

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Krista St-Germain**

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 67, Listener Q&A.

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 everybody. Welcome to another episode of the podcast. If this is the first time you've tuned in, welcome. I always kind of think it's a good idea to just go back and start from the beginning, but a listener Q&A is actually a pretty good first podcast because it'll kind of give you a little bit of an idea of what I teach and hopefully, some of the questions will resonate with you.

I've chosen questions to talk about today that I think are reflective of things that I hear on a pretty regular basis, and they're specific enough to be interesting, but common enough to be useful to you. So listen for what you can use in some of these questions that I'm going to answer.

Also, I want to do something fun. I know we're already into early September now, but for the rest of the month and maybe we'll just go until the first week in October, why not? We have time. But what I want to do is have a little fun competition over on Instagram.

So if you're not following me on Instagram, first of all, let's definitely connect over there, @lifecoachkrista is how you can find me. Here's what I want to do. Because there are 11 million widows in this world and I am determined to get at least a million of them to listen to the podcast, over on Instagram, use your phone, take a little screen capture of the podcast episode that you're listening to.

This one or another podcast episode that you're listening to, whichever, and tag me in it, @lifecoachkrista. You can do this on Facebook too, but

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

put it in your stories. Tag me in it. And if you do that, I'm going to put your name in a drawing for my new favorite thing, which is a necklace.

I have to tell you about it because I love it so much. It's called the grit necklace and it's this little baroque pearl and it comes in 14 carat gold or silver. The actual chain. And it's this little pearl with a dainty chain and the card that comes with it, I have to read the whole thing to you.

It says, "Grit. She is unshakeable. Not because she doesn't know pain or failure, but because she always pushes through. Because she always shows up and never gives up. Because she believes anything is possible no matter the odds. And perhaps what makes her beautiful has less to do with what lies upon the surface, and more to do with what lies within. She isn't just beautiful because of her appearance. No, she's beautiful because of the way she chooses to live and love, in the way she embraces all of life's experiences, good or bad, and her willingness to bend but never break, and in her courage to believe that the darkness can't hold her, as long as she continues to create her own light. She is just like a pearl, made from grit, but full of grace. She's unstoppable. She knows it's not what happens, but how she chooses to respond with perseverance in her mind and passion in her heart."

Oh my goodness, I love that so much. It's everything in terms of my philosophy, in terms of what I want for you and what I see in you, even if I don't know you. Unstoppable, knowing it's not what happens but how she chooses to respond, with perseverance in her mind and passion in her heart. Love, love, love it.

So I want to give one of these away because it's fun and I can and I want you to feel good wearing it. So share the podcast. Tag me, @lifecoachkrista on Instagram, put it in your stories, and let's have some fun with it. I'll see it, then I'll get to know you, maybe I can follow some

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

more people that I don't know just yet, and hopefully other people will hear about the podcast.

So fun thing to do for September. Let's do it. Alright, let's talk about some of the questions we got this week. So I'm going to just do four of them and at any point, if you have questions and you would like me to do something, answer a question that you have on the podcast, email it to me, [krista@coachingwithkrista.com](mailto:krista@coachingwithkrista.com). And I will consider it for a future episode.

But today, we're going to cover some questions that kind of talk about fear and the primitive brain's response to fear, buffering, numbing with social media, how to process anger instead of resisting it, failure in advance, and some things that I think you'll relate to.

So here we go, let's just jump in. Question one, "Why does it seem like every new thing I try to do as a widow leaves me feeling scared? When will this go away and when will I feel confident again?" Such a good question. How many of you have asked yourselves that?

I'm going to break it down in a couple of ways. So why does it seem like every new thing I try to do leaves me feeling scared? Okay, I just listened to one of my friends, Pam, her name is Pam Howard if you've never come across her. She's a life coach friend of mine. She has a lovely podcast called Less Drama More Mama, which I think is precious. But she specifically works with moms who basically kind of lose their patience.

Pam, I'm sorry if I'm not describing the beautiful work that you do as well as you describe it. But Pam has a lovely analogy for fear in the primitive brain and I want to share it with you because it's so relevant to this question. So we have in our brain, a part that is just very aware of things that could be dangerous.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

It's that part that's so primitive and so basic to our survival that whenever it perceives a threat, it creates fear for us and lets us know about it. Pam calls it the barking dog brain. I love it. I usually refer to it as the primitive brain or the lower brain or the lizard brain, but I love this idea of the barking dog brain.

