

Ep #102: Sex and Widowhood - Part 2: Worries and Fears



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With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 102, Sex and Widowhood Part Two: Worries and Fears.

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 sex and widowhood part two. If you haven't listened to part one, I suggest that you stop and go back and listen to last week's episode. Catch up on part one where I cover the biggest myths that I hear widowed moms worries about as it relates to sex, and then come back and let's dive into part two, worries and fears.

Okay, in this episode, I'm going to cover some of the most common worries and fears that widows have about sex. We had quite the discussion about it inside my Mom Goes On group coaching program and these are also the issues that have come up over and over when I've coached on the subject.

Now, I'm sure there are probably more worries and fears that I won't cover in this episode, but I'm going to cover some of the biggest most frequent worries and fears that I see, and I'm going to break them up into two categories. The first is about sex and the act of sex, and the second category is worries and fears we have about what happens or what will happen during sex.

So first, about sex. Number one, I'm worried about STDs and I don't know how to have conversations about it. The whole thing just feels terribly awkward. So if this is you, first, I would say good for you. Good for you for having the foresight to think about STDs.

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One of my Mom Goes On members who just actually recently graduated as a sex educator and she piped in on our discussion inside the group and shared that STDs are pretty common among people who aren't needing birth control anymore because they just forget. They forget that infections can be spread through sexual contact.

So yes, protection is a wise thing to think through. That said, let's be honest with ourselves. You know I'm all about being honest with ourselves. It's not that we don't know how to have conversations about protection and STDs. We know how to have a conversation about it, we just don't want to have a conversation about it.

It's like saying we don't know how to talk to our kids about how babies are made. Yeah we do. We'd just rather not. So let's call it what it is and consider what it would be like if we were just willing to lean into any awkwardness that we might be feeling and have the conversation anyway. This is just part of being an adult.

So do your research if you are unsure of what you want your personal protection policies to be, but then decide what your policies will be and be willing to have the conversation. And more than that, be willing to walk away from any partner who isn't willing to use the kind of protection that you decide is right for you.

Okay next, number two. Can we talk about the word wid-hoe? I mentioned this in the last podcast episode. If you have spent any time in Facebook support groups for widowed people, you will hear this term undoubtedly. Wid-hoe. And maybe it's cute to some people, I don't find it all that cute. I find it a little insulting.

What I think is that we've got a double standard here happening. We don't use this term when it comes to men. We only use this term when it comes

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to women. Basically we're saying and feeding into the idea that if women have multiple sexual partners, that it means they're immoral. They're a hoe if they have multiple sexual partners.

This could be a podcast episode unto itself and maybe it should be. But let's not buy into this. Let's not buy into the stereotype that if you choose to have multiple sexual partners, that that somehow makes you less than, that that somehow makes you questionable, immoral.

Now, you get to pick whatever you want. So I'm not going to make your choices for you, and if you choose to believe and you like your reasons for believing that you only want to have a sexual partner perhaps with marriage, maybe you have religious reasons for doing so, I will never tell you what to do.

But just notice the double standard. Just notice that men don't call themselves wid-hoes when they go out and have sex again. Only women do that. Our culture only points that term towards women. And I'm just not a fan. So if you're thinking that multiple sex partners makes you a hoe, I would encourage you to rethink that and decide for yourself what you want to make it mean about you no matter how many sexual partners you have. You're a grown woman, you get to do what you want.

Alright, number three. The logistics of actually making it happen. So are you worried about the logistics of making it happen? Are you asking how will I ever have sex since I have young children? They're always around, I'll feel guilty if I get a babysitter. Are you worried about the logistics? Many women are.

And here's what I want to offer about that. We do a lot of things. Grocery stores, going to work, we do the things that require us to get babysitters sometimes. The reason we're so uncomfortable with the idea of getting a

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babysitter in order to go on a date, heaven forbid to have sex, is because we have judgment of what that means about ourselves as women.

So many of these worries about logistics will go away if we're not buying into the belief that sex is a bad thing. If you're telling yourself that you're a bad mom if you get a babysitter because you're doing something you want to do, or because it's sex, yes, you're going to feel guilty. But guilt is optional. You do not have to buy into that story. You can decide that what's important to you matters and is nothing to feel guilty about.

So those are the three things I want to cover about sex. If you're worried about STDs, good for you, but you know how to have a conversation about it. If you're calling yourself a wid-hoe because you're thinking about having sex, that is optional. And if you're telling yourself that logistics are complicated and you're feeling guilty about getting a babysitter, investigate your beliefs around what it means for you to be having sex that are creating that guilt for you because guilt is optional.

