

Ep #94: When You Don't Know How



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With Your Host

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[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 94, When You Don't Know How.

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 everybody, welcome to another episode of the podcast. Here we are. I don't know about you, but I have had a day; one of those days. I could probably use some coaching on it. But it's okay. Here we are. Here I am. We're going to do this podcast. We're going to talk about what to do when you just don't know how.

And before we jump in, I want to read a little bit of a listener review. I haven't done that in a few episodes, and I just so appreciate them, when you take time to rate and review the podcast. This one comes from Mama_gigi and the title of this review is Can I Give This More Than Five Stars? SO, thank you for that, Mama_gigi.

And she wrote, "I wish I would have found this podcast sooner. It's been exactly what I needed when I needed it the most. She's addressed so many of the concerns I've had and taught me to be kind to myself throughout this unique process. The possibility that I can not only have, but also design and create a life that I love, even after loss, brings me incredible hope. I owe that realization to Krista and this podcast."

And, Mama_gigi, that makes my heart happy. If I could just have everybody who listens be kinder to themselves as they figure out how to love life again, even after loss, and feel that sense of hope that you are describing, that's why I do it. And that would make me so, so happy. So, I'm glad to hear that the podcast is helping you. And thank you for taking time to share that review.

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So, okay, I want to share with you something that I've seen a lot in the coaching that I do. And as always, what I try to do is I try to find areas where I see other widowed moms struggling so that I can get out in front of that for you, hopefully, and help you not struggle in some of those same areas.

And so, what I notice on a fairly regular basis is we tell ourselves that we don't know how to do things. And sometimes, it's true in a sense, in that maybe we've never done this particular thing before. And so, because we haven't had the exact experience in our past, then we tell ourselves that we don't know how to do it in the future. And so, I get that. That's what happens sometimes.

But more often than that, I think, this idea that we don't know how is really a sign of two things. And I want to tell you what those two things are.

The first thing I think it's a sign of is simply that we have an old part of our brain that, by its very design, is wired to try to keep us safe. It's wired to try to help us not do risky things. It's wired to help not feel negative emotion. The primitive brain, the motivational triad, if you've listened to that podcast episode, is seek pleasure, avoid pain, be efficient.

So, if we have an idea that this new thing that we haven't done before is dangerous, maybe not physically dangerous but perhaps feels emotionally dangerous, feels risky, that in doing it we might risk feeling rejected or we might have to be vulnerable, or maybe we won't be as successful as we want to be and we'll fail. Then that most primitive part of our brain that's designed to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and be efficient will offer us the story that we don't know how.

Because when we believe that story, we don't know how, then we get stuck in confusion, and then we don't go and figure it out. Which that primitive part of our brain kind of likes because it keeps us repeating the same

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patterns and being efficient. It keeps us avoiding any possible scary things that are out there.

And so, to that end, it's very effective, this I don't know how thought. So, that's one reason it comes up. The other reason though and the reason I really want to bring to your attention today is that oftentimes, when we're being told this story of, I don't know how, it's really just a sign that we don't want it all that much. We don't want it enough. Our want to isn't as high as it could be. The desire to do the thing isn't as high as it could be. That's it.

We don't have a really strong why. I noticed this at one point when I was coaching a woman who is actually on one of my public free calls. And she was talking about how there was, I believe, a widower that lived very near her in her building. And what she was telling me was that she didn't know how to start a conversation with him.

And little warning signs kind of went off, little bells in my brain, "I don't think that's what's happening here. We know how to start conversations." Now, maybe they're not the most graceful conversations that we start all the time. But if we want to start a conversation, we know how to get it done. We know how to start a conversation.

So, "I don't know how to start a conversation," is really just a sign that, "I don't really want to start a conversation. And I'm just going to tolerate this idea that I don't know how." It's kind of a nice way of saying that the risk isn't less than the potential reward. Or maybe the risk could be greater than the potential reward.

Because if that woman had believed that the man of her dreams, you know, the next relationship for her lived down the hall and he was sitting there waiting for her to come knock on his door and start a conversation, she'd be down there starting a conversation. Or if she believed that she had to

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start a conversation and if she did that, she'd get a million dollars, she'd start a conversation.

There would be no part of her brain that said, "I don't know how to start a conversation." She'd just do it. So, what that tells me is that her want to isn't high enough to support the how to. So, this is what I want you to think about.

Where in your life are you telling yourself that you don't know how? Where in your life are you focusing on the how and you're making having not done this thing before or recently, you're making that the focus of your attention? Maybe it's dating again. Maybe it's making a career transition or going back to school. Maybe it's deciding if and when you want to stop wearing your wedding ring.

I don't know what it is. But where are you telling yourself that you don't know how to do something? Can you think of something? And then, once you have that, how high is your want to? Thinking about a time maybe in the past where you didn't know how to do something but you figured it out, how much did you want to figure that out?

If our motivation is high enough because the want to is high enough, we'll figure out anyhow. If your child was sick and you needed to get them across the country tomorrow, you wouldn't be sitting around worrying about the how. Your want to would be so high, you would figure it out. There would be no amount of energy spent telling yourself, "I don't know how." Because your want to would be so high.

So, think about that time in the past where you didn't know how, but you didn't spend any time thinking about the how because your want was really high. And what was the emotion that that sense of want fueled for you? Was it determination? Was it commitment? Was it bravery? Something else? I don't know.

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But I just want you to realize that you did that for yourself at one point. You've done that in your life. You have done big things that you didn't know how to do, simply because you wanted to. And your sense of want to was way higher than it might be right now in that area of life where you're telling yourself that you don't know how.