So we all have this barking dog brain, and if you have ever had a dog that barks when someone comes to the door or someone comes to your backyard around the fence, you know what this is like, right? My dog Sadie, she's a very large mixed breed. A whole lot of things. She's got Rottweiler and Doberman and Pitbull and German Shepard and Lab. She's got a lot.

Whenever anyone comes to the front door, she kind of flips out. But the reason she's flipping out is because she thinks she's trying to keep us safe. She thinks she's trying to keep her family safe, this house safe. And our barking dog brain is very similar to my dog, in that when it encounters something new, which it perceives as a threat to our survival, seems a little dramatic but that's really what that part of our brain was designed to do, it lets all the alarms and whistles sound.

Bark, bark, bark, bark, bark. So yes listener, every new thing you do will sometimes leave you feeling scared. But in a way, that's by design. In a way, it's in our best survival interest to not take new risk, to not do new things because that barking dog part of our brain associates risk and new things literally with death.

I know it seems dramatic, but I think we just want to make peace with the idea that part of our brain is always going to bark at us like a barking dog. It's just doing what it was designed to do, which is to try to keep us safe from what it perceives as things that are risky.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

So the answer to your question in one sense is that yes, you're always going to have that barking dog primitive brain response if you are trying new things. Now, if you're not trying new things and you just want to stay in your house and not take any new risks and not do anything new, you will have less of the barking dog.

But even then, some things are going to be foreign. Sometimes I'll have clients who have a particular response to just being the only person in the house, or the only adult in the house. And their fear response, if they perceive a noise outside or something going on, they're kind of on high alert.

So I don't think that anything's gone wrong when that has happened. I just think we want to give ourselves a break and know that fear can't hurt us. It doesn't have any power over us. And if we notice that barking dog part of our brain alerting us, we can stop and we can think, is this really a risk to my physical safety?

And if not, then we tap into what my friend Pam calls the wise owl part of our brain, which is just a lovely name for our executive brain, our higher brain, the part of our brain that helps us make good logical decisions. So we can calm the barking dog. We don't have to kick it out of the house. We don't have to be mad at it. We can just know that it's doing its job or at least it's doing what it thinks is its job, and it's okay.

And then we can access the wise owl part of our brain and if we believe it's a risk that we want to take and it's of no physical threat, then we can just take it. We can do the new thing. And that's what's happening for you. So will it ever go away? It doesn't even matter as long as you know what to do with it.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

And then to the second part of your question, when will I feel confident again, that really just depends. And so I've done a podcast episode on this, but just a quick refresher in case you haven't listened to that particular episode, there is a difference between confidence in a skill and self-confidence.

Confidence in a skill, say something we've learned to do that at one point we didn't know how to do, confidence in a skill only comes after we learn the skill. Think back to something that you didn't know how to do. I remember when my now 16-year-old was learning to write, she was not very confident in her ability to write letters when she was probably four and she was practicing.

She would get mad about it. She's a very high achiever. Even at a young age, she would rip up her pages sometimes and get mad that her letters weren't coming out right. She didn't have confidence until she had written those letters over and over and over and over. She didn't have confidence that she could do it.

And that's the same thing whenever we're trying to learn something new. We can't wait for confidence in our ability to do the thing we've never done before. It doesn't make sense. We just have to show up and be brave and commit to doing the new thing and fail a lot, practice a lot, struggle a lot, so that we learn and then we develop that new skill and confidence then is the result of that effort.

So if your husband managed the finances and now you're trying to take on that role, don't expect to feel confident in that but take it on anyway. And commit to figuring it out. Be brave. And then eventually, through repetition, you're going to feel confident in your ability to do it.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

Self-confidence on the other hand is our ability to feel any feeling, our willingness to feel any feeling, and our belief that we're the type of person who can figure things out. That's self-confidence. Has nothing to do with individual skills and everything to do with the way we perceive our ability to figure things out and how willing we are to feel any feeling, knowing that feelings are always the worst part of any new experience.

So bring the barking dog with you. It's just trying to keep you safe. It doesn't mean anything's going to go wrong. And don't expect confidence before you've acquired a new skill. But leverage your self-confidence to help you acquire the new skill. And that's universal. So I hope that's useful for all of you.

Okay, question number two. This listener wrote, "I don't want to spend so much time on social media. I find myself with my phone in my hand even when my kids are around me, and I end up just mindlessly scrolling. And it's not like I even feel better after having spent time there. Mostly I just end up feeling resentful because everyone else is posting about their happy lives. But it also feels a bit compulsive because I don't really plan to be on it. I've heard you talk about avoiding feelings with things like this. How do I know if that's what I'm doing?"

