

Ep #142: Widows Like Us An Interview with Ann Kerrigan



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Krista St-Germain

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 142, Widows Like Us, with Ann Kerrigan.

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, and welcome to another episode of the podcast. I've got another interview for you today from a widowed mom who I think you will find to be very relatable and very inspiring. I was asking inside of Mom Goes On, we were talking about podcasts episodes that had made the most impact on people, and also talking about what kept people from joining Mom Goes On initially, or what almost stopped them from joining.

One of the things came up that I thought was relevant was that someone said they almost didn't join because all of the women that I have featured on the podcast have done such amazing things with their lives, and they felt a little bit intimidated by the type of women that might be in the group.

And they were kind of telling themselves that they might not measure up, and I found that so interesting because as I look back on it and I kind of thought about some of the women that I've had on the podcast, and I think about what they've accomplished in their lives. It's interesting to me that many of them didn't come to me looking to accomplish some of the things that they've now accomplished. That wasn't why they came to coaching.

They came to coaching because they didn't feel good. Right? Emotionally, they weren't where they wanted to be. They felt like they were stuck in their grief. They wanted some support. Life was surviving but not thriving. And it was only later, after we got past all of the ick, that they started to give themselves permission to dream again. That they started thinking about

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what could be next and what could be fun, and started considering things that they hadn't considered before, as possibilities for them, and then they went on and created some big things or followed a big dream or started a new business or took a new adventure.

So, what I want you to hear is that it's totally okay, you know when you listen to Ann, then she's going to talk about the new business that she's created. It's okay if you think, wow, I don't know if I could ever do that. It's okay if that's the farthest thing from your mind is some big new adventure. Like, I think about, you know, so many women that I've coached with who have become coaches. So many people who have, you know, just done some really amazing things.

You know, Susanne starting a school for boys and Paula taking her kids around the world, and you know, Kim starting her own business. Like, yes, people have done big things, Linda writing a book, like, the list goes on, but the big things can come later. You don't have to have the ideas for the big things now. It doesn't mean anything about you if you don't have those ideas now. But if you take care of yourself now, if you invest in your own wellness, right, and you get through this surviving part, then you can get to the other side.

You can start thriving again, and you can start dreaming again, and you can start doing things that right now you don't even give yourself permission to think are possible for you. So, please don't ever take an interview from a woman on this podcast and make it mean that she has something that you don't that there is something innate about her that you are lacking, right, and don't ever think that you have to have some aspirational, giant, extraordinary goal to come to Mom Goes On.

That's the last thing I want you to hear. What I want you to hear is if she can do it, I can do it. If she once felt terrible and horrible and thought her

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best days were over and couldn't imagine life without her spouse and struggled being a solo parent and was filled with anxiety and worry, if she has come from there, and maybe that's where you are, then it's possible for you, too. That's what I want you to hear, okay? So, with that, I hope you enjoy my interview with Ann Kerrigan.

Krista: Hey, so, welcome Ann to the podcast. Excited to have you!

Ann: Great. Thanks, Krista. It's good to be here.

Krista: When we were talking before we started, one of the things, well, I was just saying that I remember how nervous I was when I went on my very first podcast, and you said you heard me on Brooke Castillo's podcasts, and it really kind of is a trippy thing to learn about someone from their podcast, have their podcast help you in such a profound way, and then, circle back and become a guest on their podcast, and that's why it was such a crazy moment for me, and I know that's kind of what it's like, right?

Ann: Yeah, it's very exciting.

Krista: Yeah, who is this person, and now I'm on their podcast. It's crazy.

Ann: Yeah.

Krista: So, let's just jump in. I want to have you tell people just a little bit about you. Like, tell us about Ann.

Ann: Oh, well, in terms of what brought me to you was because I'm widowed, and let's see, that whole story started when my husband and I

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were working our jobs, and we had recently adopted two kids from Asia, and my husband started having problems at work and problems connecting with us at the end of the day. He would be so tuned out during dinner. It would take him so much longer to complete the tasks that before he could do in 8-9 hours.