Okay, now let's talk about the worries and fears that you might be having about the actual act, about what happens or what could happen during sex. So number one, you might be worried that this new person won't like your body. Is that familiar? This came up a lot when we were talking about it recently.

That maybe your spouse was with you for a long time, they watched your body go through lots of stages, and watched it age, and so you're now worried that this new person won't like your body. And first, I just want to say I get it because you're a woman socialized in this world that we live in.

And the messages that we hear explicitly and implicitly are that our bodies need to look a certain way and that if they don't, we are less valuable. It's really true. That's what we're told. We're supposed to weigh a certain

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amount, we're supposed to fit into a certain mold, and oh by the way, our bodies are objects of pleasure for our partners instead of us.

So we need to check ourselves here. I get it if you're worried, but this is an opportunity for you to think about your body differently. Chances are, first and foremost, very high that whoever wants to have sex with you actually imagines that having sex with you and the body you have would probably be pretty pleasurable for them.

They are into your body or they don't want to have sex with you. Yes, they are into you. Yes? Second, your body is not an object for their pleasure. It's for your pleasure. Your body is not an object for their pleasure, it's for your pleasure.

And we're socialized to believe that our bodies exist to please others, that our bodies must meet certain dimensions, have certain ratios of fat, and our skin has to be a certain texture. Heaven forbid we actually would be human women with lumps and bumps and stretch marks and cellulite. Heaven forbid we would be not airbrushed magazine mavens.

So if you're thinking this, again, don't feel bad about it. You've been socialized. You've been literally marinading in this philosophy of what a woman's body is supposed to look like and why it actually exists, which is for the pleasure of others.

But see that as an opportunity. See that as an opportunity for you to investigate all the things you've been thinking about your body so that you can start learning to love it more, so that you can start seeing it as an amazing, beautiful human part of you that is for your pleasure.

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I'm already feeling ranty and I'm only on worry number one. Okay, worry number two. Maybe you're worried that you might call out your dead partner's name. What if everything's going really well and it's feeling amazing, and instead of the new person's name, you call out your dead spouse's name?

So first, listen, so many people are worried about this. I have never had a widow tell me that this has happened. That's not to say it can't happen. I'm guessing it actually has happened to someone and I just haven't heard about it yet.

But here's what I want to ask you. So what? So what? Either we can laugh about it or we can say mean things to ourselves about it. Those are our options. We get to choose if that were to happen, what we would make it mean.

I have said this before and I'm going to keep saying it until it really sinks in. But we're not worried about the actual thing that we think we're worried about. We're not really worried that the thing will happen. It's never what will happen that occupies our brain space.

What we're really worried about is the mean thing we're going to say to ourselves if the thing happens. If we say our late partner's name during sex with a new partner and we say, "I can't believe I said that, what an idiot, who even does that? There must be something wrong with me, I'm definitely stuck in my grief, I'll never be able to be in another relationship, they're never going to take me seriously," we can say this long list of mean things to ourselves, that's an option.

Or option number two, we could be kind to ourselves. We could bring a little levity. We could even try to laugh about it. We could be like, oops, old

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habits die hard. Can't teach an old dog new tricks. Can't believe I just did that. What did you say your name was again?

That might be a little bit too far, but can we not diffuse anything with humor? Of course we can. And we never ever ever have to be mean to ourselves. And here's the thing; in worrying about this so much, you're being mean to yourself now.

You're letting this take up space in your brain and you can just decide, yeah, that could happen, but if it does, I'm going to be kind to myself and I'm going to laugh about it. And then we carry on.

Worry number three. You're worried you might cry. You're worried you might cry during sex, after sex, I don't know, but you're worried you're going to cry. So many widows are worried about this and yes, you might cry.

Again, so what? So what? This might be more than you want to know about me but hey, here we go. I have a history of crying after sex, specifically after having an orgasm. Cry-maxing if you will, maybe you've heard the phrase.

I used to think it was kind of ridiculous. I would judge myself as it was happening and now I've just decided that it's a beautiful thing. I know there's some hormones behind why it happens, I couldn't tell you the details, but for me what it means is I feel close to you. I feel happy, I feel connected, all good things.

As I was writing this episode, I asked my boyfriend what his recollection was of me crying after sex and whether I had warned him because my memory is just really not all that good. And if you've been following me for a

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while, you'll know that he's the first and only person that I've dated since Hugo died almost five years ago. We've been dating for over a year, still going strong.

