

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 165, The Gift of Goal Constraint.

Are you the type of person who wants to make changes in multiple areas of life and do all the things, so you set lots of goals but then you find yourself either making only small advances toward each goal or going all in but burning out quickly? Then you quit, beat yourself up and make it mean you'll never be able to change in the areas that matter to you or you avoid goal setting entirely.

If this sounds familiar and you're also dealing with life after losing your spouse, I have been where you are and I have a solution for you in today's episode. Let's go.

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. No one asked me but it's going to be 107 tomorrow. I am not interested in 107 and never have I ever been more grateful for air conditioning. My parents are having problems with theirs right now. And oh my gosh, I'm just – they might need to come over to my house tomorrow. We'll see. So, a couple of things before we jump into the podcast episode. One, just a reminder, August 1st, the price goes up for Mom Goes On and it goes up substantially.

So, if you've been thinking about joining this is the week to do it. You have to apply. You go to coachingwithkrista.com and you click on the Work With Me page and you apply. And that is because not everyone is ready for what we offer. And we don't make offers until we're confident that we can help. If it's not a good fit for you at this time we'll get you some other resources that

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

help meet you where you are, until you're ready to come work with us in Mom Goes On. So, I wanted to remind you of that.

And that also I'm excited, in August, we've been working on a couple of downloadable products for you that will be available in August. I'll give more details as we get closer but it was really enjoyable for me to create these products, there's two of them. One is called Memories That Matter. And it will be the digital answer to not forgetting the details about your person that you want to remember.

It was one of my big worries when Hugo died that I would forget and you could ask my best friend since middle school, she would joke with you and tell you I seriously have a terrible memory. It's bad. And so, but I really just worried that I wouldn't be able to remember the things that matter. And so, I did write down a lot of things and I'm really glad that I did that. But I also wish that I had had a resource which is why I created it for other widows, that would have made that easier for me.

So, Memories That Matter is a journal that you can print and fill out. It's very easy, of course emotionally a little challenging but it's very easy in terms of you don't actually have to do anything except follow along and fill in the blanks. But it's a 100 prompts that help you remember the things that are important to you, the things that matter. And so that was absolutely enjoyable for me to put together. I went back through and I read all of the things that I had written down about Hugo and came up with my own prompts and then just kept going. And so, it was really amazing.

And then the other one that we created is another book called Dear New Widow. And I just remember when Hugo died and I couldn't find anything that felt uplifting. Most of what I was finding online felt sad and depressing. And most of the widows that I knew weren't even my age. I didn't have any in my social circle. And so, I wanted to create something that you could use as a little pick me up.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

So, I went to my Mom Goes On current clients and former clients and I asked them if they could tell you as a new widow one paragraph, if they could just write one paragraph that they wanted you to know that they wish someone had told them, what would that be? And they wrote the most beautiful, relatable gut wrenching, so good. So, we put those all together so that – it's not something maybe you would read all the way through.

But in those moments where you just need a little bit of hope or you just need some encouragement and maybe some practical advice. You can pick up Dear New Widow and get that from someone who gets what it's like to be in your position, even if her life circumstances aren't the same as yours, she gets it. And so those are coming. I'll talk more about them on the podcast when they are actually available for you. But that will be some time in August.

So okay, let's get into this episode, the gift of goal constraint. I have always been the type of person who has lots of goals. And I have struggled with this cycle before numerous times and so that's why I'm so familiar with it. But it's that place where you want to do all the things, you have multiple areas of life that you've identified that you want to change. And this might be happening to you and these things might be related to the fact that your life has completely changed since your spouse died. It might be something that you've been struggling with since before your spouse died.

