

Ep #149: Widows Like Us: An Interview with Julie McAdoo and Carrie Fajvan



Full Episode Transcript

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Krista St-Germain

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 149, Widows Like Us: An Interview with Julie McAdoo and Carrie Fajvan.

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. I'm excited about this one. I've already recorded it, and usually, when I do an interview podcast, I go back, and I record the intro later. So, you haven't listened to the interview yet, but it's already done, and I just love it. I loved it for so many reasons. One, you're going to meet a couple of amazing women who have been through so much but are so relatable. They've formed a beautiful friendship during Mom Goes On, and I know neither one of them expected and that I really loved hearing about.

I hope that as you listen to them and their story, what you will take away from it is if they can do it, I can do it. Right? I know sometimes you listen to interviews on this podcast in particular, and I know this because people tell me. Some of my clients have gone on to do some really amazing things, and you use that against yourself. Right? You tell yourself things like, oh, I don't think I could do something that big.

I don't think that's possible for me. Maybe there's something wrong with me. You know, big things must be possible for other widows, but probably not me. There must be something special about them that I don't have, and that is the exact opposite of what I want you to hear when you listen to these interviews.

What I want you to hear is that women like Julie and women like Carrie, they didn't even necessarily have big aspirations before they came into the

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program, right? They were just in a place where they wanted more, and they didn't like what was happening in their lives, and they wanted tools, and they wanted support, and they wanted to figure out a different way. It was only because they took those little steps, right, not knowing what the greater picture of life was going to look like later. Still, they took those little steps, and they invested in themselves, and they followed along, right?

They did the work, and slowly over time, things evolved, their confidence grew, and they set bigger goals themselves. In the case of Julie and Carrie, they kind of pushed each other in the most loving and helpful way. So, I hope that's what you take from this interview. That if they can do it, you can do it, right? Because that's the spirit that it's intended, and I do get a little bit emotional in this one but bear with me because honestly, sometimes this work is just such a great privilege that it blows my mind to sit there and watch the two of them over Zoom talk to me about how life is better now, and to know that I played a role in that is just, sometimes it just cracks my heart wide open.

So, hang out there with us, and I hope you love this interview with Julie and Carrie.

Krista: Alright, welcome Carrie and Julie to the podcast. I'm excited to have you.

Julie: Hi, we're excited to be here.

Krista: It's like the first dual interview that I've ever done. That's awesome. So good. So, why don't you just take turns and introduce yourselves and just tell everybody a little bit about who you are and how you became a widow.

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Julie: Do you want to go first?

Carrie: Sure. I'm Carrie Fajvan, and I'm 45. I have 3 kids. Ashley is 17. Elizabeth is 11, and Jack is 9. My husband Allen died in June of 2019. So, it's almost hitting the 3-year mark. He got esophageal cancer, but we didn't know until the very end. So, we had 18 days from the diagnosis to death, and his last 12 were in the hospital, and then it was up to me to figure out what was next.

Krista: Yeah, totally. Julie, how about you?

Julie: Yeah, so Julie McAdoo and my husband died of COVID-19 on April 7th. So, I'm coming up in 2020—So, I'm coming up on the 2 year anniversary now. Kind of similar. I mean, we didn't know anything was wrong until all of a sudden he got COVID. It was early in the pandemic, so since he was well under the age of 70. You know, everybody thought that he was not going to have any trouble with it, and then, next thing you know, within two weeks, you know, he was gone. So, I have two daughters. One is now 15, and one is 13, and that's about it.

Krista: Yeah, and so what everyone can't tell from just listening to the podcast because I can see you and they can't is that you're both in the same room. So, not only is it an interview with two people at one time, but they're actually in the same room. Given that Mom Goes On members are here, there, and everywhere. I think you have a pretty unique story. So, I want to hear a little about that.

So, before you tell me about your meeting and all of that. Where were you when either of you started listening to the podcast, or you decided you wanted to be a part of the program? Like, how did you get from husband died to Mom Goes On?

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Carrie: I found you on a Facebook scroll. I was almost a year and a half out, and I had started with a therapist a year after Allen died, and it was helpful. It was working, but what resonated with me so much when I saw your ad on Facebook you talked about how you don't have to adjust to this new normal, that you can love your life again. And I was going through the motions. I was functioning, but that was it. I was not enjoying myself, and I was miserable.

So, I saw your ad, and I was like, well, you know, maybe this woman is too good to be true. You know, you got to be careful what you see on Facebook and whatnot. Then, you popped up again. So, I clicked on the link, and I started looking more, and I was just like, oh, you know, she's telling me I can love my life again. I really want that, and you had that, you could sign up for a free phone call.

