

Ep #198: Widows Like Us: An Interview with Cheri Metzler



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 198, Widows Like Us: An Interview with Cheri Metzler.

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 going to record this intro for the fifth time because one of my dogs just keeps barking. So hopefully number five is going to do it. Anyway, today on the podcast I have an interview for you with a client who I have so much loved working with and it's been so encouraging for me to watch her progress. And I want you to hear her story. I know it's easy to hear stories from the widows who basically are never happy again.

It's easy to hear how hard it is to be a widow and it's far less common that we get to hear stories of widows who have been through it and come out on the other side and are doing really well and Cheri is one of those people. So I can't wait for her to tell you her story. Can you hear Zoe barking in the bark? My gosh you guys. Okay, anyway, I'm going to let Cheri tell you her story.

And listen, depending on when you're listening to this podcast episode it releases on Monday March 13th which is the day that we start our Dating for Widows masterclass. So it's not too late to register but you need to move quickly because we start it today. So go to coachingwithkrista.com/datingmasterclass and you can sign up for the free version or you can sign up for the VIP version, whichever suits you.

And we will have one of three sessions starting today. Don't worry if you can't make it live, we'll absolutely send you the replay, we will send you the worksheets. You can get everything you need to get even if you can't come

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live, so coachingwithkrista.com/datingmasterclass but go there now because we start today.

And I haven't asked for a while but if you love this podcast, if it has helped you at all would you please consider leaving a rating or a review, especially reviews. I love hearing what you have to say about the podcast so reviews help me, they tell me what you like and what you don't like but also they really tell whatever the algorithm is that makes podcasts become more discoverable, that this podcast is valuable.

And I really want to serve more widows and there are 11 million of them in the United States alone. So I at least want a million of them to hear the podcast and your reviews and your ratings really help that. So if you could take two minutes and go do that I would be so, so grateful.

Alright, let's jump into my interview with Cheri. Enjoy.

Krista: Okay, welcome, Cheri, to the podcast. I'm excited that you're here.

Cheri: Thank you so much for inviting me. I'm so excited to be part of this program. I've loved every minute that I've had with you.

Krista: Well, it's been so much fun to watch you grow and change and I know we're going to get into all of that. So why don't you just start by kind of introducing yourself and tell listeners a little bit about who you are and how you got here.

Cheri: Okay. I'm Cheri Metzler, I live in Omaha, Nebraska. I was married for 37 years to my high school sweetheart. And we had an amazing life, three children and two of them are now married and I have six grandchildren.

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Krista: Can I look like you when I have six grandchildren, please? Seriously. And every time you say, “I was married 37 years”, I’m thinking, she got married at 12, I’m not sure what happened.

Cheri: Thank you. Thank you. I have good genes.

Krista: No kidding.

Cheri: But yeah, in May of 2020 my husband took his own life by suicide. It was out of left field, did not see it coming. He wasn’t ill that I knew of. I believe that he had some kind of traumatic brain event happen about three weeks prior to his death. So yeah, it was a very, very trying time for me. I did not ever see this coming because we had talked about being 100 years old together. So it was a shock and really took me to a place that I don’t ever want to go back there.

Krista: Yeah. So how did you end up finding the *Widowed Mom Podcast* or *Mom Goes On*, what was your journey from May till when you found us?

Cheri: That was really interesting. So I was following Brooke Castillo. I’m a self-help guru kind of person. I love self-help books. A friend of mine kind of turned me on to her podcast. And so I was listening to a lot of her stuff and you were a guest speaker on and it was after I lost Mike. So I was very much struggling with trying to figure out the new normal. Is this really all I have left in my life? Is this what it’s going to be like? And the podcast just resonated with me so much. I called the next day.

I started listening to your stuff and I called the next day and got set up for an interview to see if we could work together or not so yeah.

Krista: What did you know about life coaching at the time? Because when I started listening to Brooke, I very clearly remember thinking this is so helpful and also life coaching is weird. And I would literally tell people to

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listen to her podcast but ignore the part about life coaching. Did you have any hesitations or were you like me?

Cheri: I didn't know what that was either but I knew I needed help. And when I listen to you, your voice is just very calming and very easy to listen to. And so you've got it. I just felt you were a sister and going to walk through this with me. I didn't really know how the whole group thing was going to work but I was open to try anything at that point. I was just so sad and so alone, but I just needed a community that totally understood me.

Krista: Yeah. How did the group experience meet your expectation?

Cheri: It was way better than I could ever imagine. I'd been with a counselor one-on-one and I did GriefShare at church which is kind of group oriented. So I was open to that process so yeah.

