

Ep #111: Relief in Grief



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With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 111, Relief in Grief.

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 another episode of the podcast. Today we're going to talk about what it really means when you feel relief in grief, why we want relief, and why feeling it sometimes seems like a problem.

First though, I want to do a little listener shout-out. Haven't done one in a couple of episodes. This one comes from Grammy from Illinois. I love it. And Grammy wrote, "You've been a godsend to me. I lost my husband August of 2020. I don't know how, but you were on my feed and it seems like it was meant to be. I've listened to every one of your podcasts and attended some of your live talks. You've truly helped me and continue to help me."

Grammy, I see you, I love you, and thank you for taking time to rate the podcast. I really do appreciate it when you all take time to do that. I know you have a million things on your plate and I try not to harp about it but I want to reach a million widows and ratings and reviews are the way that the podcast becomes more searchable.

So I really appreciate any one of you who have ever taken time to leave a rating or a review and I just want you to know I see you, I hear you, and I appreciate you. Okay, so quick little update about my life.

So as you know, we've moved. Kind of settling into the new house, and one of the things I'm really doing a lot of self-coaching on right now and work on is I am noticing my brain wants to control all the teenagers in the house. So

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my partner has two kids, I have two kids, they're all teenagers. More kids and more specifically, more teenagers than I'm used to living with for sure.

And I really do think that since Hugo died, I've come a long, long way in terms of releasing my desire to control things that I can't really control, but I really notice my brain right now wanting all the teenagers to see it my way, do it my way, and fall in line with what I think is the way that it all should happen.

And that's a perfect lesson for me right now because it's just really helping me remember to show my brain it's okay to have expectations. It's okay to have rules and consequences. And for sure, we do. Some of that I'm having to navigate now and really think through. But it makes me a less effective parent when I spend a lot of time and energy trying to change other people. It makes me less effective and it makes me show up not as powerfully as I could for myself.

And so that's been so far a good opportunity for me. Not easy, mind you, but a good next opportunity for my growth is just remembering you can't control other people as much as we might want to. But I do always get to choose who I want to be and how I want to show up and there's a lot of value in that. So growing pains, but growing pains worth going through.

So let's talk about relief in grief. Some of you aren't going to relate to this episode and some of you are going to think that I'm talking to you, to the point where you probably think I've been spying on you. But I hope that you take a lot of comfort knowing that the reason I know so much about this topic is because it's so common in grief.

I know how easy it is to think that you're alone in parts of your struggle, but I've coached on this subject a lot, so it's not just you. In fact, this is one of the things that I love about the kind of group coaching that we do in my

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program because someone will start a coaching session by saying something like, “I feel terrible even saying this but...”

And then most everyone else in the group agrees with them in the chat and they're so grateful that they said something because they also wanted help with the same subject, but we're just too uncomfortable to bring it up. So if you listen to this episode and you think you're alone with regards to feeling relief, I promise you that you're not, and I hope that you find some hope and some connection in that.

So relief in grief. Maybe you feel relief because your partner was suffering and now they aren't. Maybe you were taking care of them and that was extremely hard on you and now you feel relieved not having to be in that caretaker role anymore.

Or maybe you were in the situation and wishing for relief because that caretaking role was so hard on you. Maybe you feel relief because your relationship wasn't all roses and now you have a chance to start over. Or maybe you were even looking for a way to get out of the relationship and their death gave you that out.

There are many, many reasons that widows experience relief after losing their partner and many reasons that they want relief. But interestingly enough, most of us don't experience relief by itself as a problem. Relief actually feels like a welcome release after so much pressure. We can welcome the release of that pressure.

So I find it's not typically the presence of relief that causes the trouble. It's when we experience relief and then judge ourselves for having felt it or wished for it that we create suffering for ourselves. I'm going to say that again. It's when we experience relief and then judge ourselves for having felt it or having wished for it that we create suffering for ourselves.

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We feel or wish to feel relief, and then with our judgment, we experience guilt and shame about relief. I'm wondering if this sounds familiar to you. Here's what happens. You think a thought, something like, "I'm glad they aren't suffering anymore," or, "In a way, I'm glad they finally passed," or, "I'll be better off this way," or, "They'll be better off this way," and then you feel relief.

And then you make that relief mean something about you. And of course it's not usually something good. We then say to ourselves, "I'm selfish, I'm a horrible person, I didn't love them enough, a good partner wouldn't wish for this, maybe there's something wrong with me, I shouldn't feel relieved, I caused their death." I've coached on that one a few times.

"How terrible of me to have wanted a break because now I'd give anything to have them back." And this, this judgment, this is the optional part. The mean things that we say to ourselves after we feel relief, we don't have to tell ourselves these mean things. We don't have to make the relief mean anything bad about who we are.

We can also tell ourselves that it makes sense why we'd feel relief or wish for it. That our feeling relief didn't actually cause them to die, that we have human brains that want to avoid pain, that all emotions are part of the human experience. We can make relief mean that relief is just part of grief.

Because here's what I think relief actually means about you. Are you ready? I think relief means absolutely nothing bad about you. And I'll give you two reasons. First, you have a human brain. And part of that brain's wiring is to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and be efficient.

Remember the motivational triad for widows episode of the podcast? If not, go back and listen to it. Motivational triad says seek pleasure, that means get good food, have sex, procreate. Avoid pain because pain is bad for our survival, get away from it. And be efficient.

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So your brain wants to avoid pain. It is wired that way. And if you thought your person was suffering while they were alive, and that was in turn creating suffering for you, then of course, your primitive brain would want the suffering to stop.

So wishing for it to end, even though we often judge ourselves for doing it, is not a surprise at all when we understand how we're wired. It would actually be more of a surprise if your brain didn't wish for relief. So relief means nothing bad about you.

Second, relief is a feeling. It's an emotion. I use those words interchangeably. And feelings aren't moral. There are not feelings that are superior or inferior, they're not good, they're not bad, they're not better, they're not worse. Feelings are simply experiences that happen in our body, created by sentences in our mind.

All of us have them. None of them mean anything about the human having them except that the human has had a sentence in their mind that created an emotion. That's it.

So if you have experienced relief in grief and you're judging yourself for having had that feeling or having wanted it, I just want to offer that you can put that judgment down. You can be your own champion and decide to believe that your human desire for relief makes sense.

That it doesn't mean that you didn't love them enough, that it doesn't mean you were weak, that it doesn't mean you caused their passing or any other terrible thing.

That's what I have for you this week. And wherever you are, whatever you're going through, I just want to remind you that I love you and you've got this. Take care and I'll see you next week. Bye-bye.

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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.