

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 119, Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton.

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. This one is another interview. Somebody I have wanted you all to meet. I've been admiring my guest today from afar, even though we're part of the same coaching community, I've been admiring her in terms of first of all, her style, which is what I have her on the podcast to talk with you about.

But also - and she might not know this - for her coaching. Judith is an absolutely brilliant coach and I'm excited for you to get to know a little bit about what she teaches today because I don't think we often think of style as having anything to do with grief.

But it really does, and I want her to explain what we need to be thinking about as widows to find our sense of style at a time when frankly, it feels like we don't even know who we are sometimes. We can't even imagine even worrying about something like style.

I think partly that's because you, like me, are perhaps not defining style in the way Judith defines it. So I'm looking forward to you hearing that from her and just also learning some of the little things that we can do to find our style, to step into our style, to take care of ourselves through style.

So with that, I would love to introduce you to Judith. And also, if you like what Judith has to offer, go check out her podcast. It's called Style

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Masterclass and it's lovely. And I will tell you again, sometimes with interviews, this one might require earmuffs for the kiddos.

If you're listening with kids in the car, there's a little bit of swearing in this podcast interview. But one of the things I really value is bringing people who aren't putting on airs, who really are themselves, and Judith is herself on the podcast. But just be forewarned. Alright, let's get into it. Hope you enjoy.

—

Krista: Welcome Judith to the podcast. I am so excited for my listeners to meet you. So why don't you start by just introducing yourself, tell them who you are, what you do, how you came to do that work.

Judith: Yeah, so I'm Judith Gaton. Nice to meet you all. I'm waving but you can't see me, so hi. I'm Judith Gaton. I am a style coach and I help women dress and love the body they're in right now. So that is my main mission.

And really what the greater purpose of the belief that confident women change the world, so if we can get women up and dressed and loving the body they're in and then they can sort of set it and forget it and be about their business in less time, because I think that is a huge concern for most women. I came about this work in a very roundabout way. I started out as a fashion designer and then went to law school, and then got certified as a life coach.

Krista: Because that's the normal path to go first to fashion design and then law school. That's standard.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Judith: Makes perfect sense, right? So yeah, and then I came back full circle to style and got to marry all the things I love most, which is helping women, talking about mindset, and style, all at the same time. So that's why I became a style coach really. The short version.

Krista: I love it. I love it. For my listeners too as you said, to change the world, even if I could just - if people take away how they can change their own world from the conversation that we have today, I think that would be incredibly useful to people.

Because I think sometimes the widowed mom experience, it feels often like you're at the expense of everything going on around you, that there's no time for you. And so to leave this conversation believing there are ways you can feel more empowered and change your own world would be amazing.

Judith: And I love that you touched on that because I want to be clear what I mean by that. I believe in what we call the ripple effect. So one tiny thing that you do can effect big change. So even if you decide to do some very small act of self-care or kindness for yourself, the ripple effect of that can be world-changing.

Now, it might seem like why bother, this is so silly, this is kind of not going to make any big difference, it won't move the needle, but I want us all - if we use the framework of the ripple effect and we just start from that basic premise, the tiny little things you do for yourself, however seemingly insignificant can have a huge ripple effect in just your world, your tiny family, your community, your bigger community, and so forth and so on.

So think of it that way. The little infinitesimal things that we think this is so dumb, it can actually have a bigger effect if we let it.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Krista: I like that. I like thinking about the podcast that way too. It's maybe 20 to 30 minutes of me behind a microphone but then someone listens and then they teach their children, and then their children teach their friend, whatever, and it's fun to see it all ripple, so I like that the same thing is true with our own confidence and how we take care of ourselves.

Okay, so I'm imagining most of my listeners and if this is not you, totally cool, but I'm imagining a lot of my listeners are thinking things like, "How could I possibly ever have time for style? Why would style even be important to me? I'm barely surviving, let alone taking time to think about fashion." It's like, almost feels like a pipe dream that you would even have time to consider these things. So not a necessity. What would you say to that?

Judith: So I think - we'll start with the second question and then the first one. So in terms of why bother with any of this style stuff, and I hear that a lot, this style stuff, which I love. I think it's a great question. Because we see so much turmoil in the world, a lot of your listeners have gone through some really deep stuff. And it's kind of like, you want me to what? You want me to talk about lipstick? Really, bitch? Really?

Krista: Really? Because I have time for that.

Judith: Because I have time for that. So I want us to think of style versus fashion. If we clear that up a little bit, it might be a little helpful and then we'll deep dive into style. So fashion I want you to think is sort of the external things that are going on around us, like all these trends that we see.

Like some little chickypoo in a neoprene suit, bouncing around on a runway. Okay, yeah, that's fashion. That's outside of us, it's so trends, all that craziness. And then if we think about fashion as happening outside of

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

us, style is personal. So when we talk about style, we bring it closer to home, it's literally about your thoughts and feelings about yourself outwardly reflected.

Krista: Say that again.

Judith: Your thoughts and your feelings about yourself outwardly reflected. That's all style is.

Krista: I like it.