I was like, well, it's free. What do I have to lose? Like, nothing. So, I signed up, and when I talked and we felt like I was a good fit for the program, and I was like, yes, I'm all in. I can't wait to start.

Krista: So, before you saw what I was saying about not settling for a new normal. What were you imagining for your future?

Carrie: One of the hardest things was right after Allen died. You know, in those early grief days where you're numb, and you're miserable. You're just so sad and overcome with your grief, and I learned how everyone talked about how like grief doesn't go away and that you don't just process it and it gets better, and you're done, and I was like, hey, what do you mean it doesn't get better? I have to feel this way for the rest of my life? I don't want to feel this way. I don't want to be alive if this is how I have to live my life.

So, I got past those early days and weeks, and the widow fog was intense. It was 10 months before I could really hold a conversation with somebody

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and keep my train of thought. I hadn't even learned at first what that was. I was just more like, what is wrong with me? Oh, my goodness. I can't even remember what I needed at the grocery store. Oh, look, I missed 5 things on the list.

Krista: And I bought toilet paper three times in a row. Yes.

Carrie: But there's no dish soap.

Krista: We got toilet paper.

Carrie: Right. So, I had gone beyond that and that widow fog. Still, I just was blah. I was sad. I was lonely and blah and missed Allen so much still. I wasn't crying every day anymore, but as I said, I was just going through the motions. And I wasn't happy. I didn't want to be like that, and it's like, all of your hopes and your dreams and your goals are tied around that one person. So, I had not yet figured out what my new hopes, dreams, and goals were without Allen in the picture. So, I was really stuck.

Krista: Now, as I look back on it, it's much easier for me to identify that same spot that I was in, and now I call it a grief plateau. Right, where we're past that point of completely our world exploded, and we can't function. We're functioning, but it doesn't feel like we want it to feel, and we can't really figure out how we're going to get there. So, it's like meh. Meh, at best.

Carrie: Right.

Krista: Okay, so that's kind of where you were. Julie, what about you?

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Julie: Well, I am a podcast junky, and so um, you know, I had looked. I guess I had kind of looked around. The first thing I do when I encounter a problem or a situation is I go to Google, and I see what kind of resources are out there, and everything was very sad and quite depressing and sounded awful, and you know, I turned to my podcast, and I typed in widow. Saw Widowed Mom and was like, hey, that's me. I also kind of thought, I want to be able to support my kids through it which, this program isn't entirely that, but you know it's much more about me supporting myself through it so that I can have some you know space to give to my kids, right?

But, I was also probably looking for a roadmap up and out. Like, somebody has done this before. There's got to be away. You know? And I wanted to make sure that I wasn't crazy. I was always looking for the other shoe to drop. Like, I'm feeling alright. Now, what am I overlooking? Like, am I hiding something? Is some kind of feeling or some kind of experience going to catch me by surprise and, you know, kick me down while I'm up?

So, I was really kind of looking for other people that have been there, done that, what I could learn from it.

Krista: When you're talking about it, you know, is it going to kick me down while I'm up? What was up like for you? Like, what would happen that would then start to make you worry that the other shoe will drop? Because I think this happens to a lot of widows, and they think it's just them.

Julie: Yeah, I think I was at a point where I was pretty functional, and you know I was getting things done, and I was yay me I got out of bed, and I got all of these things done, and I was able to laugh at things, and I'm like well, are you sure you should be happy again or seeing the bright side of things? Or enjoying the pleasant weather today or laughing with coworkers? I was

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just afraid that there was something that was going to come around the corner, like in a thriller. You know?

Krista: Did you notice your brain offering you kind of judgmental thoughts about you like, how you were handling grief or how much you loved your husband or any of that, or was it just a worry that it wouldn't last? What was it for you?

Julie: I think it was mostly that it wouldn't last. I think if there were any thoughts about the other thing that you mentioned about, like moving on and like that not really doing justice to my husband. I feel like that sort of idea comes—it came from outside of me like other people might judge me for moving on too quickly and that I didn't love him enough.

I knew in my heart there was no question in my mind that I loved him tremendously. But definitely, it intruded in so far. It's like I wondered how other people would feel when moving on.

Krista: So, you Googled, you found the podcast, you started listening.

Julie: Yeah. You have the short podcast, in the beginning, they're like, you know, 15-20 minutes, and you can listen to anything for 15-20 minutes. Still, I only had to listen to one and be hooked because I'm like this is very helpful information. You know, I think the first thing I listened to was like Widow's Bill of Rights. This is great stuff, and I just kept on going from there.

I think by the time I got found you, you may be already had at least 40 or 50 lessons out there, and I just soaked them up like a sponge.

Krista: So, how was your widow fog at that point? Or what was your experience with widow fog like?