But maybe you're not happy with how you're spending your money and so you want to change something about your finances, or how you're investing your finances. And maybe you want to scroll less on social media, or look at your phone less and be more present with your kids. And maybe you want to parent differently. Maybe you've got goals related to your physical health or how you're moving your body. Maybe you want to eat out less, or you want to drink less, or you want to date again. Maybe you're working through body image issues.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

Whatever it is you think you want to change it's so easy to want to do it all at once. But that doesn't work very well, does it? This is what happens to me when I try to do it all at once. When I try to do it all at once I don't really make a lot of progress. I don't really enjoy the experience, it feels very heavy. It feels like it's full of shoulds. My self-talk can turn negative pretty quickly.

And I used to have this pattern which thankfully I've got the tools now but I used to have this pattern where I would start all the things and then have this incredible enthusiasm behind those things, feel so motivated. But start too many things at one time and then completely burn out. But that wasn't the worst part of it. It wasn't the burn out. It wasn't the lack of accomplishing the goals, it was then the story that I created about myself having not accomplished those goals. And that's the ultimate problem is what we create in terms of our beliefs about our abilities to set and accomplish goals.

So, I want to convince you, sell you on this idea that constraint around goals is a gift you can give yourself. And it might be a little bit new and it might be a little counterintuitive. But I want to give you five reasons why constraint can really help you and then invite you to apply it to whatever it is that you want to change next in your life. And none of this by the way, none of the goals that I'm talking about are we talking about changing from a place of trying to earn our worthiness.

So, I am talking about things you want to do because they're things you want to do, because they're preferences that you have in the world, they're not other people's shoulds for you, they're not shoulds you picked up from your childhood. They're not things that you think you need to change in order to be lovable, worthy, any of that. Your worth is fully established, your lovability is not negotiable. Setting and achieving goals doesn't make you a better person. It just helps you align yourself more with the life experience that you want to have. So that's what I'm talking about.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

So, let's make sure we're clear on that first. Also, I will tell you, in Mom Goes On lately I've been recording what I'm calling walk talks. So, I live on a golf course and I've been walking in the morning. And sometimes as I'm walking, I'm thinking about the women in the program. And I'm just thinking about widowed mom things. And so of course I have that handy little voice memo feature in my phone and I've got my AirPods on anyway.

And so, I just decided, maybe I should just start recording these things that I'm thinking about and sending them to the women in my program because it's another way for me to help. So, a few weeks ago I started recording walk talks. And we created a little space for it in our online community. This is a recent walk talks is this idea of goal constraint because I'm seeing it inside the program as well as outside of the program. I'm seeing inside of the program where because we aren't being – well, here I want to say it this way.

It's not that we aren't being, it's when we do not proactively choose what we're working toward and instead we just react to the things that we perceive in our day as problematic, we make less progress. And so, what we were talking about is the value of as we go through the program, which is why I've structured it the way I've structured it. Going through it with constraint. But I want you to hear this too. So, if you constrain yourself to one main goal at a time, and that doesn't mean you can't have multiple goals at one time.

But when you really give one of those goals your main focus you will get farther faster. So, imagine that you had 10 goals all at one time. And since I live on a golf course and I'm thinking about golf even though I don't really play it, instead of trying to get the one golf ball to the hole, you stand there and you hit 10 different golf balls towards the hole. Now, you did hit 10 balls. But who knows where they went? Now you've got to go find 10 balls and hit them again. And unless you're a good golfer you're probably going to have to do that multiple times.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

It's going to take you forever or much longer to get the same distance, to get to the actual hole with the ball. If you just hit one ball and you kept hitting that one ball until you got it to the hole you would get farther faster. Are you with me? Okay. And your brain won't experience so much resistance when you hit one ball at a time, when you pursue one goal at a time. So, remember the episode that I did on the motivational triad, the part of our primitive brain that really wants to just seek pleasure and avoid pain and be efficient.

It doesn't like change because change is inefficient. So, when you go trying to change multiple areas of your life and create new things in many places, have multiple goals at one time there is a part of your brain that does not like it anyway. It doesn't like it when you're changing one area of your life because it's inefficient. We already have all of these established neural pathways, these ways of thinking and doing that exist in our brain, that our brain doesn't have to expend any effort to follow. It's how do we get to the grocery store in the car without really even thinking about it.