He was now bringing so much work home, working through the night, and then unable to multitask between different screens. He did information technology, and it just got to be such a problem that his boss called him out on it. At the same time that I said, you know we need to go to some marriage therapy. So, I made an appointment for counseling, and the counselor was so perceptive.

She was great. She really tuned us in to push the issue with the primary care doctor, who had previously been pretty dismissive of Tom complaining that he was having trouble. Not so much with memory, but it was multitasking that was the biggest problem, initially.

So, we did push that, and he was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease at age 47. So, we had a rough couple of years there with the diagnosis and adjusting to it, and by the time I met you, I was just bitter and angry about the whole thing. I was so mad that we have these wonderful kids that wouldn't get to know this amazing guy. They wouldn't get to know him fully because the life expectancy was less. It was still very vague as to what the actual life expectancy was.

They had said between 6-8 years is the typical progression for Alzheimer's, but with early-onset, because people are healthier, it can sometimes be 10-20 years. So, we kind of lived in this state of, I don't know, just limbo, and it was hard to see any sort of horizon for a long time. He had the disease for six years before he passed away, and during that time, we had a lot of help

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from friends and family, church, neighbors, school community. We were really, really lucky, but nonetheless, I still felt very frazzled.

Like I was never fully meeting his needs or the kid's needs, much less mine, so the idea of self-care, even though I would try for it, it just was so—I learned a different type of self-care through the work with you, and that is what has been especially beneficial.

Krista: How old were your kids when your husband was diagnosed?

Ann: They were, my daughter had just turned four, and my son was four.

Krista: I mean, even that, even that in of itself having two-four years old's that you adopted. It's hard enough to take good care of yourself without a husband who's now been diagnosed with this life-changing thing.

Ann: Yeah.

Krista: And so, how far out were you from his loss when you, you know, started looking for support?

Ann: Let's see, how far out? We have a local group called Judy's House that I called them like the next week after Tom passed, and they said, well, you need to have been out for six months from the passing. I thought, oh, how am I even going to make it to that, but I did. I started with that initially, and that was a really good program. They were amazing for us.

It just so happened that in our little group of ten there were most of the kids were ten years old. My kid's age at the time, so we just kind of lucked out with terms of being able to problem-solve around what does grief looks like in a child that is of different ages? So, it was nice. It was really helpful to have such a bond from these folks, but then, I still needed more kind of for

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myself, and I got the sense that I needed to talk to more people, but there really wasn't a good fit in town at that time.

So, I did start looking online, and I had—

Krista: —You're in a large city?

Ann: Yeah, and I'm sure there were if I had kept digging, but at the forefront were groups for older people. So, you know, plenty of people in their 80s and that did not click, you know, I so needed the support around my kids. Another thing that I really got from your program is the idea of supporting myself is supporting them.

Krista: Was that something that was hard for you to see before?

Ann: No doubt, really hard.

Krista: How did you see it before?

Ann: I so know it intellectually, and I've told people, you know, that airplane, mask metaphor so many times, but it doesn't feel good when at the time you're, whatever it is. Whether you're taking a few extra minutes to read a book, and your kid is bounding on the door, and you know that they have true grief as well. Like, it just doesn't feel good to put yourself at a higher priority.

Krista: I went back and looked at your, way back in the day, it's a different process now, but way back in the day, I say way back in the day. It was like 2019, but it feels like eons ago, you know, when you first inquired about coaching. One of the things you actually said in your coaching application was I tried to put the oxygen mask on myself first, but I ended up feeling so guilty. Like, I can just even hear the same words now as then.

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Ann: Yeah, I remember that guilt being so strong.

Krista: So, you were listening to the Life Coach School podcast?

Ann: Yeah, I had been referred to Brooke Castillo, and she had interviewed you, and you had talked about going through the process yourself and then wanting to help widows, and you can just tell from the commitment and the passion in your voice that this was something that you really long to do.