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Julie: You know that one, I don't really think I noticed it as much. Somehow I was able to go to work and just kind of switch my brain into a different mode where I blocked everything else and just was present at work. So, I would say I didn't struggle as much with widow fog as other people do. Definitely, a lot of guilt, though, for going to my job and being able to shut everything off and escape when my kids were in COVID lockdown doing homeschool at home, and they had no recourse for escaping. So, I felt a lot of guilt over my ability to get out of the house and the situation.

Krista: Isn't it amazing how sometimes our brains just won't let us win.

Julie: Yeah.

Krista: Like, here you are a new widow and COVID, and then you're brains like, and you're doing it wrong. You shouldn't feel so good, or you shouldn't be stuck at home. Crazy. Okay, so, then timeline-wise, how far out were you from your husband's loss when you joined?

Julie: Let's see.

Krista: Not that it matters; I'm just curious.

Julie: Yeah, and I joined in November. So, seven months.

Krista: Okay. So, then, talk to us about how you two connected. I want to hear this story. I mean, I have kind of heard it, but I want to hear you tell it.

Julie: Well, I had been in since November, and I was scrolling through the introductions threads one day when a new class was coming in. And this person posted that they were in this town called Haverhill, and I'm like

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Haverhill? That's like two towns away from me. So, I DMd her, and the rest is history.

Carrie: We were like, hey, we should meet for coffee. We found out that we literally lived 15 minutes from each other. So, we met for coffee, and I think we talked for a couple of hours, and then as we're leaving, we're like, hey, we should do this again. Julie was like, you know, I'm doing a half marathon in a couple of months; she's like do you want to join me? And I'm like, oh, okay. I ran, I ran for years now, but I would run like three miles.

Krista: Yeah. Yeah.

Carrie: Not 13.

Krista: Hey, if you can run 3, you can run 13.

Carrie: Yeah, well, I wanted to test myself and like prove to myself that I could do it. I had a partner to push me along. So, I was game. So, I ended up doing one without her, but I did four half marathons last year, and she did three. So, we just—

Krista: Out of curiosity, do you have any widowed friends? Like widowed mom friends that could relate? Not a one? Yeah.

Carrie: I had just moved up to New Hampshire about well less than a year before my husband died. So, I really didn't have a network up here, and so I didn't even have a group of women to pull from.

Krista: Yeah, let alone one who understood. Yeah.

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Carrie: I was 42, and the stereotype of widows is that you're 60 and above. You know, your kids are grown and gone, and all of that turns out we're only two months apart. So, you know, her kids are a little bit older, but then my younger two. Then, my eldest is slightly older than hers, so we're just very much in the same stage of life. But having that commonality of both being widows and it's priceless too. It really is. And she was just about to quit her job, and I've been a stay-at-home mom since Allen and I got married.

So, we were also available to each other, not just like on nights and weekends and stuff. We'd be like, hey, let's go hang out. Let's go do this. We could talk about all that we were learning in Mom Goes On and how we were applying it to our lives and going oh yeah, now I get it. Oh, I know that my sister-in-law has this manual, and I don't, or oh, my mom. My mom's got this manual, and that's why she does that, and I don't need to take it personally at all.

Krista: It's hard for me to get perspective on this sometimes because I've just been doing this for so long, and I forget that we really do kind of have our own language inside of the program and our own tools and shortcuts and just ways that we speak like, do you know that's a thought like, there's a T in your C line. Like things that we would say that other people might not understand.

I imagine even if you've wanted to have conversations, you know, having a conversation with not only another widowed mom who is your same age, lives in the same part of the country, has a similar story in terms of a sudden loss, right, but then also is learning the same tools and trying to figure out how to apply them and speaks that same abbreviated lingo. That's got to be pretty awesome, and as a runner, like, what?

Carrie: Right.

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Krista: What are the odds of this?

Carrie: I don't know. Yes, it definitely was, and so I think we both felt like we were in a place where, gosh, we really needed a friend and a friend that just truly, truly understood where we were at.

Julie: That led to all kinds of other things, you know? I mean obviously supporting each other through learning the techniques in the program, but also supporting each other in life. Like, when we need an emergency contact at school, you know? Things like that. Or doctor's offices and whatnot. Someone in town that you can call on when your truck breaks down on the side of the road.

Krista: Sounds like a story.

Carrie: That might have happened.

Krista: That's amazing. That's amazing. So, and just to let other people know too because it might not make sense. So, the way that the program works is kind of a revolving door, and we've done that by design. So, sometimes you'll hear me talk about well, you know, the April group is about to start, whatever. But really, it's like we do it in a cohort model, so there are small groups that start every month, but then we fold the smaller group into the larger groups.

