

Ep #157: What is Your Purpose Now



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With Your Host

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[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 157, What is Your Purpose Now?

Have you ever asked yourself what your purpose is now that your spouse has died? Maybe you believe that you don't know what your purpose is now that your spouse has died. How do you feel when you think about purpose? Do you feel pressured? Does it feel heavy? Do you worry about getting it wrong? That's what I want to talk to you about in today's episode because if you're struggling here, you're not alone and I want to help.

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. How are you doing? What's going on where you are? It's raining where I am and I have waited until the last possible day to record this podcast episode for you because as you can hear in my voice I still don't feel great. I'm better though. And this time around it was not a cold. This time around it was COVID.

My daughter's graduation party happened. I know I mentioned that in the last podcast episode. Her high school graduation party, her high school graduation ceremony, all of that came and went. And it was lovely and amazing except that I ended up with COVID as did several members of my family unfortunately. Just when you think you've protected yourself for two plus years, wham, hello. But fortunately, everyone who got it had very mild cases so far. And my dad still has it. My stepmom just tested positive this morning. And yeah, it really wasn't what we were hoping for.

And in addition to being quarantined on my birthday, which also was not my plan, we didn't get to go to the cabin. We were going to go to my dad's cabin in Colorado but he got COVID and of course now my stepmom has it.

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And so, we will have to reschedule that vacation later. So here I am still at home recording this podcast for you and this one is one I know I can help you with. It comes up so much in coaching.

And the reason I decided to do this episode was after doing an Ask Krista Anything coaching call, which if you've never been on I want to invite you to. About once a month I do free public Ask Krista Anything coaching calls.

And if you aren't on my email list and you don't know anything about them you can go to coachingwithkrista.com, scroll down to the bottom of the homepage and then enter your email and name and that will get you on my email list. So, you'll start getting notified of special things that we do for my community and then also you'll get helpful things in your inbox, including Widow Wednesday emails and such.

But on this particular Ask Krista Anything call, a woman asked for coaching and she was really surprised to learn that after her spouse died she didn't know what she wanted. In fact, she said she didn't even know what her favorite color was. And that really surprised her. She didn't realize that she was kind of out of touch with what she wanted in life and what she preferred in life. But it didn't surprise me at all primarily because I've coached a lot of people on this and also because, think about it, women are socialized to put ourselves last.

We are taught that selflessness is a badge of honor. Explicitly, implicitly we are sent the message that other people's needs, wants, desires, preferences matter more than ours. And our job is to take care of them. So, we end up putting ourselves very often and what we want at the bottom of the list. And we don't let our desires, and our preferences, and our likes matter. Instead, we give so much to others. And we're absolutely praised for this.

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So, we're so accustomed to it that sometimes we confuse having and honoring our own preferences with selfishness which is fascinating to me, but very logical given how we are socialized as women in this country. So, it came as no surprise to me that this woman was disconnected from what she wanted and what she liked because as women we're praised for disconnecting and putting other people first.

And inside of Mom Goes On which is my coaching program we cover this in way more depth, this concept of purpose. But I want to give you my basic philosophy and get you headed in the right direction because if you're struggling, you just don't have to struggle as much in this area. So first, before I tell you my philosophy on purpose, I want to offer to you that purpose has nothing to do with your worth.

Your worth is already established, your worth is non-negotiable. And if you believe that, that will help you because then you will stop trying to earn your worthiness by way of your purpose, by way of what you do. And a lot of us are doing this. I used to do this too. But really there's no amount of doing that will prove us worthy because we already are worthy, 100%. We just have to decide to believe that we are. So, I want to encourage you to decide to believe that your worth is inherent.

You would never decide for instance that a cute little toddler is only worthy if it knows what its purpose is. You wouldn't be like, "Well, toddler, I don't know, why are you on the planet? Tell me so that I can deem you worthy." It kind of sounds laughable when we think about it like that. But yet somewhere as we were walking through life on this planet, somewhere we picked up the idea that purpose matters and that somehow it's related to our self-worth. I just want to offer that it isn't.