You felt it was your mission, and it felt comfortable to kind of follow that voice. I don't know. There was just something that kept drawing me to—eventually, you started your podcast, and you and I did a little bit of one on one coaching, but for me, I was still trying to poke holes in the model.

Your thought model makes such a difference to analyze what's going on in your head and check it with reality and see if there's a way to reframe things. But I just kept—I remember specifically bringing problems to you, like, global war problems, and global famine problems, you just so very patient.

Krista: You tried to break the model? Yeah, but you know, I know I've told you this before. That's one of my favorite things, and I think that's what served you so well is because if we just accept someone's teachings without really thinking them through, ugh.

The much more powerful approach is really to challenge the tools that we're learning and challenge the teaching, and really kind of put it to its test, because then once we've done that, that's when I think the tools become useful. So, I love that you did that. Definitely kept me on my toes as a coach, which is also fun for me, but more than anything, I think it's just beneficial for you, right?

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Because now, you know, you really have, you know, not just swallowed what you were told—such a more powerful way of learning.

Ann: Yeah, yeah. No doubt. Also, I think the group that we had with that initial group once you started the coaching, I was in that first group, and that was just a really special. It was really powerful women that also didn't blindly accept things. So, to watch them go through the process as well with similar reluctance, it made it easier for me to say, okay, well, let's look at this a little bit more closely, and I think for me, I just there was so much anger.

Now that I look back, I was bitter, and I thought that was just grief, but now that I look back, it was years of feeling like I wasn't helping the kids fully, feeling like the universe was off, and that someone needed to alert the universe that my kids were not—did not have a dad right now.

Also, here was this dad. He was really emotionally suffering. He would put on a great face for other people, but there was part of him that could tell that he was losing his ability to think through things, and that was just crushing for him when he wasn't able to dress himself anymore it was, every little thing that he lost, he would grieve hugely about it.

So, grief and anger were so entangled for me that it really made it hard to sort out kind of where to start, but you were so accepting, and the other women were so accepting of the ugliest crying sessions. I can remember just really having trouble just getting my breath because it was still so raw, and so, there were some big feelings.

All my life, I have been encouraged to ignore those big feelings or downplay them. So, here was someone that said, oh, no, let's look at them more closely. In fact, what else is within this big feeling? Are there other thought components, and have we named them precisely?

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So yeah, that was so new to me. I remember having the feelings wheel with me every single time that I talked to you. Since then, I've gotten a feelings wheel poster. It's in our kitchen. I bring it up to the kids.

Krista: I love it. Yeah, there's actually a feelings wheel pillow that I found too. I'm thinking that may be a good thing to have around. Yet, you had a unique story in that there are a handful of people who, like you kind of coached, did the one-on-one coaching first, because I don't offer that anymore, but did one-on-one and then still came into the group. So, I think you have an interesting perspective there of what it's like to have. Because sometimes I think, tell me what you think about this, people think that a group is going to be less powerful because they think that what will shift things for them is the one on one attention with the coach. I'm curious to know what you think about that because I don't find that to be at all true.

Ann: That wasn't the case for me. That's for sure. I got so much more out of the group coaching. I mean, it's night and day. I got maybe one for every one hundred sorts of points or takeaways of—

Krista: What do you attribute that to?

Ann: It's really helpful to watch someone else think through because you're on the screen with them. Everyone that wants to be is, you see their face, and you have a dialogue by way of the chat. So, you know what other people are thinking, how people are processing it, and to hear it from someone else's perspective, hear it in someone else's words, maybe the way that you said it didn't precisely click in my head, but to hear someone else say it, the same topic, the same words, but in a slightly different order, it just sits differently. When you have that many versions of the story coming at you, it's easier to see your place in it and to reevaluate, oh, your own thinking about the subject.

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So, for me, the group coaching was just night and day, so much more beneficial.