Such a good question. And I did talk about that and specifically for those of you interested in more on this subject, you can go to episodes 46 and 47. Why we numb and how to stop, part one and part two. What I want to offer to you listener is that it's not a bad question, how do I know if it's what I'm doing. I suspect you know the answer to that.

But the question I would encourage you to be asking yourself is what's the impact of what I'm doing? That's the first question we want to ask. Because sometimes just getting away and just checking out for a little bit is not a bad thing. It gives our brain a little respite, a little break.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

So it's not necessarily a bad thing when we check out or numb if we're doing it with intention. So a more useful question for you is what's the impact of this? And am I happy with the impact? And if the impact isn't one you're happy with, if you're creating something in your life that you don't like, you're being pulled away more often from being present than you would like and feeling worse after you're done than when you started, then we can look at that.

Then we can decide what we want to do about it from a place of intention. And then what I would ask you is to decide how much time you want to spend on social media, and then notice what happens when you have the urge to get on social media and you don't answer it.

Because if you pay attention to what it feels like and what you notice in your body and in your mind when you have the urge to get on social media but it's not a part of your plan, and you don't answer that urge with your phone, then you will see what's left there for you to work on.

What's there for you to process? What is the feeling that you're trying to avoid? That's that that process will show you. You make a plan, you don't get on social media when you have the urge, and you see, what is this feeling I don't really want to feel that I'm using social media to distract myself from?

Is it loneliness? Is it sadness? Is it boredom? What is it? It's different for every person. It's not right, wrong, good, bad, it just is. But then you can be curious about it and go okay, here's what it is for me. These are the feelings that I'm not particularly interested in feeling and I'm using social media to numb them out.

Then you can ask yourself if you want to keep doing that. And if you don't want to keep doing that, then we do the work of learning to feel the

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

feelings. We start getting curious about what are the thoughts causing the feelings, what am I thinking that's optional that's making me feel this way? Do I like those thoughts? Do I want them? Maybe I don't. And we can change them.

And the more you practice feeling your feelings, the more you'll realize that they can't hurt you. They really can't. Even the worst of them are really just physical vibrations that we notice in our body as a result of chemicals that our brain releases after we have a thought. They're not much more complicated than that.

So that's what I want you to think about, listener. What's the impact of what you're doing? Is it not creating the result that you want? And if it's not, what is the emotion that you're trying to avoid? And maybe there's more than one. And let's start there and be curious and compassionate with yourself.

These types of self-inquiry never lead anywhere productive if we're mean to ourselves. We have to do this with an attitude of curiosity and compassion for ourselves.

Alright, question number three. "I've never thought of myself as an angry person and certainly not as a woman who yells. But since my husband died, I noticed I'm getting angrier and angrier, and what's worse, I'm now snapping at people or yelling at my kids, and I don't want to do that. I don't want to be so angry. Please help."

Okay, if I could poll all the listeners right now, I think a lot of hands would go up if I asked whether you relate to this or not. Sometimes anger can surprise us, especially if we didn't really have very much of it before our partner died.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

So here's what I want to offer you, listener. Anger in our bodies is not a problem. Just because we have anger present, also caused by our thoughts, but just because we have anger doesn't mean there's anything wrong with us, it doesn't mean we're an angry person, and it doesn't mean we have to react to the anger. We don't have to let it fuel our behavior.

So I'm guessing - and you didn't say this, so pardon me if I've got this wrong - but I'm guessing you've got some judgment toward yourself about what it would mean about you if you were an angry person, since that's kind of how you described yourself. You're not an angry person.

Notice how often we do this everyone. We have an emotion and instead of just saying I feel angry, we kind of define ourselves by the emotion. Instead of it being an experience that we're having, we define ourselves by it. So you're not an angry person, you're not a sad person, or a lonely person. You're just a person who's experiencing anger, which PS, is one of the most common emotions in grief.

So I want you to consider, it is not a problem for anger to be in your body. If you get curious on it and you learn to feel it, which is what I teach my clients to do, we notice what's in our body, we name it, we open up to it, we witness it. When we stay with it and we're curious about it, it usually only lasts for about a minute and a half.

It doesn't have to make us snap or yell once we learn to allow it to be there so that we process it, instead of acting from it or instead of resisting it, or instead of avoiding it. We can just allow it to be there and run its course. And when we let it in, which has to be done from a place of non-judgment towards ourselves and towards the emotion, then and only then can we get curious enough to allow it and let it go on about its way.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

And then it doesn't do any harm. So anger is not a problem just because you have it. Doesn't mean you have to react to it. And all I want you to do is just consider how can I allow it to flow through me instead of letting it fuel me. Then later, later, later, if you want to change the thoughts that cause the anger, that's your option too. But that's so much less significant than just learning how to let an emotion flow through you without judgment and not letting it define you.