So, "I don't know how," is always just a story that our brain is telling us. It makes sense that the primitive part of our brain might offer us this story of, "I don't know how," because it's trying to keep us safe. It's trying to be efficient and seek pleasure and avoid pain. And it may just be a sign that our want to isn't high enough.

So, what I'm offering to you is that, first of all, you show yourself some compassion. Because we all have primitive brains. We all have that part of our brain that is wired to try to keep us safe. Nothing's gone wrong there. But secondly, that you be honest with yourself about how much you want to do something.

Don't tell yourself you really want to do something when you don't. Be honest with yourself. Do you have a strong desire? Do you have a strong why? Is your want to high, high enough to get you over the how to hump?

And if not, it's totally okay, but let's be honest. Because then, when you're honest with yourself, you can make a choice. You can either decide that you no longer need to worry about doing this thing because, right now, you just don't want it badly enough. And you can be okay with that choice.

Or you can work on increasing your want to. That can be cultivated. You can look for evidence of why that thing is important to you. Why do you really want to do it, even if it feels scary? You can increase that sense of want to and use your mind to do it.

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I've had to do this a million times in my business, where I didn't really want to, or thought that I didn't really want to put myself out there for others to judge me. I had to really cultivate that. I had to really decide that no, actually I do want to and I increased my want to because putting myself out there and risking being judged meant that I could get the message out and that I could help people.

That didn't always feel comfortable. And it was really easy at a certain point in becoming a coach and creating a business to hide behind and really honestly hide behind it. It didn't even feel like an excuse. But to genuinely believe that I don't know how story.

"Well, I don't know how to do a Facebook live. I've never done a podcast before. There are a lot of things I don't know how to do." And I really did kind of believe that on some level because I hadn't done it before, I didn't have any evidence that I could do that exact same thing. I'd never made the kind of money that I make before. I certainly had never generated that on my own.

So, I had to work on increasing my want to, getting that desire higher, getting that why stronger, looking for evidence of how it was true that I really do want this thing. And that's where I suggest you spend your time. If you really want to want to do something, you can.

So, notice where you're holding yourself back because you're believing this story that you don't know how to do something. Give yourself some compassion. Because part of your brain would just rather you didn't. Part of your brain associates that with death, rejection, scariness. And that part of your brain would really just take a pass.

But have compassion for that part of your brain. It doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you. Just have compassion for that part of your brain. And then, be honest with yourself, "Do I want to do this thing, really?"

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Because if I don't, I don't have to. But I'm spending all my energy thinking about the how. I could also just work on increasing the want. And then the how would kind of figure itself out.”

Because when we want something badly enough, we don't worry about the how. We just start doing things. And then action becomes our teacher. We take action. We get more data. And then we adjust.

When I used to work in the job where I met Hugo in aviation, one of the things that we were continually working on was increasing what we called the Plan, Do, Check Act Cycle, this cycle of continuous improvement where you make a plan, and you do something, you follow the plan, and then you check to see what happened, and then you act on the new information that you have. So, you plan, you do, you check, and then you act.

And that's essentially how we figure out the how of anything. We never know the how in advance. We figure out the how as we go. We figure out the how because we're willing to try some stuff and see what works and then adjust and keep going. And we're not going to quit until we figure it out.

So, back to my idea of if you had a sick child that needed to get across the country for a procedure tomorrow, you'd figure it out. You would make a plan. You would do something. You would see if that worked. And if it didn't, you would adjust. You would act on that and you would keep doing that until you figured it out because your want to would be high enough to fuel whatever action is required, to figure out the how.

It's like me figuring out how to build a business. I didn't know how to do it. I had to trial and error my way to where I am. I had to trial and error my way to every different aspect of this business that I've created. And I got myself there not by focusing on the how, not even really by believing that I knew

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how to do it, but by increasing my sense of want, by really focusing on the impact that I wanted to make in the world and getting it so high.

I actually used to picture – I would picture you, listeners. You don't know that. And who knows if you look anything like the woman I was picturing. But I had this picture on my wall. I actually went on the internet and just started looking at pictures of women.

And I selected a picture of this woman who I didn't know, and I didn't even think she was a widow, but she just looked like who I envisioned I was going to help. And I gave her a name and I told myself her story. And I imagined what her day was like in great detail and where she was struggling.

And of course, a lot of her struggles were honestly my struggles; the struggles that I had already worked through. But that's kind of where I went in my brain and I pictured her and I thought about her and I imagined that she was waiting on someone to help her.

And every time I would get in my own head about how to put myself out there and how to build my business, I would stop that and I would redirect my mind and I would focus on my picture of her and I would think about her and what she needed.

And it helped me stop worrying so much about the how and think more about the want and the why. And it kind of allowed me to get over my own limiting crap.

And I'm so grateful to that. I'm so grateful to that because I could normalize the fear that I felt and not make it mean anything had gone wrong, which is what I'm hoping you're going to do. And then, I could really think not about the story that my brain was telling me about how I didn't know how, but

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really thin about why it mattered and why I wanted to do this scary thing and use that as my fuel. And that's what I want you to do.

So, whatever it is that you're telling yourself you don't know how, you're going to be nice to yourself because part of your brain is trying to keep you safe, then you're going to be honest with yourself and decide, do I really want to do this thing? Am I just wanting to do this thing because I'm telling myself I should want to do this thing but I don't really want to do this thing?

Be honest, it's okay. If your sense of want to isn't that high and you really don't want to increase it, you don't have to. But then, if you do want to cultivate that why and cultivate that desire and increase that want to so that the how to is no longer a problem, you can. You can do that. It's something that you can cultivate. You have that ability.

And if you need help, I'll help you, okay. Alright, that's what I have for you this week. Don't worry about the how. Worry about the want. And the how will show itself to you. Alright, I love you, you've got this, and I'll see you next week. 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.