Krista: Yeah, I agree. I find the women in the group, and whether it's, you know, grief-related or not, it's just the ability to watch and learn when my brain isn't defensive.

Ann: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Krista: When I'm the one being coached, you know, your brain is just kind of, doesn't really like it, and so, when I'm watching someone else get coached, I can see how I do the exact same thing that she's doing. It's so validating to be like, oh, there's nothing wrong with me. That's just the human way, and then, also, I can absorb the takeaways because my brain isn't so worried about defending me.

Ann: Yeah, yeah. That defense is powerful. I know along with the anger, I had a lot of feeling outside, just after years of not really participating fully, well, I shouldn't say this, I was participating fully in life as it came to us, but it wasn't the version of life that I thought that I would have, and I was so mad that it should've been different, and that I wasn't able to be there and be sort of on the well, now I relate it as being on the inside of things.

I felt like I was always on the outside when I had come to, and then to be able to see other people struggling and having these same challenges, I learned that I was not just this special person that would never be able to get the hang of living without my husband. You know, to be able to see that other people were struggling in the same depth that I was. It was helpful to see.

Krista: When your brain has a story like that, right? All brains have stories, and when our brain has a story that we're on the outside of things, then

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that's all it's going to show us. It's going to show us that everywhere. Where were some of the places that your brain was showing you how you were on the outside?

Ann: Definitely socially. For me, it was with the kids whenever there would be an interaction with other parents at a school event. I was just so bitter that I wasn't able to share that with my spouse or with my partner. I was mad that the kids just didn't have two parents. Everything looked different if I went away for a camping trip with friends. You know?

Other family's had two people setting up the tent, but we didn't. We had two little ones that were tangling up the cords while I was trying to get the tent set up.

Krista: Yeah, this reminds me of some coaching that was happening earlier in the week inside of Mom Goes On when we were talking about what it's like to believe that you're the third wheel. Right? And feel like an outsider, and how it seems like what has to change is that you have to be coupled, or you have to be partnered, the math has to change, right?

You have to be in an environment with either all widows, or you have to be part of a couple with all the other couples, or you know, co-parenting with all the other co-parents. Then, and only then do you get to believe that you belong, right, or that you're not the outsider. It's not really true at all, but it's a hard shift to make.

It's hard to understand that's actually something we can control with our thinking. That we can choose to see ourselves as part of it, right, and as belonging?

Ann: Yeah, that was a big step for me. There are times when I still feel myself skeptical, but then, I am able to step back now and say, well, what is

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going to serve me the best? What is going to help me the most, and then I'm able to get deeper into the model and look more closely at different thought ladders that might help me get to where I want to go in the situation.

Krista: Yeah, when you came to coaching, what were you hoping would change or would shift?

Ann: I just didn't want to hurt. I didn't want to hurt. I had so much pain even, yeah, interestingly talking—I haven't talked about that raw pain in a little while, and I'm getting teary right now just thinking about how acute that was and intense. You know, I was in bed quite a bit, even though I was still functioning in society. That was my default was to just crawl into bed because everything just felt so hard.

I had a therapist that I was working with and making great strides and doing well, but the work with you... it's just different. It helped me open my brain and see things from an even more varied perspective. So, it was good. It was really, really good. It's definitely encouraging working with the kids. Parenting is so different after having learned this work. My son does not like art. He wants to transfer out of this art class, and you know, only for if not that many more weeks of this semester, and he will be fine. He's not being hung by his toenails, but he wants to get out of art class.

Krista: Ha, great visual.

Ann: Yeah, so, I—We had a great conversation this morning. I said it does not matter to me if you get out of art class or not. You could put your energy into that with your teachers and your counselor, but I wanted him to consider the idea that the benefits that he's going to get from staying in the art class are going to be more helpful to him in achieving his dreams. He kept saying, well, no, you just want me to be an artist.

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No, I know that your main goal is to make a movie, and in staying in art class and sticking with that discomfort, you will have a greater ability to withstand other hardships and to be able to think through other situations when you're uncomfortable and to be brave in those situations when you are uncomfortable. So, it was great to be able to have that as a learning tool for him.