Krista: Yeah. Did you have, since there's so much stigma around death by suicide, was that a big deal for you, did you feel comfortable, you could come into a group and talk about how Mike died? Or did you have reservations about that? What was that like?

Cheri: Yeah. No. I had a really hard time expressing that fact that he actually took his own life. The first year, almost the entire year because I started with you just prior to his one year deathiversary. And that whole year I didn't want to talk about it because I didn't want people to judge him. And I didn't want them to think that something bad happened between us, that something I did caused him to want to leave and not be part of this world anymore. So yeah, it was very, very difficult to share because you could just see it when you'd say something, the person's face just changes.

And it's just like oh my gosh, then they're awkward and you're awkward. And it's just, it's a no win.

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Krista: Yeah. And you have no idea what's going on in their mind and yeah, there's just so much stigma around it.

Cheri: Right. Your group, I mean I met a lot of other women that were in the same situation. They were in different stages from me but we all had a sisterhood that not that you want to be in that group but we get each other on a different level to then just losing your husband. It's another layer to that whole process of grief.

Krista: Yeah, for sure. What did you come into the program hoping to get out of it?

Cheri: I guess to just feel like me again. I felt I didn't want to be a widow. I didn't want to be stigmatized at all by being weak. And I wanted to find myself and my power again.

Krista: Yeah. Is that what was, when you thought of the word 'widow' before, is that kind of what came to mind, weak and sad?

Cheri: Yeah, sad, alone, weak, yeah.

Krista: Did you have anyone in your life at that point in time that was your age that had been through anything similar?

Cheri: Well, my mom, my dad died when I was 19 years old. So my mom was only 42 when she became a widow for the first time. And so yes, I watched her navigate it and she was a strong amazing woman through it. I give her a lot of kudos. She moved forward and through that and realized what was best for her. And so yeah, I did watch her navigate that but then I also had people in my life that were widows or widowers that were stuck and for 10 or 15 years. And it just was, it's so sad because they kind of die with the person.

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And they're not part of life anymore, they're just existing. And that was my biggest fear was I didn't want to be stuck and I did not want to be alone forever. I knew that right away.

Krista: Yeah. Isn't it interesting though how some people, it's like it doesn't even – I don't know if they don't think it's possible or it just doesn't occur to them or they think it would be an insult. But yeah, so many people I see especially on social media that just kind of give up just like okay, well, I'll just bide my time until I die too.

Cheri: Yeah. And I just, I mean life is so short and I mean I know that Mike would have been like, "You go babe. I can't be there anymore. I want you to live. I want you to be happy. I want you to really blossom and grow." So I had that.

Krista: That's what you do when you hear his voice, yeah. So what have you found has changed for you since starting with us? Because I can see a lot. I can see a ton of changes.

Cheri: Yeah. Well, I've learned to trust myself. I've learned that feelings can't hurt me. I can change my thoughts about things and make my experience more what I want it to be.

Krista: You went through some rough stuff too during [crosstalk].

Cheri: Yeah, I mean, yeah, I mean at the year mark I found out that I had breast cancer and had to walk through that also. And that was I think even harder or as hard because the alone I felt, I didn't have my partner anymore to support me through that really, really scary surgery and recovery. I was blessed that it was caught early so I have a very good prognosis. But still, life is short and I just didn't want to be wallowing in sorrow and pity and all that ick.

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Krista: Yeah. And from my perspective you really did a great job of using the tools and asking for support and learning how to coach yourself and it was really inspiring to watch. I don't know how it felt to you but to me it was really inspiring to watch. I remember when we did the celebration event at my house and when we were accepting applications for that it was pretty early on in the program for you.

I don't even think you were halfway through. But I was already seeing you just take what you were learning and apply it and make it work and life kept throwing you challenges. And you kept showing up and asking for support and helping yourself.

Cheri: Right. It really is a journey. And I just am a strong believer in learning, growing, changing and accepting those changes in myself. And then I decided to put myself out there and look for somebody new to spend the rest of this journey with. And I've been blessed and lucky to just find an amazing man who supports me in so many ways.

Krista: I love that.

Cheri: So fills holes that need to be filled. And I'm different now than I was in my previous marriage and my previous relationship. I'm never going to be that same person but the tools that I learned here have helped me to find myself and be confident in who I am and that I can make wise choices for myself.

Krista: It was fun to watch you start dating again too because what I saw was somebody who wanted to date but didn't need to date. It seemed like you did enough true thinking about what you wanted and came into it knowing you were solid, you were good, you were enough. And then the dating was a nice extra thing on top.

