

Ep #116: Imperfect Action Until



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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 116, Imperfect Action Until.

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. What do you suppose we really need to do to accomplish a goal? To create something new, a result in life that we want but that we've never had before?

In my experience, most of us think about that all wrong. We think we need to know how before we start. We think we should be doing A+ work. We think it's not supposed to be so hard and when it gets hard, we give up before we get there, and then we make it mean that there's something wrong with us.

So in today's episode, I want to talk about imperfect action until. It's a simple answer to creating whatever you really want in life. Before we jump into that though, I haven't read a listener review in a while and I want to do that.

So the first one is from Natasha Dallas and Natasha wrote, "My name is Natasha Dallas and I lost my husband January 23rd, 2020. I was 48 years old and we were married for 21 years. I have not applied to Krista's Widowed Mom program but I do receive her emails and I've joined or listened to many of her free programs. I look forward to receiving her emails as they always help me because they're so encouraging and listening to her speak about some of the things that I'm going through or have gone through is a huge help."

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Natasha, thank you so much for the five-star review and for the comment and I just want you to know that I see you, I hear you. And the second one is from AbbyMom11. And the title of her review is, "So needed." And she writes, "Krista is right on with discussing topics that widows need to know. This podcast is my source of encouragement on good and bad days. I often go for a walk and listen in. Her advice is helpful and doable. Thank you, Krista."

Thank you AbbyMom11. Listen, I know there's so many of you out there that I'm probably never going to have the chance to work with, there's 11 million widows in the US alone. So I'm never going to get to work with all of you, I'm never going to get to meet all of you, but I want you to know that when you write a review for the podcast, I read every single one of them and I see you, even if we don't get to meet, we don't get to work together, I see you and I'm thinking of you.

Okay, let's get into the episode. Imperfect action until. We're going to talk about what it is, why we want more of it, how it can help you. I'm going to tell you four ways that I think most of us are doing it wrong and how we can use imperfect action until to get what we want in life. You ready?

The first way that we're going wrong is that most of us aren't willing to take action until we believe that the action will work. In other words, we insist on knowing the how. And you'll know that you're doing this because it will show up in your life like spending a ton of time planning, researching, studying, a ton of time overthinking.

Maybe you're asking everyone for their opinions instead of just experimenting to see what works. Instead of just picking up the bow and arrow and using the simple ready aim fire, your philosophy is more like ready, aim, aim, aim, check the wind, wipe your brow, look at the arrow, worry about what the people behind you are going to think of you miss the shot, aim some more, aim, aim.

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Now I'm exaggerating a little bit, but where in your life are you doing this? Where is there a result that you want to create but you're not taking action because you don't know that it's going to work? And you want to know that the how is there before you start taking action. Most of us are doing this. I have done this so many times.

The truth though is that if it's something we've never done before and it's something that feels big, we probably aren't going to know the how yet. The how is only going to be revealed through action.

An example of this, Brooke Castillo, founder of The Life Coach School. When she started her life coaching business, I don't know, over a decade ago at least, life coaching wasn't really a thing. People didn't even know what a life coach was. She didn't have people around her that were successful life coaches showing her how to do it.

Nobody handed her a map that said hey, here's how to become a successful life coach. She just committed to becoming one and being successful at it, and then she tried a lot of stuff and failed. And she took a lot of imperfect action until she created a powerful life coaching business.

I think this year she's going to make somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 million dollars. I'm not kidding. 50 million dollars. And without her work, without her willingness to take imperfect action until she just figured it out, I wouldn't be here.

And the same thing is true for me. When Hugo died, nobody handed me a map that said hey, here's how to love your life again, here's how to go from feeling like a numb, hollow robot to making your future even more exciting than your past. Nobody gave me that roadmap.

But at a certain point, when I knew that post traumatic growth was a legitimate thing, I committed to figuring it out for myself. I committed to

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taking action until I got what I wanted. I decided my life, my happiness, my being able to dream again, my making a contribution to the world mattered. And I did not know how that was going to happen, but I took action anyway.