Krista: I'm curious. How do you think you would have approached it differently if you hadn't had the tools that you now have?

Ann: Very didactical. No, this is the way it's going to be, and it just would have been a screaming match. I mean, that's how it was for a long time because as I was starting to look more closely at my big feelings, here was this kid that is just naturally very expressive of his very big feelings. So, we had for years, we've just had screaming matches.

Until I was able to say, you know, this is his discomfort with the consequences I've made around screentime or checking in with me, whatever it is that he doesn't have to like this. I can make up my mind to be firm in whatever thought I want right now, and the thought that always helps me is that I think back to my values, and you've just been able to help that be more prominent in my mind during times of conflict, so.

Krista: Yeah, it's such a great compass to have, right? If we know what we value and we know who we want to be and how we want to be, yeah, it's just so much easier to bring ourselves back to what matters, for sure.

So, thinking back to kind of, a lot of people find the podcast in the first year, like, thinking back to what it was like for you, and I know it was a long drawn out unpleasant amount of challenging before your husband died but thinking about what it was like for you to be an early widow? If you could go

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back and give yourself some advice, right? What do you think you would tell yourself?

Ann: That's such a good question. Such a good question because I felt it was just truly a physical pain for me, and the widow fog was intense. I had trouble focusing to read a book, and then also during that first year, my father and my mother in law passed away, so it was so cumulative everything just kept—It felt like things were just piling on me.

So, just being as gently as you can with yourself that would be the main thing that I would say to a new widow because it is big and it takes a while for your body, mind, and your spirit to be functioning without your significant other that you liked a lot.

Krista: Yeah, and it's so easy to compare ourselves. You know, even without our person, but it's so easy to compare ourselves and our own, you know ability to function with what it was like before and then weaponize that and be mean to ourselves, and why can't you get it together? You should be doing better than this. You should be more patient with your kids. You should be more of what you were before it all happened. It's so easy to fall into that lack of self-compassion.

I also find it interesting and somewhat ironic because so many, you know, you said you wanted, that you were having so much acute pain, and the feelings were so intense, and then here you come to coaching and guess what I say the first thing, now we're going to feel our feelings? I always feel bad because I know that's the last thing people want to do, but I also know that learning the skill of being able to sit with the feeling is a really powerful change. So, sorry about that, but you're welcome.

Ann: It's a big hump to get over.

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Krista: It is! I mean, were you taught anything about feelings?

Ann: Oh, no. Absolutely not. I remember you distinctly you saying, well, what else, other than sad? I mean, I really could not get any other specificity within sad.

Krista: Yeah, emotional vocabulary, very limited.

Ann: Mhmm, no doubt. And there was a part of me that had once I started feeling those feelings some shame around feeling them. That boy, if only I was different? If only I was better able to accept what she's saying, then I would be able to change my feelings more quickly. But, you did a great job of just meeting me where I was. I remember you gave me coaching around tapping that encouraged me not necessarily to physically tap. I love the emotional freedom techniques that you do a lot of work with, and it's so beneficial.

But the act of tapping, my few fingers against different parts of my face or my wrists, it would set off electrical charges it felt like. It was just really powerful. It was too much. So, you had me just think about the area being warm or just consider that area as I was doing the tapping work, and that was very helpful.

Krista: I have forgotten about that, but now I do remember. That's another example of, I love that you, this is what I love about you, you don't just take your question or something that doesn't feel quite right to you and then go in the corner, right, like you bring it up. I wish everyone would do this. Is when they have a question, they would ask the question, right? When they want more information, they would ask for more information. I love that about you. It serves you so well, right? You figure it out. You don't just go, well, I guess that's not for me, and then walk away. You keep asking.

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Ann: Yeah, it definitely was a process to get to that acceptance, but it's been a good thing.