Judith: Because if we think about how we think about ourselves, how we feel about ourselves, and therefore how we treat ourselves, that's what style is. So whether you want to get dressed up in neoprene and bounce around on a runway, you do you, boo.

But if you just want to make sure you washed your face, washed your booty, did something with your hair and put on some clothes today, then that's style. Let's talk about style.

Krista: Okay, I'm so glad you took the time to separate those two for us. Because this is not a world that I live in particularly, so it's great to explain it to me and I appreciate that you did that.

Judith: So fashion is out there, style is personal. So when we're trying to talk to people about style and why bother, it's like asking sort of why bother getting to know yourself, why bother taking care of yourself. And I often use the analogy of a beautiful dress that you were handed when you were younger.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

And you were obsessed with this dress, you wore the dress every day, it's amazing, it's amazing, it's amazing, but slowly, the buttons start to fall off, the zipper starts to fail, little snippets of this dress start to be taken out of it because life happens to this poor dress.

So before we know it, this fabulous dress we once had is this tattered, worn thing that we're like, I'm supposed to wear this every day? Damn it. But it was this thing we once loved. That's sort of the relationship with ourselves. Over time, if we don't take care of ourselves and we think of style as personal and not necessarily this huge mountain to climb, just the little tiny things we do to take care of ourselves, the little things we do to repair that dress, the little things we do to launder that dress, it will make a huge difference over time.

So even just moisturizing your face as an act of style, drinking a glass of water, taking your booty to bed a little bit earlier, getting that beauty rest that actually matters. Teeny little things are the ways of showing yourself, I'm just going to love on you a little bit today.

And it doesn't have to be this huge thing, because I think we make it a thing with style and we see so much stuff coming out. It becomes this mountain to climb, but no, what if it's just like, I'm going to re sew the button on this dress. Nothing sexy, nothing exciting happening here. I'm just going to take care of myself in these really, teeny, teeny, teeny, small ways.

Because I don't want to walk around in a tattered dress. That's not useful to me. So just kind of thinking of it in that way, this is about your relationship with yourself ultimately. So thoughts and feelings outwardly reflected, if we look at how you're caring for yourself, that gives us a lot of information about the thoughts and feelings you're currently having, which is why this is so important.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

Krista: I love it. It's so broadening up what I had in mind, even when I was thinking of style. I really was thinking of outward appearances and that nobody's going to see - maybe they could I guess if they got really close to my skin, but nobody's really going to see whether I took time to put moisturizer on. So that's self-care. Love it.

So it doesn't have to be big, it doesn't have to be - I think what you're saying, it doesn't have to be all or nothing. And it's not really about the runway or "fashion." It's about thoughts and feelings about yourself outwardly reflected. Love it.

So if someone is not doing anything, because I remember early days for me where showering was hard. It was just hard to get out of bed. And I know my listeners are all over the place. Some of them are in those early acute days of grief where they're just struggling to get out of bed, some of them are feeling like hollow robots who are moving through the world and everyone's telling them that they look so strong and they're doing so good, but they don't feel so good.

So they're in all kinds of different places. But where do we even just start? How do we move from style is not a priority to something without getting overwhelmed?

Judith: Something, yes, I love this something. That's the important part. We have to start somewhere. So one thing I teach is called the one boob at a time protocol.

Krista: I did listen to that podcast and it was fantastic, so go ahead.

Judith: I think we think okay, if I'm going to get stylish, therefore I have to be dressed to the nines, hair done, nails done, makeup done, outfit on

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

point, that's - oh my God, that's even daunting for me most days. So the idea is there's days where crap happens where you're just not going to feel like it.

So for your people who are struggling to even get out of bed, or even just shower, we want to start you out slowly. So the idea is to sort of decide on a teeny tiny small step and then celebrate it. And then to do it again and again.

So the example I use particularly in the podcast is like, okay, I want to shower today. But the first mission is to hang my feet over my bed and sit up in bed. Mission number one, okay, feet are over, we did it, alright boo, we got this. We're just going to put our feet on the floor now and we're going to walk into the bathroom.

Cool, great, yes, we did it. Feet on the floor, we walked into the bathroom. Alright, next step, we're going to turn the water on. Celebrate that. Next step, I'm going to get undressed, I'm going to get in there. Celebrating.

And it's going to seem a little tedious and kind of funny, but the idea is you really can only put your bra on one boob at a time. You can put your pants on one leg at a time. If we break it down into a tiny step and we celebrate that, like we're getting your brain a little dopamine hit, which it so desperately needs, you're proving to yourself you can do this one thing, and you're creating a relationship with yourself where you are your biggest cheerleader.

So even if all we did was get in the shower, that's not all we did. We got out of bed, we got undressed, we got in the shower, we got out of the shower. Even if we're just going to put fresh jammies on, that's it. Mission freaking accomplished.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

So starting to build this rapport with yourself is the best way to get started on any style journey because your brain has to believe that nothing's going to go horribly wrong if you shower today, and that it was worthwhile to shower today. And it felt great after you showered. It doesn't really believe you because it's just chilling. Why would we do this?

Krista: Yeah, it's kind of like it's just not going to be worth it so why bother?

