

Ep #118: Sliding Backward in Grief



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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 118, Sliding Backward 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.

Have you ever wondered if you're sliding backward in your grief? You were doing so well, and now you're not, and therefore, you start worrying that you're sliding backward.

What if I told you there's just no such thing? That sliding backward is something we made up and at no point does thinking it serve us. Would you believe me? That's what we're going to talk about in this week's episode.

Little update from my life before we get into the episode. It's almost fall, y'all. If you follow me, you know that for me fall starts in August. I love fall so I'm ready. The boyfriend and I did some shopping, finally got some furniture for the formal living room.

We combined our own furniture and made furniture for our family room, but we have a formal living room and it's been completely bare since we moved into the house in June. And can't even use it because there's literally nowhere to sit.

So bought some furniture for that room, kind of exciting. Bought a new dining room table because as much as I really did love the one that I had, it just doesn't match this new house. It's a really hideous color in this house and the house is about to be fall-ified.

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So that's what's happening around here. Enough about me, let's talk about sliding backward in grief, shall we? Okay, this is actually going to be a short episode but it needs to be done because you know the saying, right? If I had a nickel for every time that a widow got caught up on this idea of sliding backward in grief, you get the idea.

So here's what happens. Someone in my Mom Goes On coaching program will ask me for coaching and they will say something like, "I need help because I'm sliding backward in my grief. I've been feeling so much better the last couple of months, weeks, days, doesn't matter, but now I'm sliding backward, I'm slipping. I was doing so well but now..."

And when they present it to me, they just assume that I'm sliding backward is true. That it's an observation that they're making and they're just telling me about it. It's just as believable to them as it would be if they looked outside their window and told me that the sky was blue and the grass was green.

It feels completely believable. So if you think you're sliding backward, pretty sure you also believe that I'm sliding backward is just an observation you're making about the reality of your life. So if that's you, that's why I'm bringing this to the podcast.

So then I'll ask something like, "Tell me how you know you're sliding backward." And I'll get an answer that's something around, "Well, I started feeling sad again, or I'm not feeling motivated, or I felt angry, or I stopped doing a workbook, or I'm just feeling overwhelmed and feeling stressed." These are the kinds of answers that I get.

So here's what I want you to know. Basically four things. First, grief is not linear or predictable. So the emotions that you're noticing are not an indicator that you're sliding backwards. We have this big misconceptions

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and I encourage you to put it aside, that grief is somehow supposed to be stages, that it's predicable, that we should be making steady progress.

So please put aside any misconception that your experiencing grief is supposed to be orderly or based on stages or steps. None of that is accurate. It's not a straight line. It's like a giant scribble.

If we were just to take a pen and scribble on a piece of paper, that's like plotting out the experience for most of us of grief. So it's not linear and it's not predictable. What you think is supposed to be happening, neat, tidy, orderly stages, isn't actually grief. And we have to understand that first.

Second, the presence of a negative emotion does not mean that you're sliding backward. All emotions are caused by thoughts. All emotions are caused by thoughts. The only thing it means when you're having an emotion is that you're believing a thought in your brain, and that's not a problem.

We're designed to have both positive and negative emotion. That is the human experience. You are having feelings because your thoughts are creating them for you. That is a perfectly human thing to do. That does not mean that something has gone wrong or that you're sliding backward. It's just the truth that thoughts cause feelings, and it's showing up in your life.

So you don't have to judge your negative emotion and make it mean that you're not doing grief right, or that you're sliding backward. It's totally not true. So reminder, first, grief is not linear or predictable. Second, negative emotions just mean that you're having thoughts. Nothing has gone wrong here.

Third, what you are doing or not doing doesn't mean anything about where you are in your grief. If you're not taking action in a particular area of life, or

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you don't like the action you're taking in a particular area of life, it doesn't mean that you're sliding backward.

You're not taking action because of how you feel, and how you feel is caused by a thought in your brain. Again, nothing has gone wrong here. There is nothing wrong with you, this does not mean you are going backwards in your grief. This is just the model at work in your life.

Thoughts cause feelings, feelings drive behaviors, behaviors produce outcomes. And we can change any and all of them, but we don't have to judge them and make them mean that something's gone wrong.

I just coached a person today in Mom Goes On and she was just really judging herself for a pattern, and her pattern was the state of her house. She looks at her house and she thinks the thought, "It feels impossible." And when she thinks it feels impossible, then that creates the emotion of defeated.

That makes sense, right? If you're believing something feels impossible, you're thinking that thought, you're probably going to feel defeated. Makes a lot of sense that a human with the thought, "It feels impossible," would feel defeated.