Krista: Okay, so I want listeners to hear about your new adventure.

Ann: Oh, how fun!

Krista: I'm so excited for you. I'm not just excited for you. I feel the same amount of excitement for you as like I felt for early me. Because I know how satisfying the work is I do for me personally. I know it helps the world, but I also know how it adds value to my life, and it makes me want to get up every morning and do what I do, and I'm so excited for that same experience for you as hard as I know a new business adventure is, right? Because it is hard. It's just really fulfilling, and I'm excited. Okay, so, I'll shut up, and you tell us.

Ann: Oh, no, to be able to give back in areas where you had struggled previously is really cool, and it feels great to be able to do that for other Alzheimer's caregivers. So, I know, I talked about those six years Tom being sick was so hard, and oftentimes people don't know how to help. Especially if they don't live nearby. You know, I had plenty of Tom's family call from California and said, well, what can we do? What do you need right now? And I would be at a loss because one, I was just overwhelmed and had no idea what I needed, and two, like how, do I even ask for that?

So, I have developed a subscription box that encourages caregivers to take time for self-care. So, the subscription box has every month it's a different theme, and every month it will have a component around hydration, nutrition, aromatherapy, and a tool to help you process your feelings. That was one thing that during I think that would have made a difference during the course of my husband's illness. If I had been encouraged to feel my feelings during that time rather than stuff them down and store them up

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until they were just a ball of anger. So, yeah, it's amazing that your work is going out there into the world in another form.

Krista: I'll take the compliment. I'll take the compliment, but like, you created that, right? Because I've coached a lot of women, and not everyone goes out and creates something like this. It's not me.

Ann: Awe, well, it's pretty fun, and I really hope that other caregivers can benefit. So, this is something that can be sent throughout the United States, and especially when someone is newly diagnosed or the disease has taken a turn so that suddenly things are more challenging. It's something that can be even to the caregiver, and they can hopefully get a little replenishment and reprieve and get their tanks filled with it. Yeah, it's been a blast!

Krista: So, forgetmenotbox.org, correct?

Ann: That's correct.

Krista: Okay, so if people want to learn about it, they can go there, and basically then they can just send this lovely box to someone else that will brighten their day and help them with their self-care, and you know, hopefully, well, not hopefully, I'm sure they will absolutely be uplifted, but hopefully they will also take advantage of the feelings part of that, and the even deeper self-care that's available beyond just the nice things that are in the box.

Ann: Yeah. Sometimes it helps to have that permission and something for the process with you, I had the workbooks that would just show up on the doorstep, and they had very specific assignments that were broken down into doable chunks. So, along those lines, I hope that the box will give people permission to take the time to explore where they're at in life and to

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remember the spirit that they have and that they still have underneath all of the caregiving because sometimes you just become hyper focused on the individual that you love. You want to see them have as pleasant of a disease course as is possible. You do everything for them, and it's easy to lose yourself in that process, so.

Krista: Yeah, and people can get this subscription. It doesn't have to be for dementia, correct? It can be for?

Ann: It can be. A lot of the tools are more specific to dementia. We have some physician communication tools that are a little bit more specific. But it definitely could be used by any caregiver. Yeah, and it's possible to get one box or 3, 6, or 12 months.

Krista: Okay, so I'm just kind of doing a time check here, October; correct me if I'm wrong; October of 2018 is when Tom passed?

Ann: That's right. Yeah.

Krista: So, you're three years. Okay, so we talked about how your parenting changed, right, and your ability to not take their feelings personally or try to fix them has changed. We talked about how, you know, this whole idea that you were on the outside looking in, and the universe had kind of done you wrong, has really shifted. Obviously, you've started a business that's not gotten you in a place where you're giving back in a way that's meaningful to you and very powerful for the world. What else do you feel like changed for you as it related to coaching?