So, if we can decide a purpose has nothing to do with our worth and our worth is already established, that will make purpose so much easier. Because most of us have a very heavy or complicated experience of our

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purpose. We stress about it. We think it's something that we're lacking. And if we don't know what it is we think it's a problem and we need to find it. But what I believe is that purpose is just another way of describing how we choose how to spend our time and energy. That's it.

It's just a way to describe how we choose to spend our time and energy. And how we choose to spend our time and energy can evolve and iterate many times throughout our lives without us having ever been wrong about our purpose. So, we want to give ourselves permission to lighten up a little bit and not put so much pressure on ourselves, not worry that we're making right or wrong decisions about our purpose and let it evolve, let it change over time.

We also want to remind ourselves that even if we declare our purpose, it still won't take away the emotional experience of being human. It won't take away our grief. It won't be the end of our anxiety. But of course, our human brain keeps looking for the easy button, for the escape hatch. It keeps looking for a way for life to not be hard, for life to be easy. But this isn't the way of life. This isn't what it's like to be a human on our planet.

So, we also want to give up the idea that the grass will be greener if we believe we know what our purpose is, that somehow life will be better, it won't and that's okay. So, if purpose has nothing to do with your self-worth and it doesn't need to be a heavy and stressful experience, and having one won't take away the emotional experience of being human, then what? Then purpose can be fine. Purpose doesn't have to be so overwhelming.

So, here's how I think about purpose. And I think I learned this primarily from Brooke Castillo. It's funny, I have so many teachers and I can't remember sometimes who I learned what from. But I like the idea that purpose can be separated out into big P Purpose as in capital letter P Purpose, big P Purpose. And little p purpose as in lower case letter p purpose. Big P Purpose, little p purpose.

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And when we're thinking about our big P Purpose, capital P Purpose, I believe and I want to offer to you that really our big P Purpose, the purpose of all purposes is just to be a human on the planet. That's it. It's just to exist, just to have the experience of what it's like to live this human life on this planet. And the good news is that we're all already doing that. We're all already living this human life on the planet Earth.

So, if that's true which I think it is because you're listening to this podcast, that means we can just stop worrying about our big P Purpose because we're already living it, we're doing it. We don't have to earn anything, prove anything, we're just having a human experience. So that's the big P Purpose. We can check that box. We're doing it.

Little p purpose is a choice. Purpose isn't something we need to know before we take action. Purpose is something we figure out because we take action. I'm going to say that again. Purpose isn't something we need to know before we take action. Purpose is something we figure out because we take action. We learn by doing.

I did another episode that has some overlapping themes called Imperfect Action Until, episode 116. So, if this is interesting to you I would go back and listen to that one because a lot of it relates. But if we adopt the philosophy of learning by doing, life gets a lot easier. We can make progress faster. And when I used to work in the corporate world we had a philosophy in continuous improvement which is not unique to manufacturing companies of plan, do, check, act, or adjust, PDCA, plan, do, check, I like adjust, plan, do, check, adjust.

And the idea is that it's not all about the plan. We can plan until the cows come home and we don't learn anything through the process of planning. We only learn when we do. And so, it seems like the point of creating something or living life is to plan it all out and follow the plan. But really and it's kind of a recipe for perfectionism, frustration, and a lot of hard lessons

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learned. And I used to fall into this and I still do, I have to coach myself on it. I still notice myself wanting to over-plan and wanting to over-perfect, instead of just trying it and see what happens.

And I want to give you an example of the importance of this in real life and then I want you to think about how you can take this concept of plan, do, check, adjust and apply it to your purpose, apply it to this next chapter of life. When I used to work for Bombardier Learjet, all of the planes that we built were made of metal. And then we decided to try a composite plane, a composite business jet, completely different in so many ways. It's not that composite hadn't been done before, of course it had but we had never done it.

And long story short, we lost a ton of money and that plane never made it to market. And one of the things that we did or didn't do is we did not plan, do, check, adjust fast enough. We spent way too much time planning and not enough time doing, and checking, and adjusting. And this is a really easy trap to fall into in engineering specifically. So composite materials had some experience kind of figuring that out, made a plan. And then decided, the company decided to build that composite material in a plant in Mexico at about sea level.