And that's what led me to coaching. That's what led me to enroll in a marriage and therapy master's program, and then later change my mind. Because I was taking action to figure out the how. And I was letting the how reveal itself to me through action.

Because we learn by doing, not by overthinking and not by overplanning. And if I had waited to know how it was going to happen, I wouldn't have made it happen. This is also why I'm so passionate about sharing what I've learned with you, so you can learn from my mistakes and you can get there faster.

Because like Brooke paved the way for me as a life coach, I want to pave the way for you to love your life again. So that's the first thing we've got to stop doing. We've got to stop not taking action because we can't see the how. We have to take action and then let the how show itself to us.

The second thing we're doing, many of us, maybe not all, but definitely me is we're overperfecting. We're trying to get the A+. I grew up in a system in my younger years where the goal was to get the A+. That's how we got approval. I was taught implicitly, the goal wasn't to learn or retain information or to experiment or grow.

The goal was to get good grades, to get the approval of my teachers, of my parents, to get the gold star because I did it right. The goal was not to fail. And this is almost the polar opposite of imperfect action until.

I believed a lie and you might be believing this lie that we should do it right or not at all. And we take right to mean perfect. Do it perfect or not at all.

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And maybe that helped us build an impressive résumé, and maybe that helped us get good grade point averages.

But now, it keeps us caught in a cycle of people-pleasing, it keeps us caught seeking validation outside of ourselves. It's the reason we work on something long past the point of diminishing return. So overperfection isn't helping us. Perfection isn't even helping us.

Can we shift our goal from A+ to good enough? And I know that's hard for you. It was hard for me. Almost like a sucker punch in my gut if someone told me to do B- work. What? No, I get As, in fact, I get A+s. But why?

If we're overperfecting, we're not figuring out the how. We're stuck in the ready, aim, aim, aim, aim. And that doesn't help us make a contribution, that doesn't help us get more data, that doesn't help us learn anything. That doesn't help us see the how. That just keeps us stuck.

If you want to listen to a little bit more information on this, I did a podcast episode called How to Overcome Perfectionism with Failure, so that would be a good one if this is resonating with you.

The third thing that we do, we're only willing to take a certain amount of action and then we quit. We go into something new that we want to create, but we aren't 100% committed. Committed no matter what. We're not committed no matter what to figuring it out.

So we take a certain amount of action and when that amount of action doesn't work, whatever that amount of action is that we've decided is appropriate, then we quit. So when you're asking yourself when is the appropriate time to quit on a dream, I'm going to offer that it's never.

Why would we quit on a dream? Why would we quit on something that genuinely matters to us? Just because it hasn't worked out yet, just

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because we haven't figured it out yet, just because we haven't taken enough imperfect action until.

If you're being called to pursue something that matters to you, then what if you just stopped entertaining the idea that you would quit? Because truthfully, most of us overestimate what we can accomplish in the short term and completely underestimate what we can accomplish in the long term.

And sometimes that seed that we've planted, it's under the ground, it's just about to sprout, but we haven't seen anything. We haven't seen anything come up from the ground, there's no seedling that's visible to us, but it's down there. It's getting its little roots, it's just about to break open, and then we decide that it's not working and we quit just at the moment that our efforts were about to pay off.

So if it matters to you, decide that you're 100% committed and then you take imperfect action until you get there. I always like to refer to Dan Sullivan's four C's. I love Dan Sullivan. I can't remember if I've taught this on the podcast before but I'm going to teach it again anyway because I just think it's so valuable.

Dan Sullivan teaches this tool called the four C's. And what he says is that often, we're waiting to feel confident before we do something, before we try something new, before we develop a new skill. And we let our lack of confidence hold us back from taking action.

And we don't want to do this, and we get it all wrong because we think that confidence comes first. We think we're supposed to feel confident and then take action. And what I love about the four C's that Dan teaches is that it's not at all true. What really happens is that first, we commit to something 100%. We go all in. We decide that the big thing we want is something we're going to figure out how to get. We're 100% committed.

