

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Krista St-Germain**

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 85, New Widows, Start Here.

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 truly look forward to. Here's your host, Master Certified life coach, grief expert, widow, and mom, Krista St-Germain.

Hey there. Welcome to the podcast. This might be the very first episode of the podcast that you've ever listened to. Perhaps someone sent you here, perhaps you just discovered the podcast and you saw the title, but regardless, if your partner just died, from one widow to another, I send you all my love.

And I've recorded this episode with hopes that it will make these early days just a little easier. Because when my husband Hugo died, I didn't know anyone my age who had lost their husband. And what little I knew about grief was pretty inaccurate.

So now, as someone who has walked the walk and studied grief in depth and coached hundreds of widows, this is the podcast episode I wish I could have found as a new widow. So here we go.

First and foremost, you're going to be okay. You don't need to know how you're going to be okay but trust me, you are. Now only have I walked this walk myself, but I have worked with hundreds of widows of all different ages, all different circumstances, husbands who died unexpectedly, long-term health issues, husbands who died by suicide, widows with little kids, grown kids, no kids, supportive families, not so supportive families, life insurance, no life insurance, you name it.

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

And if all those women can do it, you can do it. You don't have to know how yet, but I just want to assure you from one widow to another that you are more resilient than you think and you're going to get through this.

It's okay if it doesn't feel real yet. It doesn't mean you're mentally unstable, it doesn't mean you're in denial, that doesn't mean you didn't love him enough. You're not doing anything wrong no matter how you feel.

And most widows I've worked with, myself included, recall a time where they intellectually knew he had died but didn't truly believe it. Or felt like they were watching a movie about someone else's life instead of their own. It's okay.

For some more than others, the body and brain tend to protect us from feeling that full impact of the loss immediately, so sometimes you'll wrestle with that for a while. You'll know it's real but it won't feel real, and that doesn't mean anything's gone wrong.

So not only is it okay if it doesn't feel completely real yet, but all of your feelings are okay. All of your emotions are okay. Anger, sadness, disbelief, numbness, guilt, even relief, even joy, all of it is okay. The more you can allow your feelings, all of them to be part of your grieving experience, the better.

This is the cause of a lot of suffering. When we don't allow all of our feelings or when we judge them. The less you judge your feelings or yourself for having them, the less you will suffer. Feelings are not right or wrong, they are not good or bad.

Maybe you were in a caregiver role and you noticed that part of you feels relieved. That doesn't mean that you didn't love your partner. Maybe the relationship was challenging, and you have mixed feelings about his

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

passing. Maybe you were separated. Maybe it was abusive. Maybe you were even divorced.

Occasionally, you might even find yourself experiencing positive emotion. You might even laugh. That won't mean you've done anything wrong. And that won't mean that you didn't love him enough or that you're grieving wrong. And you might notice that you feel really angry, but that doesn't mean that you are now an angry person.

You are not your feelings. You're just a human with feelings. And all of those feelings, the positive ones, the negative ones, they are all part of the grief experience so let them be with you as you grieve.

Just like there are many theories about weight loss, many theories, so many theories, there are many theories about grief too. And you really don't need to worry about any of them, but if you've heard of the popular five stages of grief because it's the one that seems to have taken hold in our culture more than all the other grief theories, do not worry.

Please do not try to fit yourself into a grief theory box. You don't need to be angry. You don't need to be in denial. You don't need to bargain. You don't need to be depressed. And sometimes I see people really misunderstanding this particular theory and it can be the source of a lot of confusion for new widows, as it was for me.

Sometimes people are surprised to learn that the five stages of grief was actually originally based on hospice patients. It was about the process of coming to terms with a terminal diagnosis, not what actually happens to people who are grieving the loss of another human, but rather the humans who are going through their own terminal diagnosis.

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

So that's not to say there isn't value in this theory, but it is one of many theories and just because it uses the term stages, I don't want you to think that grief is in any way linear. It is not tidy. It is messy. It's not even two steps forward and one step back necessarily.

But it is the natural human response to a perceived loss. And the death of your partner is likely one of the biggest losses you might ever have experienced. So please drop what you think you know about grief and be open to the idea that it's going to unfold the way it's supposed to unfold for you. And that might look very different than what you've seen on TV or read about in books or have heard about from the people in your circle.