Alright, last question. "I want to start a new business but I'm afraid to do it. I have the seed money, but what if I lose it? It's harder now that we're on a single income, and I can't decide if the risk is worth it or not. I would feel so ashamed if it didn't work out. What should I do?"

Okay, first of all, I never know what any of you should do. Any of you. It's not my job to know what you should do. I barely know what I'm supposed to do. But I definitely don't know what's right for you, but what I know is that you know what's right for you. You don't need me to tell you what's right for you. I don't have an agenda for you.

But I know that you know what's right for you, and what I can tell from this question is that what's holding you back is fear. Fear of failure and fear of feeling ashamed. So part of this goes back to what I talked about in question number one. That barking dog part of your brain senses potential failure and sees that as a threat, sees that as something that it really wants to alert you of because it could be, in the lens of the barking dog, a real problem for you.

But that's okay. That's just the part of our brain perhaps that is on high alert. So if you know there really is no physical danger and it really isn't a threat to your actual physical survival, then we can just tell the barking dog that yes, we hear it, and fear is okay. We can still feel fear and take action toward our dreams anyway.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

Another thing you mentioned is that you would feel so ashamed if it didn't work out. So there's two things I want to offer you here. One is that now we know what the worst part of this experience would be for you. It would be shame. It would be that emotion of shame.

So are you willing to feel shame, which for most of us is like a really hot, red feeling in our face or our neck or our throat. If we really get curious about it, that's what it is. Are you willing to feel that? Is this new business important enough to you that you're willing to feel that experience in your body if it doesn't work out?

It's a question we all have to ask ourselves. Am I willing to feel a feeling? Because if I am, so many more doors open up to me. But then the second part of that is that shame is an option. Shame is not a requirement if something doesn't work out. Embarrassment is not a requirement; inadequacy is not a requirement.

Being mean to ourselves and weaponizing a great effort, something we cared about that didn't work out the way we planned does not mean that we have to feel badly. We create those feelings with the stories we tell ourselves.

So what you're essentially saying is if I start this new business and it doesn't work out, on the other side of that, I'm going to tell myself that I'm a terrible person and there's something wrong with me. And therefore, I will feel shame. Because that is where shame comes from. It comes from the optional story that there's something wrong with me.

I love what Brené Brown teaches here and I'm paraphrasing, but basically what she says is guilt comes from the story that I did something wrong, and shame comes from the story that there's something wrong with me. Both of those stories are optional.

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

So you can start a new business and you can have it not work out the way you wanted it to, and you can be nice to yourself on the other side of that. You can also start a new business and have that barking dog brain be telling you it's very scary and you shouldn't do it, and you can do it anyway and you can be wildly successful.

But when we stop ourselves in advance because we're worried about failing, guess what, we still fail. When we stop ourselves because we're worried about failing, we still fail. We just fail to even try. We just fail ahead of time. We fail before ever even giving ourselves a shot.

So I don't know what's going on specifically, listener, but I want to offer that it's okay if you're feeling afraid. That doesn't have to be a showstopper. It's okay if your barking dog brain is telling you all about it. You can handle shame if that were to be the emotion that you created with your thinking, but you also have the option to not create that emotion for yourself. You could be nice to yourself on the other side of it.

And then what I would encourage you to do of course is to look into some of the money beliefs that you have. We spend a decent amount of time on this in my six-month program because so many of us come locked and loaded with some really terrible limiting beliefs about money and our ability to create it, budget it, invest it.

And so we live in fear of it because we haven't yet figured out how to think in a way that has us feeling abundant. And so we just default to fear. So I would recommend doing that work too, and I bet there's a lot in there.

Okay, I hope those questions were useful to all of you, there were questions that you could relate to. I could see so many pieces of client conversations that I have had with so many widowed moms, so I hope that was valuable to you. If you have other questions that you would like me to

## Ep #67: Listener Q&A

answer, you are welcome to just email them to me, [krista@coachingwithkrista.com](mailto:krista@coachingwithkrista.com) and I'll consider them for upcoming Q&A episodes.

Let's go have fun with our little necklace competition. I'm going to see you on Instagram. Screen grab the podcast and tag me, @lifecoachkrista. Let me know what you think. Share it over on Instagram and I'll see you there. Hope you have an amazing week everybody. I love you. You've got this. Take care.

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](http://coachingwithkrista.com) and click Work With Me for details and next steps. I can't wait to meet you.