

## Ep #169: It's Not Personal



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

## Ep #169: It's Not Personal

Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 169, It's Not Personal.

How much time and energy do you waste taking the things people say and do personally? And if you could be free of that pattern, what would you love to do with that time and energy instead? That's what I believe is possible for all of us. So, in today's episode I'll tell you why other people's choices aren't personal, the role our primitive brain plays in making things personal and how to truly stop being bothered by what other people say and do.

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. So, I'm just over here prepping myself for my daughter to go away. If you've been listening to the podcast you'll know this, but she graduated high school in May and she's going away in a couple of weeks. And I'm just letting myself feel all the feelings over here and trying not to count it down. I keep reminding myself and I hope you will do the same if you have a major transition happening in your world, that feelings cannot hurt us. They are just vibrations in our body.

They are a beautiful part of the human experience even the ones we classify as negative. And I'm just letting myself feel them all, I'm over here feeling using my own now process, tapping, all the things. So that's what's happening in my neck of the woods. I also decided to do an event. I haven't announced it publicly. I'm only announcing it first within my Mom Goes On membership and the graduates of that program. But I want to tell you about it because if there are spots remaining I will announce it to those of you who are on my email list.

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So, what I'm going to do is on November 12<sup>th</sup> I'm going to invite 10 women to come to my house and we're going to coach on my couch all day long. And then after that coaching is over then we're going to go to dinner. And I'm going to get a limo and we're going to out to one of my favorite restaurants. And I'm going to treat everyone to dinner and drinks. And I'm really excited about it because I love coaching. And almost all the coaching I do is on Zoom. And so, I'm really excited to invite some people into my home and help them in person face-to-face.

I think there's something about that in person connection, that being in the same space allows us to just go deeper, to be more honest with each other, it allows me to pick up on some of those non-verbal things that I'm seeing and the energy that I'm feeling. And I'm excited about it. So, if that's something you are interested in and we do end up having space left over from the Mom Goes On members, then watch your inbox. And if you're not getting emails from me then go to [coachingwithkrista.com](http://coachingwithkrista.com) and you can just register for the free grief course. That's on the homepage.

And that will also get you added to my email list which means that you will then be the first to know about offers such as coaching on my couch or anything else that I might dream up. And then I know I've been mentioning the Memories That Matter journal. We finally did get a webpage which you can go to if you would like to purchase that journal. It's [coachingwithkrista.com/memories](http://coachingwithkrista.com/memories). And buying the Memories That Matter journal is what will then give you access to buy the Dear New Widow eBook as well if that's something that you are interested in.

So, I'm glad to finally have that done and know that those two projects of mine that felt so rewarding to create are out there and available to you, and helping people.

So okay, let's get into this episode. I want to talk about it's not personal. We waste so much time raging against things that other people say and do.

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And we do that largely because we believe that what they say and do is personal. We make their opinions and their words mean things, mean something about us. And it just doesn't have to be that way. And I think that the whole premise is based on some misunderstandings so I want to clear them up, at least as best I can.

I am constantly reminding myself to not take things personally, whether I get an email from someone who says that Mom Goes On, or The Widowed Mom Podcast, it changed my life and you're a gift and I'm grateful, and it's amazing and thank you so much. I get emails like that. But then I also get the emails that say, "You're an evil money hungry witch. And how dare you ask widows to give you money? And you should be giving everything for free. And I'm telling everyone how awful you are." I get all of that.

But what I know that makes that easier for me and makes me less attached to both the positive and the negative is that none of it is actually about me. None of it is my truth. The praise that people have about me isn't about me, it's about them. The criticism that they have about me isn't about me, it's about them. The praise is true for them, the criticism is true for them but it's not objectively the truth, it's their truth. It's not my truth. That doesn't make me right and them wrong. It just means that the feedback people give me is about the way that they see the world.

If it were about me then everyone would have the same opinion about me and about my work but they don't. And this is the case with you too. If it were personal everyone would have the same opinion about you and they don't. Am I right? People have their own opinions based on their own belief systems, their own conditioning, their own socialization, their own life experience and that's why we're all walking around the world having vastly different experiences even about our shared experiences.

Think about any sort of political issue or political person, Donald Trump is always such a great example because it's easy, former president, Donald

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Trump. You've got a large portion of the world or I should say a large portion of the country that thinks he's the best president ever and also a large portion of the country that thinks he's the worst president ever. And if it were about him we would all see him and think of him in the same way but we don't. And I get it.

It's easy to think about, well, that's okay, I can see it in a political figure, I can see it in a movie star. I can see it even maybe when others are generalizing but it's not actually about me. But what about when people say something directly to you? What about when people have an opinion about your life? What about when people do something that affects you? Hey, you shouldn't be dating so soon, you're going to mess up your kids. Hey, why haven't you moved on yet, hasn't it been long enough?

Hey, I don't think their father would want you to parent like that, are you sure that's best? Hey, are you sure you should be spending your money like that? It's different, it's harder when it's about us. It's not actually different. Same skills apply. So, think about it, you are the center of your own solar system. You are the sun in your own solar system. In your life you are the middle. You are the main character, you are the leading star, you are the sun of your own solar system.