Measuring yourself against arbitrary timelines is rarely useful. Your experience will be unique because you are unique. And the first year is the hardest for some people, but it's not a hard and fast rule. Some women find the second year more challenging for reasons that they hadn't expected.

What matters most isn't how much time passes. What matters is how you choose to support yourself as time passes. And I want you to trust that you will know. If it helps you to journal, do that. I wrote every day to Hugo for a long, long time.

If it helps you to punch your pillow or punch a boxing bag, do that. If going to a mental health professional and telling your story over and over and over until you don't need to tell it anymore helps, do that.

Some of you might find that group support sounds amazing. Do that. Some of you might want to work with a coach like me. If that sounds helpful, do that. But let yourself find what works for you and trust that you will know what is right for you and that it might evolve over time.

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

If you are a mom, which many of my listeners are, you're probably very worried about your children and how you can support them. It will seem like an impossible task to support them and their grief while you support yourself and your own grief.

But you're going to figure it out. And the most important thing is that you don't put yourself last on the list. And I know this is hard. And I know this is cliché. I really do. But it's true. The flight attendants tell us this every time we fly, that we have to put the oxygen mask on ourselves first before we're able to help those around us and the same thing is true with grief.

Your children really do need you to take good care of yourself because that will be what helps you take care of them. And this is a marathon. It is not a sprint. So please figure out what you need to do to take care of yourself so that you can take the best care possible of your children. They will take their cues from you.

If people are asking you how they can help, it's okay that you might not know what to say. But in whatever way you can let them help you, do it. Let them run errands, let them bring you food or clean your house, or your car, mow your lawn, watch your kids.

If their help would be useful to you, accepting it doesn't make you weak. It does not make you a burden. Believe it or not, most people who love you, they're feeling really powerless right now. And it's actually a gift to them when you accept their help.

Now, don't accept their offer to come sit with you if what you really want is time alone. But if their offer would genuinely help you, consider accepting it, even if it's new territory for you.

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

If you're feeling foggy, I want to assure you that widow fog is real. There's nothing permanently wrong with you. But your hormones right now are not normal. There is a huge impact to the brain and to the body from grief. And the parts of your brain that handle processing and memory recall and retention of information, those parts aren't working as well as they once were.

It's different for different people, but don't be surprised if you're doing things that you would have never done before. You're putting the keys in the pantry; you're forgetting to pay bills. Some widows have even forgotten to pick up their kids from daycare. It doesn't mean there's anything permanently wrong with you. But right now, your brain is adapting.

Also, your heart might actually ache. In fact, for some grievers, it feels like they're having a heart attack. So if you think you need medical attention, of course, please get it. But just know that when we talk about a heart ache, it actually can be a very real feeling.

Chances are high that most people in your world don't know how to support you. If you'd like to help educate them, I suggest you send them to episode 45 of this podcast. It's called For Those Who Love Us. But they're going to say insensitive things, typically on accident, typically they mean well. They're going to stick their foot in their mouth.

Mostly because no one has taught them how to support a grieving person. And they don't understand that they can't make you feel better, and they really, really want to. So they'll say things like, "He's in a better place," and, "At least he's not suffering," or, "You're young and you'll find someone else," or they'll even say things like, "I know how you feel because my so-and-so died."

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

And you might hear their words and you might feel terribly alone and misunderstood and even minimized sometimes. I've been there. I think we've all been there. Most people just don't get it and we will do ourselves a big favor if we assume that they mean well and that just as we are imperfect, they are also imperfect humans and just as we are doing the best that we know how to do, they are also doing the best that they know how to do.

And we can show ourselves grace and compassion, and we can show them grace and compassion because most people around you, they really are trying hard. They just don't know what they don't know.

If you're asking yourself how you're ever going to get over this, or move past it, I just want to offer that you're not. And that's not a bad thing. You're not going to stay stuck forever, but you're not going to get over it, you're not going to move past it. You're going to move forward with it.

You're going to figure out how to take this life experience and bring it with you, weave it into the fabric of all of your other life experiences. You're going to figure out how to miss him and love him and keep living. But you're not going to move on, you're not going to move past it, you're not going to get over it. You're going to move forward with it. And you can do it, I absolutely know you can.

And to many of you, this may seem extreme, but I would be remiss if I didn't say it. If you contemplate harming yourself or harming others, please reach out to a qualified and licensed mental health professional immediately. Your wellbeing is worth it.

