

Ep #151: The Merry-Go-Round or the Rollercoaster



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 151, The Merry-go-round or the Rollercoaster.

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. Just got back from my trip to Puerto Rico last week. It was so good. I've never been to Puerto Rico. It's a lovely place to go. It's so easy to travel to because it's a territory of the US so you don't need a passport. You don't have to worry about customs. And everyone was so friendly. The ocean was amazing.

And listen, this is a big deal, I did not check email, or Slack, or bring my laptop you all, I have not completely gone out of range, whatever the term for that is since I became a coach, literally. And I have taken a lot of vacations since then but I have always taken my laptop with me or I've always been in some way plugged in or available. And I told my team that they could text me if there was a crisis but otherwise to handle it. And they did.

And I came back and everything was handled and there was no fires. And it was amazing. So, it feels like a big accomplishment to me. And I'm proud of having created a business that can run without me.

So, okay, let's get into this episode because I want to talk about the merry-go-round or the rollercoaster. And the impetus for this episode is a scene in one of my favorite movies with Steve Martin called Parenthood. It's a movie from the late 80s. And in it there is a scene which I'm going to read to you. I actually looked it up so that I could get it exactly accurate. And there is a scene where Steve Martin's grandma tells a story. And Steve Martin's not

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having it. But I just love this story and more than anything I love the idea of what it represents in terms of what's possible for our lives.

So, here's how it goes. The kind of whacky old grandma who she's just up there in age and maybe her mental faculties aren't always as solid as they once were but then sometimes as in this instance she just has these moments where she offers amazing wisdom. So, grandma says, "You know, when I was 19, grandpa took me on a roller coaster." And Steve Martin's character, Gil, says, "Oh", very sarcastically by the way. And grandma says, "Up, down, up, down. Oh, what a ride." And Gil kind of rolls his eyes and he says, "What a great story."

And grandma says, "I always wanted to go again. You know, it was just so interesting to me that a ride could make me so frightened, so scared, so sick, so excited, and so thrilled all together. But some didn't like it. And they went on the merry-go-round. And that just goes around. Nothing. I like the rollercoaster. You get more out of it."

And so that's the scene. And it happens when a time when Gil and his wife are arguing and they're about to discover that, you know, she's about to tell him that she's pregnant. And it's kind of an unplanned pregnancy. And he's already super stressed out. And so, grandma tells this story. And I love it because this is the choice we get to make. This is the choice all of us, that you listener, get to make in your life. Do we want the merry-to-round or do we want the rollercoaster? And that's what I want to talk about in this episode.

So first, I don't believe the rollercoaster is the superior option. I don't believe that this is about right or wrong, or good or bad, or better or worse. The merry-go-round is completely is completely as valid as the rollercoaster. So, if you're thinking this is about you should want the rollercoaster. That is not what I'm saying. I'm not pushing you to want the rollercoaster. And when I think back to my own grief experience, there was

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definitely a point where for me I had had enough of the rollercoaster. I just wanted the merry-go-round. I just wanted things to feel calm.

I was so tired of the emotional ups and downs and all the highs and lows that I just wanted calm. So, if that's where you are and that's where you want to be then I'm with you and I'm all in, stay there if and until you decide you want something else. And you never have to want something else by the way. But the most important thing about the merry-go-round or the rollercoaster is that you choose consciously.

Because what I see so often is that widows are settling for a merry-go-round life when what they really want is the rollercoaster. They don't want the merry-go-round, they're just settling for it. And the saddest part is that they're calling the merry-go-round their new normal. They aren't actually choosing it on purpose because it's what they want, they're resigning themselves to it. And we do this because there are some thoughts in our mind that this is all that's possible for us. This is all we can have.

When we don't believe that the life we want is possible then we settle and sometimes this means settling for the merry-go-round. Eventually there came a point in my grief where I stopped wanting the merry-go-round, it felt boring to me. It felt less than what my heart was asking me for because at that point what I really wanted was to get back to living. What I really wanted was to stop believing that my best days were probably behind me and that I should just be grateful for what I had. I did not want to be on the downhill slope of my life.