So, it's easy to think that you are also the sun in other people's solar systems but you are not. They are in their own experience, in their own dream, if you will, in their own solar system where they are the center of it. They are in their own movie where they are the leading role, you are a supportive character. They see their life experience with themselves as the center, and so do you, and so do I. So, remind yourself of that. You are not the center of their world just like they aren't the center of yours.

Your behavior does not cause theirs at all, if it did, everybody would be acting the same way. You've heard me talk about the primitive brain before and I think it's relevant here. Remember that our primitive brain's basic

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programming is seek pleasure, avoid pain, be efficient. That part of our brain is very interested in what is required for our survival. And so, the logic of that part of our brain says that other people's approval is necessary, required for our survival. That means that to that part of our brain rejection is to be avoided as much as death.

To say it another way, to that part of our brain, rejection is equivalent to death, both are to be prevented at all costs. And here's my theory. I don't know that I've ever read this anywhere but this is my theory. If our primitive brain wants to avoid rejection, then in a way, it's in our interest, if other people rejecting us is within our control, if we believe that. Because if we believe that other people's rejection is within our control then that means we're not powerless. That means we can do something about it. We can prevent them from rejecting us.

So, I think there's an advantage to this kind of logic flaw that somehow other people's behavior is something we can do something about because if we make their rejection about us instead of about them then we continue the illusion that we have the ability to prevent something that terrifies us. And we don't like feeling powerless as humans.

I was coaching someone recently inside of Mom Goes On and how this was showing up for her is that she was telling herself that one of her long time friends who had stopped talking to her had stopped talking to her because of something that she did, not the friend, my client. My client was saying that, "There's something I did that has caused this long time friend to no longer speak with me." And so sometimes what we have to do when we're coaching is we just have to slow something way, way down.

And we have to use the thought, feeling, action cycle, the self-coaching model, well, we don't have to but I just find it's effective, to kind of better explain what's happening. And so, I asked her, "Is your behavior caused by her behavior?" And we had a good conversation about it. When we slowed

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it down what we realized is that even though it feels like to my client, or felt like to my client that she was reacting to this friend's behavior. And had done that and that it really was this friend's behavior that was causing her response.

When we slowed it way, way down she could see that what was really happening was that the friend did or said something, in this case said something. She had a thought about what that friend said. That thought filled her with rage. And from rage she took a particular action. What the friend said was kind of the triggering event. What the friend said was what my client had the thought about. And so, when we slowed it down she could see that, actually what happened wasn't that it was what the friend did. It was what her mind had made what the friend did mean.

And the story that her mind told her is what filled her with rage. And then when she acted from that rage she did something. But it wasn't really the friend and the friend's behavior. And so, when that sunk in and I hope that is something you can think of, what is something that has felt like it was out of your control, maybe something that you did and it really did seem like how you felt or what you did was caused by something else outside of you, by someone else outside of you. Someone said something to you, someone expressed an opinion that you didn't like.

Someone did something and then you felt some kind of way about it and maybe you did something in response. It seems like it's that person and what they said. But other people aren't as powerful as our brain would have us believe. Stories in our mind however are incredibly powerful especially stories we don't know are optional because we're so busy being in them we can't see them for what they are, which is optional.

But when we can slow down our own behavior enough to see this in ourselves and enough to see that other people actually aren't causing anything within us. It's all about what we bring to the table in terms of our

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own stories, our own thoughts, then we can recognize that the same is true for other people. Our behavior isn't causing their behavior. Our behavior isn't personal to them and theirs isn't to ours. We're all walking around with minds that love stories and with minds that have patterns and wounds, unhealed trauma.

And so maybe what you say to one person could be the exact same thing and tone of voice that you say to another. But one person will find it completely neutral, not at all offensive, they won't think a thing about it. And another person will be incredibly offended and maybe it triggers something within them that isn't even about you. And I'm not saying, let's go around and say mean things to people, that's not what I'm saying at all.

I'm saying we have to stop taking things personally if we want to solve some of our own suffering because so much time and energy is being wasted taking what other people think about us and making it personal, taking their behavior and making it personal. Owning their responses to us instead of just being able to honor ourselves and show up the way that we want to show up and letting them have their own stories about us, letting them have their own responses. Knowing that those responses aren't personal in the least.

So, I want to offer that in order to stop being bothered, we have to really do two things. One, we want to compassionately remind ourselves that we have a primitive brain. And that primitive brain associates rejection with death. We have to remind ourselves of that and we can even thank that part of our brain for trying to look out for us, for trying to keep us safe. When we feel that gut punch because of what someone said or did, you feel it and then you go, "Okay, I see you, primitive brain. Thank you for trying to keep me safe. I'm actually not in danger."

And then the second thing is that we remind ourselves that whatever we're seeing or hearing from others isn't about us. If it were about us everyone

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would be responding in the exact same way and they aren't and that's okay. So, thank your primitive brain for trying to keep you safe. Remind yourself that other people's behavior is about them, and their backgrounds, and their belief systems, and their socialization, things that they learned growing up. It's not about you. You're not the sun in their solar system. You're just like a planet or maybe a little moon. And that's okay, that's okay.

Alright, I hope that helps you, whatever you've got going on this week, maybe you're preparing to send a kid to college or some other challenging life event. I don't know. I know that you have them but whatever it is, 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.

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