So, at the beginning of the month, there's always a small group starting, and then at the end of the month, there's always a group that's reaching its six-month point. So that's how people come to overlap like you did even though you joined at different times. And I like it that way because I like to know that someone who's brand new to the program isn't alone. After all, they have other people who are brand new with them but then also have somebody that's a little bit further ahead that they can look to. Right?

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That they can kind of, have some examples of what's possible and some encouragement, and then those women who are a little bit farther ahead remember what it was like to be brand new, and they're so welcoming and encouraging. They're probably the ones that reach out to you in the DMs like what happened with you guys.

Julie: Yeah.

Carrie: Yeah

Krista: Like, hey

Carrie: She started in November, and I started in February and so some of our conversations Julie would be like, well, hey, have you done that yet? Then, like, no, she's like, oh, don't worry. You'll learn it. It's a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

Krista: So good.

Julie: Well, the other thing is, is that Carrie was very good at attending the phone calls, and I was very good at doing the workbooks.

Krista: So, perfect balance?

Julie: Yeah. So, she would tell me what I missed on the calls, and I would tell her what she missed in the workbooks.

Krista: Yes. I love it. So, what's, out of curiosity now since you've both graduated like, do you coach each other? Do you like help each other in that way? What are your, how do you work through stuff that you're going through?

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Julie: Very much so.

Carrie: For sure, yeah.

Julie: We have many conversations about—

Carrie: —We still, we try to meet every week, just the two of us.

Krista: Really?

Carrie: Like, maintain our coffee dates.

Julie: We have a Friday morning coffee date.

Krista: But like, so with coaching, I always tell people you are not paying me to be your friend. You're paying me to help you see what you're creating with your brain, right? So, sometimes that can feel a little bit confrontational. You know, I don't really want it to, but it can feel less like, usually if your friends you know come to you with something.

Then, you listen to them with empathy, and you know you don't try to change anything. You just kind of there as a witness. So how do you find that balance to be? Are you more like, if Carrie's having a bad day, then Julie, you're like, I'm so sorry it's terrible? Or are you showing her her thoughts? Like, what's that like?

Carrie: What would Krista say?

Krista: What would Krista say, like, oh dear. Like, shut up, I just want to—
Yes, I know it's a thought, and I like it.

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Julie: It's a little bit all of that. I mean, there's definitely a lot of commensuration like, oh, I feel you. That happened to me. Or tell me more about that? This could happen to me. I want to understand this, you know.

Especially when we started dating. There was a whole lot of sharing of information.

Carrie: There was, yes.

Julie: There's just the whole new learning that wasn't necessarily fully covered in Mom Goes On. But if you need more episode ideas, I think we probably have a few.

Krista: Dating? Did you decide to start dating at the same time?

Carrie: Yeah, pretty much.

Julie: It was hilarious. So, we met on a Saturday morning at the Rail Trail. It's kind of in-between both of our houses, and she says oh, I've been doing some research for us. I was like, oh, you have? Huh? She said, yeah. I joined Bumble this morning. I said, funny, you should say that I joined Bumble last night.

Krista: No way, within 24 hours of each other.

Julie: You bet.

Carrie: Yep.

Krista: So, then, did you start dating at the same time, or did it take a while to find people you were interested in?

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Julie: No, it doesn't.

Krista: And that's how I met my partner too. So, yeah.

Carrie: We had to like put—You know we figured out how beelines and swiping and all of that stuff work and like what different when people put things in their profile; what that really meant. It was code for this, that, or the other things.

Julie: But, we were willing to accept in a profile and what we weren't.

Krista: Totally. Yeah, that's important stuff. Well, I will do maybe a dating episode, and people come back and talk about their dating experiences. I think that would be worthy of a full like, lessons learned through dating as a widow kind of deal?

Julie: Yes.

Carrie: For sure.

Krista: So, if you could go back and like talk to yourself, you know maybe in your early grief, or maybe even I don't know where you both feel like you reached a plateau, but somewhere in those early days or in those plateau days like, what kind of wisdom would you offer that earlier version of you?

Carrie: I would tell myself that it's going to be okay that there is something more, and you don't have to settle for anything that you don't want to settle for. One of the biggest things with Mom Goes On was making it so that I realized that I was in the driver's seat of my life and my feelings. So, yes, I've always been in the driver's seat, but I didn't realize I was in the driver's seat, and I wasn't sure how to turn that steering wheel, if you will.

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So, learning about my feelings and how to process them and that gosh, that feeling only lasts about 90 seconds. Well, sure, I can handle that. And realizing that I can choose the thoughts that are serving me and learn to not choose the thoughts that aren't. That was huge, and so knowing that now versus how I felt when I was stuck is just knowing that it's going to be okay and you can be happy again.