Ann: Oh, man, it's so hard to think what hasn't. I mean, I'm just sitting here talking to you in this room that I developed. This room alone, I think, is just really descriptive of how my mind has changed. Like right now, I'm surrounded by plants, and they're hanging from ceilings and growing up

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walls, and it's windows, it's just a calm, peaceful room, I think as soon as I repainted and changed the light fixtures and got these plants up. That's when the idea came the forget me not box.

So, I think I'm able to drive some of my decisions around me, and in doing so, I have a very different creative outlook on life. My husband wouldn't have liked this design. I don't know how many of my friends or family would like this design, but I utterly love it, and it really makes a difference in my day. So, I'm able to see things that bring me pleasure and be surrounded by physical, I wouldn't say everyone's version of beauty, but for me, it is. And that's something that wouldn't have been manifested before.

Krista: Is this the same room because I remember you telling me at one point, you know, people when we're on a zoom call together, I only see what people want me to see, right?

Ann: Yeah.

Krista: So, you can make this really tight spot of the space, and I will not see what's happening in the rest of the space. And I remember you saying you know how much you had changed, you know the room that you were usually sitting in and that before you did, there were all these piles around you. Is this the same room?

Ann: It is! Yeah.

Krista: So, what was it like before? It's now a peaceful oasis. What was it like before?

Ann: My kids were making a lot of noise, and I was trying to find the space that I could talk on the Zoom call, and I couldn't even fit a chair in this room because of the volume of stuff, and so, I physically cleared a path and a

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place for me to at least rest my back against the wall. So, I was surrounded literally above my head piles of, you know, things that had accumulated during the last months of Tom's illness, paperwork from insurance processing, just so many mementos from his life as well as just plain, you know, all of the some of the stuff that needed to be going. It needed to be gone through like his—There were some of his clothes and a huge pile of his baseball hats.

So, for the longest time, I wouldn't go in here, and then when I was forced to, I almost had to get a rake to clear a spot and then.

Krista: Not to mention how did that room feel emotionally then?

Ann: Oh, yuck. Just horrible, just weighted, and dense. It felt hard to even walk into. It was really a manifestation of my head. Like, my head was heavy and dense, and I couldn't think through things, so, yeah. I love this room now.

Krista: I love it. It is such a beautiful illustration of your own progression, right? When we change what's happening in our minds and in our emotional lives, right, when we get that in order, it literally manifests itself in our surroundings.

Ann: Yeah, yeah. That's definitely true for me.

Krista: From heavy to peaceful. So, what do you think about? Tell me about what you see now for yourself and for your future that maybe you didn't see before?

Ann: Oh, goodness.

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Krista: I know, I just throw these questions at you. I send you a list of questions I'm going to ask, and I ask none of them.

Ann: Let's see what do I think? I guess I just don't see it as confined. I think the possibilities are so open-ended. I mean, if you would have asked me if I would start a business two years ago, there's no way. I didn't have any interest. I wasn't drawn to it, much less ready to take on the learning curve. It's huge, but I'm enjoying it right now. So, it just makes me think, who knows when I'm ready for it, and I feel good about it. It's just nice to have that optimistic feeling looking forward.

Krista: Yeah, I love it too, because I always hope that what people will hear is that, they will hear, you know, aspects of themselves or things that seem familiar to them, and what they will take from every interview that I do is okay, if she can do it if that woman can do it, then maybe I can do it too. Right? And so, to go from not ever even imagining yourself, even thinking that being a business owner was a possibility, right, or you know, seeing that kind of vision for your future. You don't have to see it now, right? You don't have to see it now. I mean, when did you see it? It took a while, right?

Ann: Yeah, yeah. About a year and a half, two years, into the process.

Krista: Yeah. But then as I remember it, tell me if I'm wrong, as I remember it, it was kind of, it came to you pretty quickly. Like, you had done some pretty powerful work. I will say I watched you release some heaviness, which was pretty powerful.

Ann: Yes, no doubt.

Krista: And then it was almost like as soon as you let yourself release that, it seemed to open this doorway for you. For this idea to be born, does that feel accurate?