It's because the pathway is already in our brain. We don't actually have to think about getting in the car and putting on the brake, and putting the key in the ignition and turning the ignition and letting the key off the brake. We don't have to think about any of these things. We don't have to think about which streets we need to drive on to get to the grocery store. We've just done it so many times, we've driven a car so many times, we've made that trip so many times that it has been delegated to a part of our brain that is very efficient. And that's good for us, there is value in that.

It doesn't burn as many calories. Our brain does not want to do that, it wants to be efficient. So, when we're chasing multiple goals we experience more resistance because we're trying to change more pathways at one time. So, number one, you'll get further faster. Number two, your brain won't experience so much resistance. It will actually be easier for you to change one thing all the way through than it is to change multiple things at the same time. You also won't feel so scattered. That's number three.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

You won't feel so scattered and because of that, because you have constraint to one area you'll be able to see your progress so much easier because you're only trying to do one thing. If you're trying to work on a budget, and parent differently, and exercise differently, and eat differently, and drink differently, and use your phone differently, all these things at one time, you will feel scattered. And you won't be able to see your progress so clearly.

The visual that comes to mind as I think about this is let's say you wanted to redecorate your house. This happens to a lot of widows where you don't want to move necessarily. You want to stay in the same house but at a certain point perhaps you decide you want to redecorate it so you can get maybe a fresh start and make the house feel a little bit more like this chapter of your life instead of the last chapter of your life.

So, if you were to do that you probably wouldn't tear up your entire house at one time and try to redecorate the whole house. You wouldn't do that. You would do one or maybe two rooms at a time. But you wouldn't take the whole house down to the studs and try to live in it. You would do it in pieces. It's the same thing. Why do that to ourselves with goal setting? Why try to redecorate the whole house at the same time when it creates so much chaos? And we feel so scattered and we can't even see the progress because everything just feels like a mess.

Okay, number four. It doesn't even matter what goal you constrain yourself to when you remind yourself that you will learn something about yourself and about the change process no matter which goal you pick. This is why in Mom Goes On, we do month one and month two but then three, four, five and six can be done in any order. Because it doesn't really matter the areas that we tackle. So maybe one person might decide that they're going to work on, in month three they're going to work on their relationships with other people because they're having challenges there.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

Somebody else might decide that they're going to work on their relationships with past, present and future. Somebody else might decide that they're going to work on their relationship with themselves. There are different choices and they can be done in any order and doing one makes you better at doing the next one because you will learn something about yourself, the change process requires that of us.

And number five, then what you learn can be applied to the next area so that you literally make progress in the next area even faster than you did in the first one. Does that make sense? So, if you constrain yourself to one goal at a time you're going to get farther faster. You're going to hit that one ball all the way down the course and I am not a golfer. So yeah, who knows what that's even like, how many times you have to hit it. I don't have a clue. I don't golf even though I live on a golf course.

Your brain won't experience so much resistance because you're only trying to change one area. And the motivational triad says seek pleasure, avoid pain, be efficient. So now you're only dealing with that in one area of your life instead of many, many areas. You won't feel so scattered and you'll be able to see the progress that you're making much easier. You'll learn something from that one area and then what you learn you can apply to the next area so that you will literally compound your ability to make progress faster.

Plus, guess how much easier it is to not speak harshly to yourself when you actually are accomplishing a goal. When you set something and you don't try to do all the things at one time, you're reasonable about it and then you're making steps toward it, you're seeing your own progress and you're kind to yourself along the way. Now, could you potentially be kind to yourself if you had many, many goals you were trying to create at one time? Of course, but I think it's easier if we do it one at a time. It's easier if we give something our priority.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

And that doesn't mean it has to be the thing we spend the most time on necessarily. But it's something that we prioritize. It's a goal that we decide matters and for how long, and here's what we're going to do, here's what we're going to change, here's what we're going to work toward and create. And then once that is done then we're going to pick another area and we're going to move the needle in another area. So, if you've been trying to do so many things at one time, stop it. You don't have to do that to yourself.