Krista: I love it, and I have to tell you that's exactly what I want people to get out of the program is that feeling of being powerful and really seeing themselves as the authors of their own human experience because that's not where most of us start. We feel pretty terrible, right? And we feel like we're at the expense of all of these things that have happened to us, and that's, so I love hearing that. That's exactly what I hope everyone experiences. So, thank you for that. What about you, Julie?

Julie: Yeah, I would say grief is individual, and so there's not like a one way to go through it, or it looks just like this and this and do this or don't do this. You're doing it wrong. That was one of my fears that you know, and I've heard from you and others the five stages of grief is not exactly how it goes exactly. You know, it is what it is.

Then, feelings aren't to be feared. I grew up in a family that didn't really display a whole lot of feelings; not even the women cried; nobody did. So, being okay and being able to sit with feelings, my feelings, other people's feelings. I remember my grandmother died a couple years before my husband died, and I saw her maybe a month before she died and she was in a nursing home, and it was just too much.

I felt like such a coward. I ran out of the room because I just couldn't sit with my discomfort of seeing her at the end of her life in the nursing home that wasn't the nicest of places. After all, that's just how most nursing homes are apparently.

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And you know, I obviously didn't get a choice when my husband died. I had no choice. I couldn't run from those feelings, really. So, learning how to feel them and be okay with them and recognize that they're not problems is part of life. It's huge for me.

Krista: Yeah, I think. Also, you didn't run from the feelings, but honestly, like give yourself some credit because you totally could have drank them away, shopped them away, spent them away. Like, you know? I mean, eventually, they don't really go away. We just like shove them down, but sometimes I think we want to give ourselves a little bit more credit. Like, you chose to feel them, and you could've done your darndest to avoid them, but you took a different path, right? You learned how to feel them.

Julie: Yeah, and I think you know going to work initially was avoiding feeling. It was a mistake, and you know, I found your program, and that helped me feel the feelings. I still remember how you got excited about the pond with all the fish.

Krista: I love that. Yes. Yes, that was so good.

Julie: I mean, that was just when I was starting to understand the about, you know, seeing feelings and experiencing them and letting them kind of flow through you and observing you.

Krista: Yeah.

Julie: And not trying to run away or avoid them.

Krista: Was that at all something you were looking for? Like, because I think most people are like, I'm already feeling terrible, why would I want to join a program where I have to feel more, and I don't? That's the last thing I want to do. So, is that something you were kind of interested in, intrigued

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by, repelled by, but just willing to do? Did you even know it was going to be something we were going to do until after we had already joined?

Julie: You know, on some level, I think I wanted to make sure that I was, going back to that thing of honoring my husband. I wanted to be able to feel sad and appropriately so and to grieve for him and not hide or run away from my grief or him. I think that was part of it.

Krista: What was the thing that flipped the switch for you? What helped you not run?

Julie: You spend a lot of time on feelings and the feelings wheel and the hundred felt feelings, and even though I didn't do the hundred felt feelings because I just couldn't wrap my head around it. The shift in okay, I feel this feeling. I'm going to sit here and just experience that because that's what I'm supposed to be doing right now; instead of going, I'll think about that later. You know, I'll feel that some other time or I don't feel like feeling that. I'm not going to feel it. It became like an academic pursuit that allowed me to do it versus running from it.

Krista: I love hearing that you didn't do the full hundred felt feelings, and yet still your relationship with feelings changed.

Julie: Oh, yeah.

Krista: My thought about it is, yeah, I give you a lot of work. As you said, one of you is good at coming to the calls, one of you is good at doing the workbooks together, but my thought is we don't even have to do all of the work, right, to experience a lot of the benefits, and if I can help you change your relationship with feelings and change your relationship with your thoughts, right? Meaning that you come out of the program having had a felt experience, not just an intellectual one, but a felt experience. You

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really, something has shifted, and you believe actually and in your body in a way that you didn't before that feelings aren't problems.

They aren't things you have to avoid. Like, you can allow any feeling to pass because, Carrie, to your point, it only takes 90 seconds once you've had some practice with it. Then, also that you do get to decide what thoughts you want to listen to, right? You don't have to believe every thought that shows up in your mind no more than you have to date everyone that shows up in your Bumble beeline. Right?

You get to choose, right? You are more powerful than you think, and those two relationships, to me, are the foundation for changing all of the other things that might be unique to us going on in your life.

Carrie: It's actually even been helpful—I'm a better parent because of it. I can allow other people to have their feelings and experience them now without feeling like I need to fix it for them. It's more like my son was upset the other day, and I listened and was like, yeah, that's hard. I can understand. He was missing me. I was leaving and going out on a date.

So, I was like, yeah, I haven't been around a lot lately, have I? And I said it's really nice to be loved and missed that much, you know? And I just listened for the rest of it, and he was good after like five minutes, but I didn't need to fix it for him.