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Ann: It is. It is. There was creativity that I had no idea I had access to. It's just really enriched my life. I feel lucky. Yeah, there's no doubt. I was also, if you had told me that I'd be doing this work a few years ago, I would have thought, oh, that's for people that come from a lovely upbringing and come from a family that doesn't have its many functional moments.

Those are probably people that are very social and very engaged in life, and can just take this on without difficulty as opposed to, I was so, or at least I perceived myself as so far on the outside, and the idea that you would have the patience to work with me and just continually bringing it back to me in a different form and reflecting my words back to me helps me to see it differently.

So, and now I have a lot more options that I wouldn't have had. I am very lucky.

Krista: Yeah, because it really isn't—success has nothing to do with the family that we came from and granted, for sure, there are some opportunities that some of us get that others of us don't get based on the family that we came from, but you know being willing to follow a dream and follow a passion, and put one foot in front of the other and you know, figure all these new things out that you figured out because you were willing to let it be uncomfortable and do it any way that's why you've created what you've created, right?

You had an idea even though you didn't know a thing about how to do it. You let yourself feel uncomfortable every step of the way and now you've turned that idea into a reality, and anybody can learn to do that, which I love. Same thing here, right? I didn't know. If you would have asked me if I was going to be a coach after Hugo died, ha, no. Right, like, and then here we are.

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Well, is there anything that we didn't cover, Ann, that you want people to know that you wished we'd talk about?

Ann: No, I'm just sitting here kind of fiddling with a bracelet that you had as part of a Mom Goes On Master's Retreat, and within that bracelet is the note freedom, and that just really speaks to how I feel now.

Krista: That was the note you wrote yourself during our week?

Ann: Yeah, and I haven't changed it. It just really still speaks to me that I have more freedom. I can make different decisions based on what works for me that I wouldn't have considered before.

Krista: Yeah, I think it's a good gift. Genuinely, I'll cry. Like, I made a million dollars last year.

Ann: Oh my gosh, Krista!

Krista: It's crazy, it's nuts to think about a million dollars, but at the same time, it's not that exciting. Right? It doesn't like, stir me. It doesn't move me; I mean, I'm happy that I did it. Like, it is an awesome accomplishment that not a lot of women do, and so I'm glad to have done it, and I hope that it's an example for other people, but what really moves my soul and my, you know, makes me want to do what I do is like working with people like you.

Like, watching—Because sometimes it's hard for you to see, I think. I have such a unique perspective on other people's lives because I see from an outsider's view what it was like before, and I watch the progress. It's kind of like, you know how when, if your kids ever go away to camp all of a sudden they come back, and you're like, oh my gosh, they grew?

Ann: Yeah.

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Krista: Right, but you don't see it at the time because they're right in front of you. I think that this kind of work is that way when you're the client. I think it's happening, and you kind of see it, but you're so close to it that it's hard to see your own, the changes that are happening within you, and so I get this beautiful position where I get to be on the outside of that and I get to watch, and so, to work with you and to see the growth and the change and the freedom being expressed and the creativity being expressed and the calmness and the confidence and all of the changes that I see in you.

It is such a huge gift for me, and it is why I do what I do. And so, yes, I love it any time I accomplish a goal, but, like, genuinely from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Ann: Awe, beautiful thing.

Krista: Yeah, end with that!

Ann: Thank you for your patience with this process.

Krista: And it's interesting that you would think I needed to be patient. That's not how I perceive our coaching. It didn't feel that way to me, but to me, it's just coaching is amazing, and I love it. I just love it, so anyway.

Ann: I can tell.

Krista: But, thank you so much. So, forgetmenotbox.org if people want to learn more about your box or more about you, and I assume they can find all of your information there and connect with you if they like as well?

Ann: Exactly, yeah. Exactly the email, and everything is there.

Krista: Thank you, Ann. I love it.

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Ann: Thank you, Krista.

Krista: See you later!

Ann: Love you, love you, okay 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.