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And if it's big enough, if it's outside of our current self-concept, then once we commit, we're going to feel scared. The part of our brain that doesn't fully believe that we can do it, the part of our brain that doesn't really want us to take that risk and associated risk with death will show itself and we will feel fear.

And the answer to that fear is the second C, courage. It's not confidence that we need. It's courage. We commit to something that scared the pea wadding out of us, then we need courage. And through courage and imperfect action until, trying something that doesn't work, falling down, picking ourselves up, learning more information, that's when we develop a capability that we've never had before. That's the third C. Capability.

Once we have a capability, the byproduct of all of that imperfect action until is confidence. So we've got it all wrong. We're looking for confidence before we start but what we really need is to commit 100%, that will scare us, then we use courage, and we try some stuff and we try some stuff and we try some stuff and we keep trying some stuff and we keep learning and we don't quit, and then we develop a capability. And then because we have this new capability, then we feel confident in that ability, in that new skill that we've learned.

So let's stop quitting on ourselves and let's commit 100% and take imperfect action until. So a reminder, we're not taking action because we believe we need to know the how. We're overperfecting, we're quitting too soon because we're only willing to take a certain amount of action, and the fourth thing is that we're telling ourselves it shouldn't be so hard.

We're on the journey, we're taking action and it's hard, and we're telling ourselves it shouldn't be. But really, most things worth doing are hard. They challenge us. They ask us to be a version of ourselves that we've never been before. Of course they're hard. They ask us to use skills and muscles we've never used in that way before. It's supposed to be hard.

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So whether your goal is figuring out how to love life again now that your partner died or starting a new career or a new business or going back to school or dating again or it could be anything, getting healthy, drinking less, shopping less, figuring out how to be playful again, starting a hobby, solo parenting, it doesn't matter.

If it's new and growth is involved, if it exceeds your self-concept, if you've never done it before, if you're not quite sure you can do it, it's supposed to be hard. So nothing has gone wrong when it is hard.

The primitive part of your brain that's designed to seek pleasure and avoid pain and be efficient won't want you to do it. And it will tell you it shouldn't be hard. But you got to have an answer for that part of your brain. You got to talk back to it. Hard is good, hard gives us growth, hard gives us the life and the future result that we want to create. So we need to lean into hard.

When we're doing something that's hard, we got to challenge the narrative about it. We have to talk to ourselves. This is hard, go me. This is hard, I'm good at doing hard things. This is hard and I'm so proud of myself for being up to the challenge. This is hard and I'm not quitting because things that stretch us will be hard and that's beautiful.

So the answer is imperfect action until. Action that is imperfect. We're not trying to get the A+. We're finding the point of diminishing return and we're not going past it. We're setting our sights on good enough. This podcast is a great example of that.

If I went for perfect, if I let that part of my brain that doesn't want you to judge me and wants to get the A+ dictate how long it took me to work on a podcast, I'd have about half of the episodes that I've created out by now. I would just be stuck in planning and overthinking and perfecting.

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But that doesn't serve you. That doesn't serve me. That doesn't serve my goal. And good enough is good enough, and that's what I tell myself. And listen, when I listen back to the podcast, it's like cringe-worthy sometimes. Sometimes I don't even listen.

But I have to keep reminding myself, I can't serve you if I get caught up in my perfectionism, if I get caught up in wanting everybody to think I'm amazing, I'll never help. So I take imperfect action.

And we want to take action with the goal not of being successful but with the goal of learning, of getting more data. If you are familiar at all with manufacturing, and I spent 10 years in an aviation manufacturing company. You've probably heard the term continuous improvement or kaizen.

Kaizen is the Japanese philosophy of good change or good improvement. It's about continuously improving your processes. And as widows, this is very relevant. It's very valuable in that way that we live our lives going forward, and one of the things that we focused really heavily on in terms of continuous improvement was this process called PDCA.