Krista: How might you have responded before, or what would have been different when you thought you had to fix it?

Carrie: I would have said, oh, well, I'll be home tomorrow or something like that. Some sort of thing to make it so that oh, well, it's not so bad because I'll be here then. Or, be like, this is how it is. You know I have to leave, but

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I'll be here at this time, or I'm sorry that you feel that way like, I'm stumbling here a little bit.

Krista: So, you would have kind of minimized how they were feeling, maybe?

Carrie: Yes.

Krista: Or, try to make them feel differently as opposed to yeah, no, I hear you. I'm with you and allowing them to feel the way they feel. Right? Which is like, why doesn't anybody teach us this in school? I mean, really, no other alternatives work anyway. We can't change someone else's feelings because their feelings are caused by their thinking.

So, we get to stop spending our energy in ways that don't actually help anyone and just kind of being with what is.

Carrie: Right, and I think that's one of the reasons it works well for Julie and me to bounce things off of each other is because we do a lot of listening. So, there's that genuine understanding of knowing where the other one is at, but it's also a hey, so, what about this? You know? Telling it more like it is.

One of the things I value so much about Julie and our friendship is she always has another perspective to offer that I never think of, and she doesn't make any bones about, well, hey, you know, you could do something different here, Carrie.

Krista: She doesn't let you stay in a victim play. I love it. It sounds like you're both mutually interested in the success of the other, like genuinely.

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Carrie: Definitely.

Krista: So, kind of walk me through, what did you think was possible for your life before because it sounds like it was kind of like, at least for Carrie; I want to be happy, but I don't really know how, and I don't know how possible you thought it was, but how has that changed? What you thought was even possible for your life. You also, I know Carrie mentioned just kind of struggling to know like if all of my dreams were about my relationship with my partner, my person. Now I have to recreate that for myself, then who am I now? What do I want going forward? So, what's in the future now?

Julie: Well, I think that was one thing I didn't entirely struggle with because I had an identity crisis before in my past where I thought that my life was going to turn out one way. All of that changed in the span of a couple of weeks and then I had to do something else completely different and come to terms with the fact that everything I thought I knew was different. So, for me, I was just grappling with the loss of my husband, and of course, you know, we had our hopes and dreams.

We had just moved up here. He got his bucket list job, and you know everything was falling into place, and all of a sudden, everything was scattered to the four winds. So, I think mine wasn't so much about not knowing what was possible. I needed to figure out what I wanted to do, and it ended up that I decided to go back to the original idea for myself, which was to get into small business coaching.

That's something I really enjoy, and what I loved about going through Mom Goes On is one of the things I've always felt I would struggle within coaching other people was that dealing with other people's feelings and the empathy thing, alright, I could understand where they were coming from. I

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knew what it was like to be stressed, but I had never really experienced deep grief.

So, I think the program really matured me. It made me feel a lot more confident and comfortable sitting across from someone who was deeply wounded by what they'd experienced in their business life because that's can really crush a person as well.

So, that's really made me much more confident in my desire to finish my book on business and start-up my coaching and start getting out there and sitting with people in their business grief and helping them.

Krista: They can have big feelings, and it's not going to be such a problem.

Julie: And I can help them work through that because that's the thing they can learn to feel those feelings, pick up and carry on. It doesn't mean that they don't need to stop doing what they're doing.

Krista: Yeah, people ask me that a lot, too, as a coach. It's funny. Even though they're coaches, they ask me this a lot. I think they think I don't know what they think is different about grief work than other work, but really once we get the idea that feelings aren't problems. They're not contagious, and we don't need to solve them, and nothing has gone wrong because we're having them then work that involves feelings, I love it.

It's not painful. You don't leave feeling depressed. You don't leave feeling, you know, deflated or overwhelmed or burdened. I leave feeling energized, excited, and on fire. So, I'm so glad that you figured that out because of all of those people that need you, right, as their coach. You would have maybe missed that if you hadn't gotten comfortable with the feelings bit, so I'm excited for you. I'm actually really excited for those people.

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Julie: Thank you.

Krista: Yeah. So good. What about you, Carrie?

Carrie: Well, as I said, I felt pretty stuck before I started the program, and so I got unstuck is the bottom line. You know, you, for some people, and me included, you have this life insurance money and that you would do anything to give back because when you get it, you don't actually want it, and you feel dirty for having it. So, I needed a new car. I had a 2008 Dodge Caravan that had over 200,000 miles on it, but it was hard to spend that money.