Judith: Exactly.

Krista: Life sucks, so what's one little thing?

Judith: But one little thing of not showering over time will add up. So all we have to do is sell your brain on showering today. And we're letting that be enough.

Krista: What about somebody who's further along? So they're in that place where everybody's telling them they're really strong and they're going through the motions and they're back to work and they're doing the things, but still don't really feel like they - or maybe have never given much thought to style. They're just kind of going through the motions.

Judith: I find a lot of people here just in general, a lot of my really strong ladies who are operating like a brain without a body, I just have to get through today, I'm just getting by, I'm just getting through. So for people who are there, I would just say find one area.

We don't have to do full makeover. Again, we don't have to do the whole kit and caboodle. Find one area that you think you might want to try exploring. And it doesn't have to be - especially if a lot of people are coming at you

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

with, “You’re so strong, you’re so brave,” and you want to punch people in the face, it doesn’t have to be anything outwardly glorious.

Maybe you don’t want to start putting on a full face of makeup, and we just want to - for the example, moisturize your face. Something that’s purely for you and nobody else.

Krista: I like the idea of starting with underwear.

Judith: I’m a big fan.

Krista: Talk about it.

Judith: Underwear is another thing that’s purely just for you and it’s between you and you. And nobody has to know that you went and got underwear that fit you. Let’s just start there. We got rid of...

Krista: What? Underwear that fit you? What? What is this?

Judith: So many women I’ve talked to didn’t know that it’s not normal for their undies to ride up. They don’t have to live that way anymore. So even just starting small acts like that. Things that nobody will see, so you don’t have to deal with people’s commentary about it.

But just so that, you again, to build rapport with yourself. So starting in your underwear drawer. Anything that has holes, that has stains, all the panties can’t be period panties, otherwise you have really no panties, let’s be honest.

Krista: That has happened to me, where all of a sudden the entire drawer is period panties. And you’re like, what happened? But then you just decide it

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

doesn't matter because nobody sees it but you. And so we tell ourselves it doesn't matter.

Judith: Yeah, we tell ourselves it doesn't matter but you see you and you're the one having to deal with the uncomfortable undies, or you're the one who has to go in the drawer and for people who are in a time crunch, if you're rifling through to find the one good pair of underwear because everything has turned janky, where you're like, damn it, my one good pair is dirty, so now I have to wear the kind that I really know I shouldn't be wearing because they're going to make me miserable all day, we don't have time for that crap. You have better things to do with your time than to be distracted by underwear that don't fit you.

Krista: Yeah, and I also think it's just one small little way that you can make yourself feel even just a teeny bit better. Because who wants to start the day putting on something that actually doesn't make you feel good about yourself?

Judith: If we can get you to do nothing else, dear listener, go to your underwear drawer after this call and really just get rid of anything that has holes or stains, or you've been telling yourself these will be period panties, these will be period panties. It's time to let that go and if nothing else gets accomplished and you could just get rid of holes and stains, you're going to free up your brain to not have to make micro decisions about janky underwear because you got better things to do.

But also, you'll give yourself the benefit and the pleasure of knowing at least a few good pair that fit you, the good enough pair even, and again, building that relationship with yourself. Like, I'm going to take care of you, I've got your back. Even if it's just undies that nobody sees, I've got you. I've got you.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

Krista: Yeah. I love that. I'm going to take care of you, even if it just starts with underwear and nobody even has to know. One of the things that I did that really felt good to me was buying new pajamas. I had never, until my husband died, actually invested in nice pajamas. I just always wore t-shirts or whatever.

And I remember discovering - no plug, there's nothing in it for me but I'll plug them anyway. Soma, their cool night pajamas, buying a pair of those for myself felt like complete luxury. And nobody knew I bought them, nobody else was seeing me wear them. But it just felt like self-care on a level for me that I had never extended to myself.

Judith: I had one client a few rounds ago, and we just did pajamas. We just up-leveled her PJ game. She's like, the truth is I'm probably not going to get dressed. I was like, cool, you want jammies? Let's get you jammies. She's like, wait a minute, what? I'm like, did you know you could have a wardrobe up-level of just your jammies? And she's like, holy crap.

1930s style loungewear, we can up your game. You can be one of those ladies who lounge. No shame in your game, in really nice PJs. And it was super transformative for her because we just up-leveled - first we were realistic about what she was actually going to wear, which I think is huge.

Just be real, real. If you're a yoga pant gal, you just wear the best damn yoga pants you can find, boo. If you're going to be in your jammies all day and we're just changing into fresh jammies, let's get you the best damn jammies that we can find you, that fit you, that you're going to love.

And again, no one sees you? That's besides the point. You see you. So you get the benefit and the luxury of great fabrics, cool textures, especially if you're perimenopausal or menopausal. You want cool things because y'all get hot. We want to make sure you're taken care of.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

Krista: I know, and it wasn't even happening to me. I wasn't even perimenopausal, but just waking up in sweats in the middle of the night. Whatever t-shirt I was wearing was soaked, just because I wasn't in the right fabrics at night. And literally not sleeping well and not knowing that I actually could change that for myself by making a small move like that, which doesn't even have to be done in the store. We don't even have to go anywhere to do these kinds of things, we can literally do it online.