And some people would say it's plan, do, check, act, some people would say it's plan, do, check, adjust. I've come to like plan, do, check, adjust. So what we do, the goal is to iterate quickly, meaning we don't want to ready, aim, aim, aim, aim. Because we don't learn anything when we're aiming. We only learn when we fire. We only learn when we let go of the arrow and see if it hits the target. Then we adjust.

So we want to make a plan, but not spend too much planning. We want to do the thing, take action. Plan, do, then we want to check. Did it work? What happened? What did we learn? Did we get some new data? And then we adjust. Okay, now what? Okay, that didn't quite work, how could I adjust this?

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And then we do it again. We make a little plan but not too long, and then we do, we take action. And then we see how it worked, we check, and then we adjust. And the goal is to go as fast as you can. So your goal with action isn't success. Your goal with action is learning, it's getting more data.

There's this challenge that I love and it's called the marshmallow challenge. They used to have a website, you might check it out and see if it's still there. It was marshmallowchallenge.com. But it's this idea that - it's a game really. An icebreaker, team builder kind of game.

And the rules of the game are that you split people into groups and you give them uncooked spaghetti. So you know how uncooked spaghetti is hard, right? Give them uncooked spaghetti, you give them some tape, and you give them a large marshmallow. And you tell them that the point of the game is to build the tallest free-standing structure with the marshmallow on top.

And you time them. And whoever can build the tallest free-standing structure with the marshmallow on top wins. And it's a very interesting game. And it's been tested with lots of different demographics, lots of different levels of education, different ages, different positions within companies.

And you'll quickly - if you watch someone play this game or a group of people play this game, you'll see different approaches. And what I found to be so interesting about the marshmallow challenge is that the people who are best at the marshmallow challenge are not executives. They are not the highest educated. They are not the architects and the planners.

The people who are the most successful at the marshmallow challenge are kindergarteners. And the reason is that kindergarteners don't spend a lot of time planning. And kindergartners test things. If you watch groups of people in corporate environments do the marshmallow challenge, what often

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happen is that they spend a lot of time trying to come up with the perfect plan, a lot of time jockeying for power about who's in charge and how we're going to do this.

And then they build the structure finally, when they're running out of time, they start building, and then at the very last second, they put the marshmallow on the top. And because they didn't test the marshmallow, they didn't realize how heavy it was. And then their structure breaks and it falls down, which is the opposite of what kindergarteners do.

Kindergarteners immediately take the marshmallow and put it on the spaghetti and they start playing with it and testing it as they go. They're designing but they're also testing, they're taking action. They're making a little plan, they're doing something, they're checking their work and they're adjusting. They're following that PDCA cycle.

They aren't waiting for perfection. They aren't jockeying for power. They aren't trying to impress their peers. They aren't worried that their peers are going to judge them. They just jump in and try stuff. Can we do that? Can we just jump in and try some stuff? And maybe even have some fun along the way and experiment.

And because we're doing that from a place of commitment where we aren't going to quit, we can be assured that if that's the approach we take, we are going to get there. Because we're not going to quit, we don't need to know the how, and we're going to take action with the intention of learning and getting more data and adjusting.

So when you tell me you don't know what your purpose is and you don't know what your plan is going forward and you don't know how to be happy again, I hear you, I've been there. No amount of planning is going to show that to you.

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And this applies to any big goal you have in your life. You just decide, I'm going to figure this out and I am not quitting. And then you're going to feel scared. And that's totally fine. And you're going to let that courage fuel you, you're going to take action from a brave place. And you're not going to take action for external approval and you're not going to take action to get the A. You're going to take action for the purpose of learning.

What works? What doesn't? What do I like? What do I not like? And then you're going to see how it works and then you're going to adjust and you're going to repeat and repeat and repeat. Imperfect action until, until you create that result that you want.

And that result is valuable. If you want that result, it's important. If a part of you is asking to create something in this world, it matters. Give it a voice. And don't hide behind perfectionism and don't look for other people to approve. Imperfect action until.

Okay, that's what I have for you this week. I love you, you've got this. Go take some imperfect action until. Alright, take care, I'll 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.