And I was pretty sure that I had warned him that sometimes I cry after sex and to take it as a compliment if it happened. And he told me that yes, I did warn him and he was grateful for that because when it happened he wasn't thrown off. He wasn't worried that something had gone wrong.

So if you, like me, are sometimes a cry-maxer, and you're worried that your new partner might be frightened or alarmed by this, just tell them. You can totally just tell them. Also, if you're worried about crying and not the happy cry-max kind of cry but the I made a mistake, I'm sad, this shouldn't have happened kind of cry, that's a little bit different.

But again, going back to what you're really worried about isn't that you'll cry. It's that you'll be mean to yourself if you do cry. And that's so optional. You don't have to be mean to yourself. What are your other options?

Let's go all the way to the place where you cry because you're sad, or you cry because you believe you've made a mistake. How could you be your own champion in that moment? How could you be so compassionate with yourself that you wouldn't beat yourself up for crying? You're human. Humans cry. So we always have the option to be kind to ourselves no matter what happens.

Alright, the next worry is that you're going to compare every new person to your late partner, including in bed. I think it's actually a pretty safe assumption that you are going to compare new partners to your spouse, and likely you'll be comparing new partners to this idealized romanticized version of your spouse.

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You have a human brain. What I really think we're worried about here is not so much that we'll compare. The worry beneath the worry is that it will never be as good as it was with your partner. That's what you're worried about.

And what I want to offer is what if it's better? Why not? If you're going to tell yourself stories about what it's going to be like, why tell yourself that it's going to be worse? Why not tell yourself that it could be amazing? You don't know.

Because remember, our brain is always trying to find evidence of our thoughts. So if you decide to think that it's not going to be as good as it was with your spouse, then that's what your brain is going to look for evidence for. And you almost guarantee that that's what you will create, and that's not what you want. Will it be the same? No. Could it be better? Of course.

Okay, number five. You're worried that you might want to stop, that you'll get started and that you might want to stop. And here's what I want to tell you. Stop. If you get started and you want to stop, you just say I want to stop.

You don't owe that person anything. And if they don't understand, they are not the person for you. So, so what if you might want to stop? Again, you don't have to say mean things to yourself. You just have to be your own champion and stop.

Number six, you're worried that you won't know what to do and that it'll be awkward. Again, I say maybe it will be awkward. Maybe it will be more like riding a bike. But honestly, let's assume it will be awkward. Let's go to the worst-case scenario where it's super awkward, you don't know what to do, you feel like you have - what's the phrase? I wanted to say two thumbs but that's not right because you have two thumbs.

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Okay, I know what it is. It's two left feet. I had to think about that. Okay, so let's say it's so awkward you have two left feet, just like in dancing. Super awkward. What's the problem with awkward honestly? If we never did anything that felt awkward, there would be a whole lot of things we don't get to experience in life.

So what if we just decide that we're willing to let it be awkward so that we can live the life we want? That it's not a problem if it's awkward. We don't have to be mean to ourselves if it's awkward. It can just be awkward. We can just not know what to do and fumble our way through it and figure it out, and trust that maybe our body will remember what we like and remember what to do. How about that?

That's what I have for you. I hope that hearing the worries and fears of other widows has normalized them for you, has given you a different way to think about some of the worries and fears that you might have, and listen, we're human. Of course this is going to be uncomfortable. I think we need to show ourselves some grace and some compassion.

We don't need to rush into anything. We can just let it unfold as it unfolds without judging ourselves and while being our own champions. I'm quite certain that doing this was the reason I was able to have the experience that I had.

It was the reason that this wasn't dramatic for me because I didn't rush myself. I also didn't judge myself for not wanting sex with another person, and a little advertisement or plug for solo sex here. You can have sex with yourself for as long as you want.

Don't forget that option. That's probably a podcast episode perhaps on its own too if you have worries and fears around that. But there is no rush. It doesn't mean anything about you. If you want to have sex sooner, later,

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never, you get to be the boss of your own sex life. You are a grown woman and it is okay for you to want what you want and not want it if you don't want it.

And when you do want it, if you start and you decide that it's not right, you can stop. If something happens that feels embarrassing to you, you can be kind to yourself instead of mean to yourself. If you end up with a person who isn't what you thought and it's not the experience you want, you don't ever have to see them again.

You're driving. You're in charge, this is your life. So you do it your way. You do it in the way that feels good to you because that's what matters is how you feel and how you experience this part of your life.

Alright, that's what I have for you. I hope it was useful. Remember, I love you, and you've got this. Take care and I will see you next week. 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.