Sometimes depression and suicidal ideation can sneak up on us and we might not see it coming. It might not be anything we've ever experienced

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

before, but if that is happening to you, please reach out and get the support that you need.

You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which is 800-273-8255. And a quick Google search will lead you right there if you can't write that number down now. And most of you probably won't have those experiences, but sometimes it happens, and I just want you to be prepared for it in case it does.

The last thing that I want to tell you is that after Hugo died, my biggest worry and I didn't want to say it out loud, but my biggest worry was that I would never truly be happy again. I really did think that my best days were behind me and that the best I could hope for was just to kind of get back to functioning and going through the motions.

But all of my dreams, all of my plans for the future had included him, and so the idea of being genuinely happy without him, it just didn't seem possible. I also had a lot of guilt for being responsible for the accident. And even - it was months after he died, people were telling me how strong I was, and I was back to work and I was taking care of my kids.

And I'm sure from the outside I looked like I was doing great. But on the inside, I was feeling so empty and hollow and just really resigned. Like this was just going to be it.

And so I say that because fast forward to today, where I know and I teach that post traumatic growth is real because I didn't know anything about post traumatic growth at that time but now I know that it's real. Now I have tools that I didn't have then.

And so I just want to offer you this hope. Not only can you get back to functioning, not only can you create a new normal, which might be one of

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

my least favorite terms because I think we misuse it a lot, but you still have the ability to be just as happy, if not happier than you were before he died.

You can go on to have a very rich, meaningful, rewarding, lovely life that you genuinely love. And I just want you to know that. And right now, you probably aren't there yet, and you might even find the idea insensitive or offensive and if so, I hear you.

But I just want you to know for me, that if you're worried that you won't ever be truly happy again, it's okay. Most of us do have that fear, but I promise you that genuine happiness is possible in the future. I promise you, even though it might seem like a pipe dream, it's true that you cannot control what has happened.

You cannot change the past, you cannot bring him back, but you can choose how to live again if that's what you want and when you're ready. So I just want to plant that seed now. I promise you; you can truly be happy again. Right now let yourself feel sad for as long as you need to feel it. Let yourself feel the full range of all of the emotions. Let yourself be angry, let yourself go through all of it. You've done nothing wrong.

If this was the first episode of *The Widowed Mom Podcast* that you've ever listened to, there are 84 other episodes. And if you're new to grief, I'd like to suggest a couple that you start out with. We'll put these in the show notes so that you don't have to write them all down. You can go to [coachingwithkrista.com](http://coachingwithkrista.com) and you can find them in the show notes or in whatever app that you might be using to listen to the podcast.

But I would recommend that you consider listening to *The Myths of Grief*, which is episode two, *Widow Fog*, which is episode six if you're struggling with widow fog, *The Widowed Moms Bill of Rights*, episode four, *Feelings aren't Problems*, episode 80, *Everything's Okay* and *Everything's Not*

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

## Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here

Okay, episode 74, and Widows Like Us: Surviving the First Year with Jamie Galyon, episode 66.

Those would be good episodes to start with and new episodes are released every Monday. If you subscribe, you won't ever have to think about trying to find those episodes, and I know you don't really need anything more to think about.

Also, if you're not on my mailing list and you'd like to get little pick-me-up emails a few times a week, go to [coachingwithkrista.com](http://coachingwithkrista.com) and you'll see a little pop-up box. You can enter your email address and then you'll start receiving emails from me.

I send out several a week, including announcements about new podcast episodes. You'll learn about free Facebook Lives and other free public coaching sessions that I do sometimes. And then also of course, you'll learn about information on how to coach with me if that's something that you ever think would be useful to you.

So I hope this is helpful. As someone who knows what it's like to be new to grief in a culture where grief is misunderstood and not really talked about, and someone who as much as I wanted to read books about grief, couldn't retain any information in those early days, I hear you, I feel compassion for you, I send you all of my love.

And I want to assure you that even if right now it seems like an impossible feat to be someday happy again, if you want to figure this out, you will. You are so much more resilient than right now you probably know. And I promise, I've seen it so many times and I've helped so many women do it. If we can do it, you can do it, so have heart. I love you, you've got this, and I'll see you on the next episode. Take care.

## **Ep #85: New Widows, Start Here**

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.