out. When we understand what it is we can't control, and we stop focusing our time and energy there, and we understand the behaviors that waste our energy, and we stop putting our energy there and we focus our energy on what we can control, which is the thoughts that we think on purpose, the feelings that we can create with those thoughts, the actions that we take, the way we show up in life, the way we pursue our goals, getting up when we get knocked down, being nice to someone who isn't being nice to us, showing up as we want to show up, that's when we create the results that we want to create.

So, this concept is really pretty easy. And that's why I want you to consider it for your life. Just notice, what circle am I in? Am I outside in that waste circle trying to control things I can't control? Am I living in the past? Do I have myself in a victim mentality? Am I trying to get approval from other people? Am I stuck in indecision or confusion or overwhelm because of my thoughts? Am I judging? Am I gossiping? Do I think other people are responsible for my feelings? Am I spending time beating myself up and

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resisting reality and regretting what happened and thinking all the should thoughts?

And if so, if I'm doing any one of those things, the moment that I catch it, the moment, I have the ability, you have the ability, we have the ability to switch circles, to get back into that middle circle, where we're powerful, where we're living with intention, where we're trying to be the best version of us and really focusing our energy on what we want to create, knowing that there are many things in life we can't control. And it's just a repetitive process.

We're never always going to be in the circle of power. A lot of times, we're going to be in the circle of waste. A lot. I'm in there still too. But what I try to do, and what I teach my clients, is be aware of what it looks like to be in both circles. Notice where you are in a given moment, especially if you have an icky feeling.

If you notice you don't feel good – and I don't mean physically feel good, I mean emotionally, you're not experiencing positive emotion, if you notice, "I'm really angry right now. I'm really frustrated. I'm really mad," something like that, there's many negative emotions, but if you notice that, that should be the first sign, "Where am I now? Okay, I'm feeling jealous. What's happening? Am I focused on something I can't control? Am I trying to get somebody to like me? What am I doing? What circle am I in?"

And then, as soon as you notice, you're kind to yourself, you don't beat yourself up, you don't tell yourself you've done it all wrong, you don't berate yourself. You just gently redirect yourself and you pivot, and you get back in that circle of power where you're thinking on purpose, you're feeling on purpose, you're behaving on purpose, and you're creating results that align with your values and your dreams and you're living on purpose, powerfully, and that's it.

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And so, we just iterate faster. We just start to notice, which circle am I in? And if I'm in the outside circle of waste, can I get myself to the inside circle of power? Can I get my energy focused back in a way that's going to take me where I want to go, so that I can love my life?

And we do that over and over and over and over as many times as it takes, in a day, in an hour, in a minute, as many times, we just keep doing it. And the more we do it, the faster we notice where we are and the faster we put ourselves back where we want to be. It's not about perfection. Nobody is always in the circle of power. We just don't spend time there when we notice that we're in the circle of waste. When we notice that, we just get back in the other circle.

Alright, so, that's the simple tool. Notice which circle you're in. And if you're not in the circle of power, get back in it, okay. That will change your life. I hope that's useful to you. I love it. It's really helpful to me and I just always remind myself, it's not some end stage that I'm going to reach where I'm never wasting my time ever again. It's that I am more conscious.

And also, when I say waste, I don't mean relax, okay. I don't mean relax. If we're relaxing on purpose, that's not a waste. That's power. That helps us. That helps us live the life that we want to live when we do it on purpose. Now, when we're escaping hard work and buffering, or we're escaping feelings with substances or behaviors, that doesn't actually create a positive result in life. So that, we put in the waste category. But rest, intentional downtime is not waste. I just want to be clear on that.

Alright, hey, by the time this comes out, I'm going to assume there might still be some spaces for September's group. But I really want to encourage you to head on over to coachingwithkrista.com if you're thinking that you want to get into September's group because the demand for coaching seems to be going up and up and up and up every month. Things are filling

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sooner and last month we were starting a waitlist for the next month before the month was even over.

So, I limit the group size on purpose, right? I want the coaching experience to be really impactful, and so I do limit the number of people that can come in, in a given month, because I want to make sure that I'm taking good care of everyone.

So, I love you. I hope you guys have an amazing week. I'm heading off to Colorado to be with my kids and be in the cabin, and that will remind me of Hugo, which I love because it was one of his favorite places too. And we're going to go tent camping and just really enjoy some nature.

Alright, I love you, you've got this. I'll see you next time. Take care. Bye-bye.

If you like what you've been hearing on this podcast and want to create a future you can truly get excited about, even after the loss of your spouse, I invite you to join my Mom Goes On coaching program. It's small group coaching just for widowed moms like you where I'll help you figure out what's holding you back and give you the tools and support you need so you can move forward with confidence.

Please don't settle for a new normal that's less than what you deserve. Go to coachingwithkrista.com and click Work With Me for details and next steps. I can't wait to meet you.