What I really wanted was to get back in it, to get back in the game, to be an example. To be an example of resilience to my kids, to be an example of what was possible for widows. And when I learned about posttraumatic growth, which if that's a new term for you, you can check out the episode of the podcast that I did on posttraumatic growth. But when I learned about posttraumatic growth I knew that I didn't have to just bounce back to the life

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that I had before even though frankly what I had before was pretty great. I knew that I could bounce forward.

I knew that I could create even deeper levels of life satisfaction for myself. And if we're being honest at that point in time I wasn't loving my career. It was okay, I loved the people, it was paying the bills, it was safe or at least it felt safe at the time. I was having fun doing it. But it wasn't really the mark that I wanted to leave on the world. I didn't believe that I was helping people to the extent that I was capable of helping them.

Airplanes were not exciting to me. Even though Learjets, they're pretty sexy airplanes. My husband loved them. Hugo loved them. He didn't want to do anything else but aviation. But that really wasn't my calling. I didn't really want that, it was never my dream. It was just kind of something that I had fallen into by nature of living in the air capital of the world where we make lots of planes. It's something that paid the bills. I had made it work for 10 years but it wasn't really making my heart sing. It had become my merry-go-round.

And I wasn't going to bed at the end of the day thinking, wow, I did some really important work today. So, the rollercoaster for me meant getting outside of my comfortable merry-go-round job, certifying as a coach, going all in on something that felt exciting but also completely terrifying which is what makes it part of the rollercoaster. It opens us up to the highest of highs, but also potentially the lowest of lows, the positive emotion at the top of that rollercoaster and maybe the negative emotion at the bottom. But it's a choice that we get to make.

And interestingly enough it's not a choice that we make just once. It's a choice we make over, and over, and over. I have to keep reminding myself sometimes that I've chosen the rollercoaster. And usually that happens when I'm experiencing some negative emotion because of a story in my mind about something that's not working that should be, something that

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seems harder than I expected it to be and I have to remind myself, No, Krista, you chose the rollercoaster. You could go sit on the couch, you could go watch Netflix all day. You could do that.

You could go back to a safe corporate job that's predictable. You really don't have to worry about payroll and managing people, or at least doing that for yourself. But I keep choosing the rollercoaster. I keep choosing the full deep human experience, not the mediocre meh experience. And when I say mediocre, I don't mean mediocre as in less than. I don't mean to say that the merry-go-round is less valuable than the rollercoaster.

I mean think about all of the emotions that are part of our human experience. If we stacked them in a ladder, we stacked them from the lowest emotion, the least, what we would consider the least desirable, the most negative, we'd probably start with something like despair. That would be at the very bottom of the emotional scale. And then if we laid out all of the emotions that are part of the human experience in order of some would call it vibration, we would have despair at the bottom and joy at the top. And in the middle would be neutral and everything in between.

So, we go all the way up from despair, to anger, and then neutral, and hopefulness, and joy, and love, and ecstasy and all those things. And there's tons of emotions. I have a book, it's called The Dictionary of Emotions. And it's probably got, it's got hundreds of emotions in it. So, we took all of those emotions and we lined them out from bottom to top, worst to best, least desirable to most desirable.

Then when I'm talking about the rollercoaster what I mean is a life that gives us the potential to experience the highs and also the lows because they are connected. The highs are not possible if we are not willing to experience the lows. Do you see what I mean? The only reason we understand joy and have context for joy is because we have experienced

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despair. We would not know happiness without sadness. We just wouldn't have a frame of reference.

If happiness were the only thing we ever experienced, if there weren't any contrast, happiness would start to lose its value. It wouldn't feel as good as it feels. It feels good because we know what the opposite of it feels like. So, when I say a rollercoaster life what I mean is all the emotions, all of it. And so, when I say mediocre, what I mean is what I also sometimes call the stagnation zone which is that band in the middle where it's not great but it's not awful. It's just meh, mediocre, blah, neutral, kind of numb, robotic, hollow. It's not terrible. It's not amazing.