Pick one, constrain, tell yourself it's okay, the other things will be there for you. And you're actually going to be able to be more efficient when you get there because you'll have learned something from all these other changes that you made. And I'm going to give you an example of that.

So, let's say that you start with dealing with stuff. Maybe you're still dealing with your spouse's stuff. There will be an emotional component and a thought component to every goal you set. So, what's likely prevented you from dealing with your spouse's stuff is some emotions that you don't want to feel just yet or at all. And this doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you. You're not broken. This is the way of the humans. Nobody taught us how to feel our feelings. We have been bought and sold a bill of goods that happiness is the goal.

We have a primitive brain that says seek pleasure, avoid pain, be efficient. So, nothing about the way we're socialized and nothing about our primitive wiring sets us up for success as it relates to hard feelings. So of course, when a part of us knows that going through that stuff and making decisions is going to feel bad we avoid it. Alright, that make sense? And guess what? We're also avoiding change in other areas because of how we think it might feel to make those changes.

So, if you're scrolling on social media, why are you scrolling? Well, probably it's a coping mechanism, that might be part habit. Right now, you've just done it so much you don't even really think about it. But

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

oftentimes when we pick up our phone it's because there's an emotion we don't want to feel. And so, we use it to distract ourselves. Maybe we're overwhelmed and so we use it to distract ourselves. How your parenting has so much to do with your ability to allow feelings.

How you're exercising and treating your body has so much to do with how you're feeling and how you're processing your feelings, how much you're eating, how much you're drinking. Any sort of numbing, or buffering, or coping behavior that we have is related in some part to feelings work.

So, if you decide, okay, I'm going to start with the physical stuff, and you learn that you actually have more of a capacity to allow negative emotion to be with you as you do something than you thought you did. And you prove to yourself through action, I can allow myself to feel sad and I can sort through this stuff anyway. The sadness has no power over me. It doesn't mean because I haven't touched this stuff that there's something wrong with me, that I'm stalled in my grief, that I am somehow weak or broken.

All it means is humans don't really like negative emotion and I'm learning to allow myself to feel it and take the action that matters to me anyway. You can do that as it relates to the stuff and then guess what, now you're better positioned to the next change you want to make. That's what I mean. We focus so much on this in Mom Goes On. Learning how to allow a feeling to run its course, to not shame ourselves for having it.

To not make the presence of that feeling mean that we have done something wrong, to not believe the lie that we're going to fall into a black hole and that we'll never recover. To figure out how to comfort ourselves, to soothe ourselves, to allow it to pass, so that we start to see ourselves as more powerful. And so that we start to see feelings as less significant in terms of their impact on us. We still value them, we see them as a valuable part of our human lives but we don't make their presence mean that we can't make progress in areas that matter to us.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

And we start to see them as not as big of an obstacle as we have been thinking of them. And we do that through experience. And we've done it in one area and we can do it in the next. And that's what I'm talking about. I'm not going to get into changing your thoughts, but that's a part of it too is uncovering and seeing your own brain's patterns and what it thinks about you and your ability to change, and what it thinks about you and your potential, what are those beliefs that we just don't even really recognize are optional?

And when we shift them in one area what we find is that it's usually like they're little cousins, they're little cousin beliefs that are in other areas that are holding us back. So, we make progress in one area because we constrain our goals. We do the feelings work. We do the mental work, the thought work and those shifts then ripple into the other areas so that we make progress faster there too.

So, give yourself the gift of goal constraint. Pick one primary goal to focus on next. You will get it done faster. You won't experience as much resistance. You won't feel so scattered and you'll be able to measure your progress. You'll learn something and then what you learn you can apply to the next area so you will literally go faster. That's what I have for you today. Whatever you've got going on, whatever the temperatures are where you live, I love you and 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.

Ep #165: The Gift of Goal Constraint

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.