So, actually, I brought that to you in coaching, and it was all I needed. It was like, oh, okay, I can give myself permission to go and spend some of this money and get a new car. That is okay. That was kind of like the first step, and things snowballed from there. So, I went and bought a new car, well, it was new to me. It was a couple years old, but then last April, I started dating. I decided I was going to put my house on the market because, for me, part of moving forward was carving out this new identity for myself. I didn't feel like I could do that in the same house and space that I had shared with Allen for all those years.

So, I sold my house, and I'm getting ready to put it on the market and get it staged and all of that. Julie is like, hey, you don't really want to live in a house with three kids and try to keep it staged, ready, and open house ready, and she was like, I'm going away for a while this summer. Why don't you come live with me? I have plenty of space.

Julie: She can take care of my cats.

Carrie: That's true too, and water her plants.

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Krista: There's a win. I love it, a double win.

Carrie: So, in June, right when my kids ended school, we moved into her house with her for two months, and I spent the summer house hunting and trying to find something that I knew that I was looking for in a town that I wanted to be in and we had some community living. It was wonderful, like, it worked out so well. Yeah, she wasn't here for part of the time, but it was really nice to come home, and she would be like, hey, do you want to grill out? Like, sure.

So, I found another house. I closed on the same day on both houses in August, and over the course of those few months, I had also figured out that, yes, I wanted to go back to school. I have a high school education, and that's it. I never went to college after high school, and I've decided that it was time to follow my dream of becoming a lawyer.

So, I started school a couple weeks after we moved into the new house, and I'm working on getting my bachelor's degree in criminal justice. My plan is to go to law school after that. So, by the time I graduate, my youngest will be right around the time he's graduating high school. I thought that was a perfect time to embark on a career.

So, I want to be a child advocacy lawyer, and when I had to redo my estate plan after Allen died. It was actually the conversation with my lawyer that helped me decide, hey, yeah, I really want to go to school. At first, I was thinking like paralegal and whatnot, but when it was through Mom Goes On that, I was like, why am I selling myself short?

Why am I just going to stop at paralegal? I don't really just want to be a paralegal. I want to be a lawyer. That's what I've always wanted to do.

Krista: I just want to chant your name!

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Carrie: So, I started last fall, and I took two classes, and then this semester, I took three classes. One of them just ended for me, so I'm back down to two right now, and I'll take a couple of summer courses and stuff. So, you know, 26 years since I've been in school.

So, that was an adjustment, that's for sure. But I love it. I'm the oldest kid in all my classes. I call myself a kid; I'm not sure if I can do that, but—

Krista: —You're going to be the one that blows up the curve too.

Carrie: Yeah.

Krista: That's so good. So, Julie's got writing a book and starting a business. I don't know even how many half marathons between the two of you, both dating; Carrie sold her house and is now going to do a bachelor's degree and go to law school

Julie: And we both have new vehicles.

Krista: And new vehicles, holy cow. Have y'all just like stopped and just kind of celebrated yourselves?

Carrie: Well, we actually went on vacation together.

Julie: We just got back from Orlando a couple of weeks ago.

Carrie: Yeah, it was the kid's break from school and—

Julie: —I heard I had a good time.

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Krista: I wish y'all had the camera for that one. That was good. Seriously though, I don't want people to hear, oh, wow, they're so, I could never do all of those things that they did because sometimes I think that's what they hear when I interview people who've done the program. But, like, did you come into the program thinking I'm going to do all of those things, like?

Carrie: Absolutely not.

Julie: No, and honestly, like, I don't even think I would have gotten through one of those half marathons. Maybe I might have done one of them had it not been for Carrie going; yeah, sure, I'll do that with you. Then, next thing you know, we ended up signing up for a whole bunch of 5Ks and all of that stuff to lead up to as part of the training thing.

I mean, there's so much. There's no way I would've gotten around to it if it hadn't had been for Carrie and I pushing each other. She is literally pushing me up hills on races. So, I think that's part of one of the things we've really gotten out of not only the program but meeting each other and then pushing on each other through the program and beyond.

Krista: Yeah, you're both kind of interested in your own growth, but then pushing the other one to grow is just this beautiful mutually beneficial evolution.

Julie: Yes.

Carrie: And inspiring each other, and seeing what she's doing, I'm like holy Christmas, this lady, she's on fire. You know?

Krista: It sounds like you both are, but what I hope other people will hear as they're listening is like, it's totally okay if you don't know what you want to do with your life. It's totally okay if you're in that place where you can't even

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imagine being happy in the future, let alone having the concept of what that looks like. It's not about having this big vision and living into this big vision. It really is about just take the next step and let it unfold. Take the next step, yeah.