Judith: Oh my gosh, there's so many different - I'm not affiliated with any of them but I want to give you all some resources. So Printfresh is a great brand that carry up to a 4X. So if you're newly on the plus side of life, great resource for you.

Krista: You said Printfresh?

Judith: Printfresh. They have great, bold print, color jammies, in these really cool cottons that are very smooth. They hold up to a lot of wash and wear and they come in these beautiful little packages. It's just worth the experience of buying from them.

Weirdly, J.Crew has great PJs that are super soft. They also carry up to a 3X, so size inclusive again. And then there's brands that have washable silks and satins, and you can just research washable silk pajamas. They're very expensive but also worth it if you're down. Soma is a great option obviously, really, really wonderful option.

And just these three things, if you were to up-level in some way, just your jammies, explore brands, whatever size you happen to be, because I think one of the worst things, when your jammy game is swag tees, old sweats - this is a little test for y'all tomorrow morning.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

Before your feet hit the ground, before you reach for your phone, I want you to check in with your body. Are you twisted in your bed clothes? Because that's the experience you've had all night of your pajamas, which is awful. And if nothing else, if nothing else that you do for yourself, if we can get you jammies that fit that aren't going to be twisted around your body, you're going to have to pull out of your crotch or your armpit, and you're soaked in sweat, if we can just up-level your sleep game just a little by up-leveling your PJs, you're going to have a much better experience during the day.

So just check in, and that will be your cue to yourself that you probably need some new jam-jams if you're sweaty and gross and your clothes are twisted around you and you want to just...

Krista: That's no way to wake up. But honestly, not anything I would have ever thought about. I would never think about where are things right now as I lay in this bed. Are they in places they should be or in places I don't want them? I have no idea.

Judith: Or for my gals who are big-chested and stuff, are you sleeping on your boobs? Are you uncomfortable? Do you need a sleep bra? We can work it out, take care of yourself.

Krista: So an easy place to start, panties, jammies, little moisturizer or something else. What else? What are some other areas? Because I think these things come very naturally to you and a lot of us might struggle.

Judith: I think our stretchy pants game. Let's talk about that. Because I think the reality for most moms and a lot of women, and especially if you are struggling to even get dressed every day, stretchy pants are your reality.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

So we're not going to shame you for them, we're not going to take them away from you, you're not required to wear "real" pants. Just make sure that the stretchy pants you're wearing are in great condition. So we want to check for any holes, we want to check for pilling in the thigh area...

Krista: Rub, rub, rub.

Judith: Right. Any rolling down, or falling - right?

Krista: Rolling down, yes.

Judith: Why put up with that shit? Go buy some new yoga pants, boo, it's okay. So we want to just acknowledge if you're in stretchy pants land, and that's where you live, cool, cool. Just make sure they fit you and they're actually serving you in the way that you think they are. Because if you're messing with them all day, they're actually not comfortable and they're not doing you any favors.

Krista: Yes. So I'm imagining the objections though. "But Judith, they cost so much money, but Judith, they're still in good condition, but Judith..." what do you say to those things? Because that's what people are thinking, right?

Judith: Hell yes that's what they're thinking. So let's talk about this in reality. They're not in good condition if they have holes or they're pilling or they're falling off your body and rolling. It's actually not good condition because they're driving you crazy all day. So it's just simply not true.

The other thing is for a lot of ladies, especially people who are in grief or people even during COVID, a lot of people gained weight. So the yoga pants you had a year ago are probably not your friend today, my friend, and

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

that's okay. Elastic has a shelf life. So I really want us to question this good condition thing because chances are, they may not be, and that's okay.

Krista: Let's reconsider what good condition even means.

Judith: Right, exactly.

Krista: Are they in good condition for your body?

Judith: For your body as it is today. Not the one you hope to have when you've lost weight or done your diet regimen or got back on your exercise, whatever. No, the human woman you are today, what yoga pants does she need or stretchy pants does she need to support the life that she has?

That's what we want. So the other thing in terms of cost, because I hear this a lot, I want you to stop thinking of the cost out of the store as the subtle cost forever. I want you to think of cost per use. So if we take a \$100 pair of yoga pants, really nice, really great, \$100 pair of yoga pants, some of you are like, what? Bear with me.

You wear them for 100 times, that's a dollar per use. Totally worth it. You wear them 200 times because let's be real-real. We have now 50 cents per use. So thank God, those things served you well. We love them. And it also helps us to let go of the ones that we've had for x number of time because we're like, oh, you have served your purpose, thank you so much for your service.

It's easier to let go. Don't think of the one-time cost. That's so irrelevant. It's cost per use. And then here's the thing; even stuff that you're like, I only wore this for a short amount of time, I haven't gotten enough use out of it, same thought applies. Even if you wore \$100 yoga pants 10 times, it was

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

still \$10 per use, probably okay with that. It's probably going to be okay, my friends.

Krista: And what's the cost of wearing something you don't feel good when you're wearing?

Judith: Exactly. It's just a distraction.