That's what I'm talking about. And we can get stuck there and end up on the merry-go-round on accident in a few ways. So, one of the ways I see us getting stuck is with behavior patterns that I often call overing, so overeating, overdrinking, over-shopping, over-scrolling, overthinking, over anything. Anything to excess where because we're doing that behavior we get to escape negative emotion is an overing behavior.

There's a couple of episodes of the podcast I did if this is interesting to you, called Why are we Numb and How to Stop. I did a part one and a part two. You might go check those out. What are the behaviors that we use to get away from negative emotion? And a lot of us get stuck in these patterns. And we come by it honestly. We come by it honestly because we weren't taught how to deal with negative emotion. We have a primitive brain that's designed to avoid negative emotion. I've talked about this on the podcast before.

So, it makes sense why we do this, why we fall into overing behaviors, why we use them to escape our negative emotion. And those aren't good or bad, or right or wrong either in my opinion. But what they do create is not only do they limit our negative emotion, they limit our positive emotion too. If we're not willing to feel negative emotion we can never break out of those

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patterns. If we're not willing to feel negative emotion we can never grow, and expand, and do things that are currently scary.

If I wasn't completely willing to feel fear I would have never been able to leave that comfy job and create a business. That was the price of admission for me was being willing to feel negative emotion so that I could feel the positive emotion and creating what I wanted and living into a dream that I had. But overing will prevent us from that. Overing will keep us stuck on the merry-go-round which is fine unless you want the rollercoaster.

We also stay stuck on the merry-go-round when we choose the safe option instead of the scary option that we really want. For me this was becoming a coach and starting my own business. Any time that we aren't disrupting the status quo, when the status quo is really what we want is a sign that we're stuck on the merry-go-round. Think about the repeating patterns that you have and maybe you think you've always had them, but you aren't changing them.

What is it in your life that you just keep doing and you don't want to do it anymore? Maybe it's a habit that you have that you just can't seem to quit but you really don't want it anymore. Maybe there's a way that you identify yourself and it feels heavy, and old, and outdated. But you don't know how to break free from it. What is that for you? Do you keep telling yourself that you're a procrastinator, or that you're bad with money, or that you're disorganized, or maybe messy? Maybe you keep telling yourself you're a hot mess. Do those things sound familiar? What is that pattern for you?

Maybe you've had that pattern for so long that you just see it as the truth of who you are instead of seeing it for what it really is which is just an optional label that you've given yourself that you just keep perpetuating. You didn't come out of the womb as a procrastinator. You didn't come out of the womb as someone who's bad at money, or disorganized, or messy. But somewhere along the way you started thinking of yourself like that. Now it's

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just part of your identity and you don't see it as optional. So, you just keep repeating it.

You keep repeating the same old pattern and proving your belief about yourself true. Does that sound familiar? It's not what you want but it's familiar. It's comfortable. It's the devil you know. And it's keeping you on the merry-go-round. I know this because I've been there. I've done this. You're not alone. Whenever we're not telling ourselves the truth about what we want in life we're on the merry-go-round. Which, by the way, telling yourself the truth about what you want can be absolutely terrifying.

It's so much easier to just pretend you don't want something because if you don't want something, if you don't allow yourself to truly want it then you can't fail. That's safe. Not wanting what we really want keeps us safe on the merry-go-round. But telling ourselves the truth about what we really want, it opens up what's possible for us. It opens us up to our truth and very scary but it's part of being on the rollercoaster. Or maybe you aren't being honest, fully honest about who you are, about what you think, about how you see the world.

Whenever we're people pleasing and trying to get the approval of others, trying to make ourselves more palatable, not leaning into who we really are, not showing up in the world as our authentic selves that's when we're on the merry-go-round. I watched one of my former certification students, so for a couple of years I taught coach certification for The Life Coach School. And one of the students that I had, I won't tell you all of his details but from the very beginning, almost from the first class that I had with him I was kind of blown away by his charisma, and his wit, and his natural coaching ability.