And then because our actions come from our feelings, when she feels defeated, she doesn't tackle what's going on in her house. No, none of us do. She avoids her house. She gets on her phone. She starts doing tasks that are less important to her. She tries not to think about her house, she tries to get away from it.

That makes total sense. That doesn't mean there's anything wrong with her. That just means that thoughts cause feelings and feelings drive actions. And this is the pattern with all of us as humans.

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So whatever it is that you're doing or not doing, we do not need to make it mean that you're sliding backwards. It's not helpful to do that. Even if we could get a panel of grief experts to agree that you were sliding backward, it still wouldn't actually serve you to think that way.

This is my fourth point. Even if it were a thing, sliding backward, which it isn't, it would not serve you. Because here's what that thought creates. Imagine you're thinking I'm sliding backward, you're thinking I'm slipping, you're thinking I was doing so well, but now. There's many cousins of this thought I'm sliding backward.

And what do those thoughts create emotionally? How do you feel when you think I'm sliding backward, I'm slipping, I was doing so well but now? You start to feel afraid, you start to feel anxious, or doubtful, or maybe discouraged or defeated.

And remember, how we feel fuels how we behave. So what do we do when we're feeling afraid or anxious or doubtful, discouraged, defeated? Well, we probably second-guess ourselves. We judge ourselves. We start spending more time worrying about how we're doing it wrong and brains look for evidence of our thoughts, so then our brain starts looking for evidence of how it's true that we're sliding backward or slipping or we were doing so well but now.

Our brain starts showing us the data that lines up with that thought, literally proving it true. It starts showing the backslide and blocking any evidence of forward movement or progress. And when we're feeling afraid or anxious or defeated or discouraged, we close off.

If you're in my program, that means you stop doing the work in the program. You beat yourself up. When we're feeling those feelings, that's when we start avoiding our feelings and that's when we start numbing out

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with food and social media and distraction. We start sleeping more than our body needs because we're just looking for the escape hatch.

And maybe we start going out of the house less, and maybe we decline invitations from people. And it's just not useful because these are not the emotions from which we are able to powerfully create. No human creates a powerful, intentional behavior from feelings of fear and anxiousness and doubt and discouraged.

We don't do that. We contract instead of expanding. And we literally prove our own thought true. We block ourselves from the life we want because we're believing this story that we're sliding backward or that we're slipping. We believe the story and we feel the feeling and we do the thing and we prove the thought true.

So even if we could get a panel of grief experts to agree that you were sliding backward, it literally still wouldn't serve you to think it that way. Because it would make you feel terrible. And when humans feel terrible, we don't create the lives that we want. We block ourselves. We don't advocate well for our wellbeing.

Even if all the experts agreed that you had PTSD or prolonged or complicated grief or clinical depression, believing the thought I'm sliding backward or any of its close thought relatives would not help you love your life again. I promise you it wouldn't.

Sliding backwards is something we made up. It doesn't actually exist. It's just an idea. It's a story. So I don't want you to believe this lie of I'm sliding backward when it shows up in your brain. And I want you to be ready with a loving answer.

Be ready for that thought to show up. Be ready with a loving answer. One that helps you move forward and create the life that you value. One that

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helps you stay present with yourself in your current life. One that has you being your own champion and being kind to yourself.

So let me give you some options. Here are some other thoughts that you could tell yourself. When your brain says, "You're sliding backward," I want you to be ready and I want you to say, "This is grief. Grief is hard. I'm still here, I'm still doing it, I can do hard things." I want you to say, "I'm so proud of you."

That's what I say to myself. I know I've told you this a million times. I say it to you, I say it to me. I literally say, "Krista, I'm so proud of you." You can say this to yourself. "I'm right on track. Everything is figureoutable." The famous saying by Marie Forleo. Everything is figureoutable. I can figure this out too.

And maybe I don't have to do this alone. Maybe you do want to reach out to someone and you do want to choose to see that you don't have to go this alone. So be ready. If you haven't thought this thought, that's awesome, but chances are it's going to pop up in your brain.

Something's going to happen and you're going to be inclined to say, "I was doing so well, and now I'm falling backward, I'm slipping backward, I'm sliding backward." Some version of that thought.

And I just want you to remember, no, it's an optional story. You don't have to listen. Grief is not linear, it's not predictable, there are no neat stages, it is not tidy, it is a giant scribble.

Just because you have negative emotion means nothing about you. We're supposed to have negative emotion. Negative emotion is supposed to be part of grief. Just because you aren't behaving in ways that you were behaving a little while ago also doesn't mean that you're sliding backward.

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It just means that you're having a thought and that thought is causing a feeling and that feeling is driving your actions. And if you don't like that pattern, you get to be the boss of it. You can change it.

That's what I have for you this week. Wherever you are, whatever is going on, I love you, 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.