Krista: It's a distraction. This pair of pants is coming to mind. I tried to buy a relatively cheap pair of - I don't know, I guess you call them stretchy pants. I hate them so much because they're kind of scratchy and they do the roll thing and they slip and then they're falling in the crotch, and then you've got this hang down thing happening in the crotch and I just hate them so much. And I tried so hard to make myself wear them because I had paid for them.

Judith: I love you for totally copping this because I feel like every person really, but I think particularly women that I've talked to because they're socialized to, I have to earn my new clothes, is it that time of year to buy new clothes, right?

We're taught that kind of stuff. So anything that's that bothersome to y'all, I'm giving you permission right now to get rid of it. We are here to give you permission, set yourselves free. But really, there's no bank of pants. This is particularly with pants. I don't know what it is.

There's no bank of jeans or bank of pants that's like, keeping track of how much you've spent on it, and if you keep it, you somehow get that money back later. There's no bank of jeans, I promise you. No one's keeping tabs. That money has been spent, it is gone.

Krista: There's no reward system or point system that we're accumulating.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Judith: God's not keeping track, and if you get to have any he's like, I'm going to reward you with your jeans points now, you get a better mansion.

Krista: You have worn the crappy pants five times, therefore...

Judith: Therefore you get this pearl necklace or this special crown. No, that doesn't happen.

Krista: I also have to remind myself too when I buy things that I later don't like. Somebody actually might like that thing that I bought, maybe it would look good on their body. It's not working on mine. And so even just donating it is a better option than having it either on my body and ill fitting, or in my closet and not being worn.

Judith: Exactly. Some other gal can benefit from it and they just weren't for you and that's okay.

Krista: This is kind of random but it just popped into my mind. So not too long ago I went clothes shopping, I think I tagged you on Facebook to tell you about it because for most of my life, and I think this is a fairly common thing for women, I have had a miserable experience in the dressing room.

You go into the dressing room, the lighting is bad, the mirrors are bad, you put on a pair of clothes and they don't fit, and then you make it mean there's something wrong with your body. That there's something wrong with you, that the clothes are fine, but you're the one that needs to change.

And I don't know where I heard you say it, but it completely changed my entire shopping experience and forever it will always change every shopping experience I have henceforth, which was to go into the dressing

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

room and pretend that the clothes are auditioning for you. Can you teach my listeners about that? Because it was so good for me.

Judith: It's funny. That whole idea came about because I like to teach my people that you're the leading lady of your life, which I know sometimes can be hard to wrap your arms around, but really, you're the one writing this story, you're the star of the show.

So your clothes are part of the costuming department. They're the sidekicks to your adventure. They're not the main event. So when you're the leading lady, all the clothes are auditioning for you. Some of them are going to make the cut, some of them are just not going to.

Sometimes you're going to be like, we've decided to go in a different direction, thank you so much for your service. And they can move on and we can just let them go without making it mean anything about us.

There are some casts of characters that are not going to fit into the movie you're writing currently and that's okay. It doesn't mean anything about you or the story you're writing. Think of how insane this would be. So we had an actress who got to this multi-million dollar budget movie, and they're like, oh, your jeans don't fit? We'll just have to scrap the whole story, time to rewrite the whole thing.

That would be insane. What the hell? We think this about our clothes. Oh, my jeans didn't fit so I need to go on some wacky diet, I need to wear three pairs of Spanx, I need to exercise more, I need to get a butt lift, hip - no, the jeans just didn't fit. It has nothing to do with you. They didn't make the cut, they didn't make the audition, we can let them go.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Krista: I actually - when I did this, I found myself actually feeling a little bit of compassion for the clothing. It's not you. You're okay, you're going to make it, it's just not going to be with me today, but it's okay, you're going to find someone.

And I went from really feeling the normal experience of just judging myself and wishing I were different and all those crappy thoughts that tend to pop into our minds, to having a completely different experience of buying clothing for my body, and letting the clothes audition for my body. It was beautiful.

Judith: And in terms of a concept, taking that everywhere. Okay, there's going to be maybe even some friendships where the people are going to audition for you and you're going to be like, no, not today, not today. You had a role in this movie, your role has come to an end, we're going to write you off, thank you so much for your time.

Krista: Yes, or a career.

Judith: A career, yes, that too. Exactly. Literally, this applies to so many places. Even as you're re-engaging in social interactions, I think this is such a great concept to even take with you. As you decide at some point, depending on what stage of grief you're in, let's say you decide to socialize more, or again, or maybe you just decide to date again at some point.

And there's so much pressure because you think you're the one auditioning. You are not the one auditioning. The other humans are auditioning to be part of your story. And here's the beautiful thing is like, you might decide some people are just not going to make the cut into your movie that you're writing.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

They're not a part of this season's plan for your show. It's okay. Totally okay. And people who were part of season one and two may not be a part of season three and four because you've decided to go in a different direction. And you can feel the energy of stepping into that like, I've decided, and that's okay.

But I think there's so much pressure too when you start to socialize again or start to interact, maybe you're feeling better and you're getting back out there, it's like you're somehow auditioning to re-enter, and it's like, no, reverse that.