I could just see him creating an amazing mark on the world with coaching. And so, I've been following him from a distance. And what I have noticed and he teaches this from his own experience. But what I have noticed is that when he was not being honest about who he was, he wasn't really

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being dishonest. He was just kind of fitting himself into a mold that he thought other people wanted to see him in. And it wasn't dishonest. He just wasn't fully leaning into who he really was. So, he's a gay man.

And he had kind of branded himself as this wholesome, boy next door, approachable, cutesy, sweet, it felt very bland. He definitely wasn't putting himself out there as in any way opinionated, or potentially alienating. He was just kind of blending in. And then at a certain point he realized what he was doing. He realized he wasn't showing up as himself. He wasn't leaning into who he really was. And that's why he was having this ho-hum experience. That's why he was blending into the background.

That's why people weren't really even noticing him, or maybe he was attracting people that really weren't the kind of people that he wanted to do business with. They weren't the kind of clients he wanted. And at a certain point he flipped that switch. And I'm going to tell you, that man is showing up in the world as himself. He is daring. He is on fire. He is out there in terms of his fashion sense and his magnetism. He is just electric. And as a result of that his business has exploded.

And he is attracting all sorts of people, his dream clients, the people he wants to do business with, the people who see the world the way he sees it are messaging him. He doesn't even have to go out and find them because he's showing up in the world as his authentic self. Just by the very nature of how he is showing up, he has created the rollercoaster experience of being in business for himself instead of the merry-go-round. So, if you want more of your people in your life you have to show up as more of you. Does that make sense?

If it seems like you're surrounded by the wrong people but yet wherever you are, you're not really being honest about who you are, and what you think, and how you see the world. Then how would you ever attract the people that you love spending time with? Of course, you're going to have

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merry-go-round friendships, merry-go-round relationships, blah, meh. Which is okay if that's what you want but if it's not what you want you've got to be honest about who you are, and what you think, and how you see the world.

You have to stop trying to please people to get the approval of others. You have to stop trying to make yourself more palatable. You have to start leaning into who you really authentically are at your core so that other people can see you. That's the difference between being accepted and belonging.

Okay, ultimately what I want you to take from this episode is that you have a choice to make. You can choose the merry-go-round and for a long time I did, it was what I wanted, I felt relieved to not have to deal with the rollercoaster. So, it's not about right or wrong, it's not about good or bad, what it really is about is living with intention, choosing on purpose. But please don't let yourself stay on the merry-go-round because you don't believe more is possible. Please don't resign yourself to a life that is less than what you want because you don't believe that more is possible.

Please don't resign yourself to a life that's less than what you want and call it your new normal. Please don't do that to yourself because more really is possible, whatever you want to do with your life. It's your life. You can go do that with your life. And for each of us there are many, many well-travelled neuropathways in our brain, many, many automated ways of thinking, things that we have been thinking about ourselves in our lives for so long that it's hard to even imagine that they're thoughts.

It's hard to even see them as things we could change because we have brains that just like to be efficient. So, if your brain is telling you that you're not the type of person that is capable of extraordinary things, if you're just not the kind of person who can do whatever it is you feel called to do, don't believe it. It only becomes true when you decide to believe it. So, you get to

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be the boss of what's true for you. You get to be the boss of whether you stay stuck on the merry-go-round or whether you create the rollercoaster experience that you want.

Do you hear me? This is what I want for you. It's not even that I want the rollercoaster for you as much as I just want you to know that you are choosing it. Choose what you want, and make it happen, and don't believe any nonsense in your brain that holds you back from that. And if you want help with that, that's what I do. That's what I do.

If you feel like you're in that grief plateau, if you want to bust out of the merry-go-round, and you want to create a future that's as good or better than your past, and yes, I said, better than, because that's possible. That's what I do. And I would love to help you so come join us in Mom Goes On. Time waits for no one. Time waits for no one and you're worth it. Alright, I love you and no matter what's going on, you've got this. Alright, take care and I'll see you next week, bye bye.

If you like what you've been hearing on this podcast and want to create a future you can truly get excited about 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.