Well, guess what we didn't do? We didn't do a whole lot of doing and checking about what it was like to build composite at sea level. So, there's a whole bunch of data that wasn't available to people because they had never actually built composite material at sea level. So, the most beautiful plan, the most beautiful manufacturing facilities, and tools, and the most amazing best laid plans, didn't work as well as we thought when we actually tried it out. But by then so much money had been spent.

And this was by no means the only reason that that program ended up going under and we lost millions, and millions, and millions of dollars. But this is the trap of it, this is the importance of allowing ourselves to learn by

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doing. We would have never known these lessons about building composite material at sea level until we actually did it. And what I want you to do is to consider how you could take this information and apply it to your next chapter of life. You aren't supposed to know. You've never done it before.

There is no amount of planning that will give you the same data that you will get from doing. So instead of telling yourself that you have to know what your next chapter of life is going to look like and you have to be really clear on your purpose, can you change your goal? And can you decide that all you have to do is to get out there and take imperfect action until you figure it out? You make a plan, you do it, you check to see what happened and you adjust based on what you learned.

You use your willingness to do, to take action as your measure of success. It's not about planning, it's not even about the result you create, it's about giving yourself the gift of learning by doing. And then let that evolve, let that iterate over, and over, and over. Because different seasons of life might have different purposes for you. My little purpose now may be very different than what I decide it will be in five years, or 10 years, or 20 years, why wouldn't it be? Why wouldn't we give ourselves that permission to evolve and iterate as humans? It's so much better, so much less pressure.

And along the way expect that your brain is going to offer you the I don't know thought. Expect that I don't know is going to show up in your brain. Expect that when you say, "What do I want my purpose to be", your brain is going to say, "I don't know." And this is why in Mom Goes On, I don't let my clients stop at I don't know. It's okay if we say it but we've got to recognize that it's a dream busting thought, I don't know, it's a dream killer. It will keep you stuck more than any other thought and it will seem so benign but it's not, it's poison to stop there.

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But it's very natural that our brain offers it to us because remember, primitive brain's way of keeping us safe is to stay in the cave. Confusion leads us to inaction, inaction keeps us safe in the cave from the perspective of our primitive brain. So of course, I don't know is going to show up, primitive brain just wants to seek pleasure, avoid pain, be efficient so it's going to offer us I don't know, it's going to keep us confused. It's okay but then we don't stop there and we say, "Okay, what do I know?"

And we go back and we get curious. What do I know about what I enjoy? Thinking back through my life, when have I really been just lit up? When has time just passed? When have I felt like I was in a total zone? What interests me? What excites me? What gets me curious? And even if it's the tiniest little itty, bitty, teeny, weeny spark of something then we follow that spark and we try it. And we see what happens. We do, we check, we adjust and we learn by doing. And we don't put all this pressure on ourselves to know everything in advance.

We don't buy into this myth that somehow having a purpose means that we're somehow more worthy. We don't get into the idea of good or bad, right or wrong ways to spend our time and energy. We just give ourselves the permission to be humans on the planet who get to choose how we want to spend our time because it's our one precious life.

Alright, this can be the experience that we have of purpose. And if you struggle even as you think about what I just offered you, struggling with purpose, you can always come back to values. Values are always available to us. Values are something that are not dependent upon future action. We can take action right now in this moment that aligns with what we value.

So maybe you decide your purpose is to work with youth and maybe that involves you going back to school, or maybe you end up doing some volunteer work. You end up having to take action to be able to execute upon that purpose that you've chosen for yourself. That requires something

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in the future. But if your value is service, if your value is compassion, if your value is kindness, or love, there's so many options, you can always take action in this moment that aligns with those values and that will feel good to you and it's available to you now.

Alright, okay, let's stop taking this whole concept of purpose so serious. We've got enough stuff going on, we don't need to be stressed out about purpose. Your big P Purpose, check, living human on the planet, you're already doing it. Little p purpose, it's just a choice and you're going to learn it, figure it out, because you give yourself permission to take action and learn by doing.

Alright, that's what I have for you this week. If you're not in Mom Goes On, get in there, what are you doing? Go apply. Alright, whatever you've got going on, I love you and you've got this. 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.