Krista: I like that. And a lot of widows find that the people they thought they could really count on are maybe not what they thought, and maybe they don't want to give them the same role in their lives going forward. And then sometimes the people that you never really imagined would be there for you are the ones that come out of the woodwork and support you in ways that might make you want to give them leading roles. And so I like that analogy.

Judith: Some people are going to be supporting cast members, and some people are going to be sidekicks. And then some people that you thought were for sure a sidekick becomes a supporting cast member and the supporting cast member becomes the sidekick, sort of to be written off the show and never heard from again, and not making it mean anything about you as a leading lady or the star of the show. It's okay, people come and go all the time.

Krista: Brilliant. I love it. Okay, so a lot of times, this is what I have experienced myself and see in my clients, we have never really given much thought to just creating things on purpose. That's anything from style to just life. So what I'm always trying to help people do is realize that your person

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

died, but that doesn't mean that you can't create the next chapter of life and genuinely love it.

You loved the first chapter that you had, that chapter is no longer available to you, and now with intention, we're going to go and create the next chapter of life on purpose. So how do we fit this idea of style into that? Because what I hear all the time is, "I don't know who I am anymore. I don't know who I am." So when you put yourself in that place and you're genuinely believing that you don't know who you are, it's also hard to imagine what your style is.

Judith: Yes. I think it's also the best, most beautiful, probably the easiest way to find yourself, so to speak. And I know it sounds weird, but walk with me, y'all. So if we can just start, and remember, it's relationship with yourself. So even creating a new life for yourself is really about your relationship with yourself, and the other people get to play a part, but really, you're the star of the show, you're writing this story.

So style is kind of a fun way to start to ask yourself the best, hardest, sweetest, awesome-est question ever, which is what do I want? Which so many women in particular are socialized not to ever ask themselves that question, and never to even listen for the answer.

We're like, okay, well, what do I want? But we don't pause long enough and we feel like we don't have room or space to pause long enough to actually hear the answer. And it seems like a very daunting, very big esoteric question.

But if we bring it down to daily beauty style stuff, we start to, again, build that rapport with ourselves. So what do I want to do with my hair today? And just listen for the answer, and then respect whatever the answer is. I

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

just want to wear a ponytail, cool, we're going to rock a ponytail today. I don't actually want to do anything with it, cool, we don't have to.

And listening to it and then honoring whatever that answer is. Do I want to wear lipgloss or chapstick today? What do I want? I actually prefer a little gloss, cool, we'll put some gloss on you. Asking yourselves these very small things when it comes to style, when it comes to self-care, when it comes to beauty routines, hair routines, if you can get yourself to buy in that on some bigger level you're going to ask yourself the question, you're going to respect yourself enough to listen, and you're going to respect yourself enough to follow through with what that answer is, we can go meta with that in bigger areas that have bigger import in your life.

We have to start you small, especially if you're out of practice with asking yourself that question, listening, and respecting with whatever it is that you actually want. If you're so used to excusing or justifying, or over-explaining your answer to that question and then not following through, that's the kind of relationship you've developed with yourself.

So when it comes to bigger life questions, your brain is like, you won't even listen to what I want for dinner, how am I going to tell you what I want out of big picture life? So style is a great way to ease you in to creating the life you want. I think it's a really fun, low cost of entry way to start to build that relationship with yourself.

So when you get to the bigger questions like what do I want to do with my life, you're already in practice of asking the question and listening to the answer you bring with you.

Krista: What do you say to people when the first answer their brain gives them is I don't know?

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Judith: I think one thing is letting people be free to guess. Just guess. We're making this shit up. Let's just make something up. But start small. I think what do you want in a very big way is daunting. I wouldn't know how to ask that question, especially when I first started all of this journey.

But asking myself like, what would you like to have for breakfast today? What kind of coffee would you like to buy? Can we buy the good lotion? Can we buy the good hair product? Little, tiny stuff like that, we probably know the answer to those smaller things if we allowed ourselves the space to do it.

I find that for a lot of women, they're like, "Oh, well, I have to buy this so then I can't buy the good stuff," or, "No one's going to see me so I can't spend on the good stuff. I can't appreciate the good stuff." So we downplay a lot of the pleasure we could allow ourselves in the small things, but expect ourselves to have the answers to life questions. That seems a lot to ask of ourselves if we can't decide where we would like to go for dinner and overwrite our kid's decision. We're asking a bit much of ourselves.

Krista: I also think with I don't know, sometimes, to your point, guess, but also we learn by doing. And so if you don't believe that you know, trying something will give you more information and more information will give you more to decide from, so maybe you'll learn. If I think the answer to doing my hair is I don't know, well, I'll try this, and if I don't like it, then I'll know.

Judith: A big thing I teach is like, let's rack up some outfit fails. Let's rack up some hair fails.

Krista: I'm so intrigued.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Judith: Let's do funky stuff on purpose because it's still a goldmine of information even if it didn't go according to plan. So one of the things - the last week I spend with my people is we do style dares. And they're just wacky stuff. I'm like, wear all one color head to toe, and people are like, you want me to what?