Julie: As I said, I was stuck. I was really stuck. I was getting out of bed, taking a shower, making sure my kids were fed, cleaning my house, like, taking them wherever they needed to go. Then they would go to bed at night. I would sit there alone in my living room and often crying or drinking away my feelings and then getting up the next day and doing it all over again, and I wasn't sleeping either. I would often wake up between like 1-4 and lay in bed for several hours before finally catching another hour of sleep.

Before I joined the program, I also had a time period where I had a lot of physical ailments because that's how my grief was coming out. There was one point in time when I thought I had a heart attack, and I went to the hospital, and I got checked out, and I made my doctor, I was like I need an echocardiogram. Like, you really need to check. I swear I had a heart attack, but that's not what it was.

I think it was a mixture that I missed my thyroid medication that morning, but really what it was, was the physical symptoms of my grief. So, no, I had no idea how I was going to go forward, how I was going to get there, and there was part of me that believed that I could, but there was a much bigger part of me that wasn't so sure. Or if I could, how do I get there? How do I arrive there? Mom Goes On really helped me figure that out.

Krista: I love it. It just literally blows my mind sometimes because there was just a point for me where I thought like, I have all of these tools, and there are women out there. They need these tools, and I was so like, it wasn't easy to put myself out there, but like, women like you were the ones that I

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was envisioning. Like, you were the ones right, and I didn't even know you. So like, it's such a continual blessing and full-circle moment for me to hear stories to hear what you have done with the work that I have done. Of course, you get all of the credit I just give the tools, but to know that the two of you connected and your lives are headed in such amazing places and that I had something to do with that is just such a gift to me. So, sorry for—

Carrie: You have such a gift to offer all of us.

Julie: I mean, even if all I had done was listen to those podcasts, I mean the shifts just listening to the lessons that you taught there that was probably half the battle, and then the workbooks and Carrie totally gravy on top, you know?

Carrie: I still listen to the podcasts every single week faithfully.

Julie: So do I.

Carrie: It's kind of like a little refresher; keep everything fresh in my head.

Julie: On Friday, we're like did you listen to Krista's podcast?

Krista: Then you can talk about it. I love it, and that's totally why I do it, right? Because I remember, I mean, Julie had spoken to me so much when you said you went to Google and you went to a podcast because so did I, and it was so discouraging to not find something, and I don't know how you all felt about the term widow, but at 40 I could not relate to that term. I was like, a woman whose husband died unexpectedly. Like, can I Google that, right?

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Woman with young children whose husband died, like, it's a widow isn't, it truly isn't a term for me, and so, yeah. I'm just so glad that when your Google search was done that at least you found a podcast, I guess, you know?

Carrie: Along with that, I mean, people don't think of widows that are survivors like so many of them have to be. When you really become a widow, you start seeing them come out of the woodwork, and you know, had no idea, so when you just do move on to have great lives again.

Krista: You weren't thinking about it before. Your brain wasn't looking for it.

Carrie: Yeah, that's true. Your brain's not looking for it. I don't think it's something that people are out there, just hey, look at me. You know? I guess it's a thing that you can hide.

Krista: Yeah, you don't ever have to talk about it again.

Carrie: We don't have a lot of widows to emulate out there to show us what it could be.

Krista: Well, thank you so much for coming out to the podcast and letting other people hear examples like, I hope people listen to this and heard themselves in you, like a thought you know, I struggled with that, or you know that's what I would like for me, or if she can do it I can do it. That's what I want. Is there anything we missed that you hoped we would cover that you want to leave listeners with?

Julie: We got a lot out of the program, even if we hadn't found each other, but if you can find somebody in your community and you can breathe the same air as them, it's magical.

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Krista: Breathe the same air as them; I love that.

Carrie: Yes, Julie has enhanced my journey tenfold. Knowing that she's here and I can just pick up the phone, and I can text her, I can pop over if I need to.

Krista: Hey, you can like move in again if it, potentially. Apparently, there are no limits.

Julie: Yes. She's got my back, and I've got hers, and it's a good thing. We really understand each other.

Krista: Well, thank you for coming and sharing your story, and seriously celebrate yourselves. What you have accomplished and created individually and together is really inspiring and something to be celebrated.

Julie: Well, thank you, too, for creating a program and sharing everything that you've learned, and giving us this opportunity to meet and form this relationship around what you've taught.

Carrie: I second what she says, and I also always love how you end your emails and everything of I love you, and you've got this. That's like one of my favorite parts.

Krista: Aw, yay. Well, I do love you, and you do have this. I do mean it. So, amazing. Alright, I want to hear about the book when it comes out. Alright, and we'll have you back, and we'll talk about dating.

Julie: Sounds great.

Krista: Thank you both so much. 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 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 that you can move forward with confidence.

Please don't settle for a new normal that's less than you deserve. Go to coachingwithkrista.com and click work with me for details and the next steps. I can't wait to meet you.