I'm like, just try it. I don't know what's going to happen. You might find you fucking love pink all of a sudden. I don't know. We'll never know until we try. Or we're going to wear black and brown, and people are like, oh my God, my mom told me to never wear black and brown. I'm like, do you know your mama doesn't have a say in this? You can wear black and brown if you want.

I purposely - I create all these challenges and we do that to just again, run up against whatever your thoughts and beliefs are about style and rules. But also it's a goldmine of information. You might find suddenly that oh, I actually really like to wear blue and black together, oh, I find that I actually really hate turquoise, or I find that I actually don't like to wear silk and I always dreamed that I would be a woman who wears silk blouses, but I sweat profusely, this is a terrible idea.

Any number of things, but we won't know until you try and each time, I have my clients evaluate. Okay, so what went well with this outfit? What did we learn? Oh, actually, I love the rise of these jeans, this actually is going to be a great bra, I love these.

So what went wrong? Well, actually, I learned this about myself, I found out that the panties I was wearing needed to go in the trash because they slip down all day, or these shoes are actually about two-hour wear because three hours and they were hurting my feet and we have to start to get rid...Every outfit, even if it's an outfit fail is a goldmine of information if you stop long enough to just sit and evaluate it. So we want to rack up fails.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Krista: Yeah, just getting the new information makes it really not a fail because you have the new information. And maybe it didn't create the result that you wanted, but now you have more information to go forward. I love that.

Judith: Exactly. Especially with hair experiments, oh my God. Experimenting with hair products in particular, if you haven't done your hair in a long time and your hair texture has changed, postpartum a lot of times this happens to a lot of people, or just getting grays and they go wiry and go all weird on you, or just with age, hair does weird shit.

So that's a constant evolution of let's rack up some fails. Let's buy some new products, let's experiment, let's see what worked, what didn't work, cool, cool. Gain some more information and you can take it on with you each step of the way.

Krista: Love that. Okay, you have some different takes on what I think are kind of traditional style guidelines that people have been taught, like if you have an apple-shaped body you should dress it in this way, and if you have a pear-shaped body you should do this with it. Teach us.

Judith: Oh my God, I will try not to soapbox because this drives me crazy. So here's the thing y'all, all of humans are just making shit up and we love to categorize things. We are into it. We're like, I'm going to categorize people by skin color, and we're like, we shouldn't do that anymore.

And then I'm going to categorize female human bodies, which you think that should be passé. Maybe that's something we don't want to get into, we should not adopt this anymore. But for whatever reason, we're into it.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

And here's the thing; they don't do this with men's bodies. They do this with women's bodies, which should tell us everything. So you are not a pear, you are not an apple, you are not a rectangle, you are not an inverted triangle, you are not an hourglass, even though that's the technical coveted shape.

You're a human woman. And none of us are symmetrical. Talk to any tailor, talk to any couturier who works in a sewing room. We are all weird gangly creatures that are asymmetrical. We have one arm that's bigger than the other, we have one arm that's longer than the other, we have a gimpy leg and a longer leg, we have a boob that's bigger than the other, we have a boob that's kind of shrink-y.

Hello, welcome human. We are creepy weird little gangly creatures that are imperfect. And if we can just learn to love ourselves from that perspective, our experience of clothing would be so much easier. I find the body shape paradigm so problematic because for the most part, it's used as a shame device.

Okay, here's the thing's I'm allowed to wear, here's what I'm not allowed to wear. And I'm going to spend a lifetime on millions of dollars trying to morph myself into an hourglass, or perfectly smooth and flat shape, when that's not actual reality of bodies. In nature, no straight lines exist for a reason. Curves are in, y'all. It's where it's at, people.

Krista: I love it. So who said you can only wear a pencil skirt if you're a whatever, I don't even know what the rules are clearly.

Judith: Who said? Exactly. What dudes were circled in a room somewhere and were like, here are the things, and the women were like, okay. I have questions.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Krista: So many questions.

Judith: And historically, it changes over time. One of the best things I saw in a design room, so when you're in fashion design school there's mannequins and my school is kind of older, so we had mannequins from decades, I mean decades of different mannequins.

And the funny thing was these mannequins body shapes would change over time. So one of the things my instructors did was to pull mannequins that were technically the same size but from different decades into the sewing room.

And she's like, I just want you to look at their bodies, the forms, and I want you to just see the change. So it's really interesting. In the 50s, you have breasts that are sitting very high up and they're kind of conical, and you have a more rounded hip. In the 60s, we have less rounded hip and the breasts have a more round shape.

When we get to the 70s, the breasts drop where they are on the chest, and then there's a little roundness to the pooch, in the front of the form, and the hips get thinner. In the 80s, we've got this weird curve situation. In the 90s, suddenly things get really flat again. It's bizarre. So even the forms change with social mores about what was desirable. This just is such a clue to us that this shit is all made up.

Krista: All made up.

Judith: It's like, in what decade? What decade?

Krista: And not knowing that then has you weaponizing that information against yourself as though there's something wrong with you.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

Judith: Exactly. And nothing's wrong with you. We just collectively as a human decided that in the 20s we wanted flat shapes, but that's probably because we were all malnourished collectively, so we decided skinny was in. And then in the 50s we were allowed to eat more food as a population, curves became in, and then the 70s when we lost our bras, saggy breasts that were full were in. And in the 80s, we decided very round breasts that were a little more up were in. We're crazy. Humans are insane. Gangly creatures doing weird things.

Krista: Yeah. So don't do the weird thing other people tell you to do. Do the thing you want to do. What do you think about this idea of age appropriateness?

Judith: Also barf

Krista: I had a feeling that's what you were going to say.

Judith: Also barf. What does that even mean? For most - these are the style rules a lot of women have grown up with to determine age appropriateness. I'm thinking specifically of there's these Lane Bryant ads from the 1940s for the stout woman.

The gracious woman. And it's all these figure line drawings of women with gray hair that are a little chubby. And I'm just like, what the hell is this? It's so funny. So age appropriate a lot of times, in people's minds, cue up you have to cut your hair, that's something I hear a lot.

You have to cut your hair because apparently at a certain age you're not allowed to have long hair. That's just what happens to your hair. It's too heavy for your head? What is happening? It's bizarre.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

Krista: Your spine deteriorates, your hair becomes too heavy.

Judith: You have to cover your arms because suddenly, God forbid someone should see your bicep.

Krista: Or the top of your shoulder.

Judith: Or the top of your shoulders. You have to cover your neck suddenly, you have to be into scarfs. You never wanted to wear a scarf in your life, you're fucking hot because you're perimenopausal or menopausal but you're suddenly required to wear scarves?

Krista: Thank you fashion industry.

Judith: What is happening? So again, all made up. So we get to decide - dear listener, every style rule you've ever been handed about age appropriateness, being a lady, being a pear or an apple or whatever, any style rule, I want you to start calling shenanigans.

Sniff the air, does it smell - is it a stanky one? Because we have to start to re-evaluate this. If you have a visceral reaction I don't want to do this, or this makes me feel bad when I think about this, then we can call shenanigans on it. We don't have to do it. You can decide.

Even if it came from your mama and your aunty and your grandma, or the well-meaning ladies at your church, we get to decide what all of this means, and we get to throw out any fashion rule, style rule that just doesn't serve us and makes us feel like crap.

Krista: Yeah. And then build the style that you want with the rules that serve you.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

Judith: Exactly.

Krista: I love it. I wish we had more time. I want more time to hang out with you.

Judith: Likewise. This is fun.

Krista: I don't like this. I don't like that I'm coming up against my time. What did we miss that you think would be maybe useful to my listeners?

Judith: I want to love on them a little bit because I know when I started this journey and mine was I had gained 60 pounds during law school and my pants didn't fit and I felt so much shame, so much shame, and feeling so - almost like a mixture of dismay and despair. Oh my God, where do I even start?

And I have to say, when we talk about panties and bras as a way to begin, I genuinely mean that from having lived the experience. So I don't just tell you that because I love to talk about bras and undies, but because that's where I started my journey.

And I promise you, if you can just start in your underwear drawer, you'll make such a difference in your own life, and not just because you got fresh panties, because hello, that would be awesome, but because you take the time out for yourself and just in that moment, even in the midst of your despair or your dismay or your disappointment that something didn't turn out the way it was.

That little glimmer of hope that you can give yourself that there's potential, possibility that things could look better and feel better one day - I'm going to

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gaton

get emotional - is going to make the biggest difference for you. And that's what I want for every woman, every human on the planet.

If we could just crack open the possibility that things could get better for you, I promise you, starting small and consistent is going to make the biggest difference in your world, and if we sold you on nothing else today, just start your underwear drawer, give yourself that little glimmer of hope that you so deserve.

And no one else has to know. So no one has to weigh in on it, it's just between you and me and Krista. That's it. It'll be our secret, and you get the benefit of it. So just - so much love for everyone listening.

Krista: Thank you so much. I love you so much. If people want to connect with you, want to learn more about you, what's the best way to do that?

Judith: Just find me on the Instagrams really is the easiest way to find me. Click on the link in the bio. So my Instagram handle is @judithgaton, if you don't know what I mean by link in bio, you just go to my profile, there's going to be a little link there and you click on it and it's going to send you to a page with a bunch of awesome goodies that you can enjoy.

And one of them is bye-bye raggedy undies, which will help you clean out your underwear drawer, help you diagnose what might be happening with your bra and why it doesn't fit you. If you're not a fan of the Instagram, you can get that directly by going to judithgaton.com/doctors and there's actually a whole diagnosis checklist and we treat it like a fun little tongue and cheek way of diagnosing what's going on with your undies.

Krista: I'm doing that immediately. Just because I want to. It sounds good. And also you have a podcast.

Ep #119: Style and Grief: An Interview with Judith Gatton

Judith: Yes. Style Masterclass podcast. So you can also find me there.

Krista: Podcast listeners like more podcasts typically. Awesome. Thank you so much for coming. I think it was super valuable for people to learn from you. I appreciate you.

Judith: Thank you. This was fun.

Krista: Take care. 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.