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Cheri: Right. I definitely listened to you and your advice in that you have to be confident and secure in yourself before you add another person into your life.

Krista: So much easier.

Cheri: And then you're doing it for the right reasons. You're not doing it just to replace somebody because you can't replace somebody. And that's not what it's about. It's about just finding somebody to walk through the rest of this life with and enjoy each other's company and we just talk about everything in life and share all the good and the bad and the in between.

Krista: Yeah. And it seems like really big steps too because it's not just like you met somebody who lives down the block and you're getting married. You met someone who lives in another state and yeah, it seems like you have really expanded, you have pursued what is uncomfortable and expanded, as cliché as it sounds but your comfort zone, it does take stuff.

Cheri: Yeah, it really is. It was hard to learn to navigate all that and I'm still in the process of figuring it out because not everybody sees it the way I do. So we just keep plugging along, moving forward. Like I said, I keep checking in with myself making sure that I'm happy with the choices I'm making.

Krista: Yeah, so many compliments from me to you because I really do think that when you spend 37 years as a wife and a mom and you have kids and you have all these grandkids. And you have this identity, you have this way that other people see you and this way that you see yourself. When people see you as the caregiver and the one who makes their lives better and is always doing everything for them. And then maybe that's not what we all envision for the next chapter. Maybe we do want something slightly different for ourselves.

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And it's hard enough to give that to ourselves and it's even harder to let other people have their own reaction to that because not everybody's going to like it when we create a new chapter that doesn't line up with how they've always seen us. And so I am just from where I sit as having coached you, so freaking proud of how you have created what you want in your life. It's not easy.

Cheri: No, it's not. It's not for the weak of heart. I mean you've got to spend time with yourself thinking and processing and sharing those thoughts and feelings with other people. It's not always the easiest process.

Krista: Yeah. I'm not sure when this podcast is going to air because I don't have the date in mind but I'm working on this dating masterclass and I think one of the things that people always assume is that when they have grown kids dating will be easier. And I have actually seen the exact opposite of that so many times where grown kids sometimes have really strong opinions about your life and your choices. And so the way that you have navigated everyone's opinions is inspiring to me.

Cheri: Thank you so much. Yeah, I appreciate that, yeah.

Krista: So let's say because I always imagine somebody's listening to this and they're probably super new to being a widow and they're maybe really new to grief. So if you were talking to that person and thinking about maybe advice you would have given yourself when you were early on or what you wish you had known in that early acute grief, what comes to mind?

Cheri: I think first thing I would say is just breathe, learn to breathe, take a deep breath and just relax and try and trust yourself to know what your journey is going to be like. It's so hard, that darkness, that scared person that you are right at the beginning, you just can't imagine that life is going to ever get any better. But if you relax and find some help, don't be afraid to ask. Don't be afraid to seek, if they're listening to this obviously they're looking for somebody that understands and that gets where you're at.

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Krista: When you look back could you have imagined or maybe a better question to ask is at what point could you have even imagined that you would be where you are? Because certainly day one you couldn't imagine it, when do you look back and see, I saw a little bit of light there?

Cheri: Definitely starting the process of, I did start GriefShare. That opened up my eyes that I was not a unicorn, that I was not the only person dealing with these feelings. Now, that's a program not just for widows, it's for anybody who's lost a loved one. And so it was interesting for me to see how widows or widowers are different than the person who lost their parent or their child. Not that it's any easier or different, it's not the same, it's just, you just are walking through a different person in your life that affects you differently.

Krista: Yeah. And I will assume most listeners know about GriefShare but just in case they don't. So GriefShare if you haven't heard of it and you are interested in it, it's not something I have any affiliations with but it's usually facilitated in a church. It's a national organization that's a non-profit and they have a curriculum that churches will facilitate. So it does have very much a Christian basis to it but it's free. And there are often options for Zoom. Since COVID a lot of GriefShare groups had to go online.

And so now you'll find it if you live in a remote area and you want some sort of grief support that is not widow specific, but has a foundation in Christianity. GriefShare is a great thing for people [crosstalk].

Cheri: So I started with that and that started me on the path of searching for understanding, people that will understand me, would be able to walk with me. And so I went to a counselor, that did not help me very much. And then like I said, I found you on Brooke's podcast and then I started...

Krista: No offense to counseling but I'm just curious to know, what was it that didn't quite resonate with you there? How did you know it wasn't a good fit for you?

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Cheri: I just felt I was paying just to have someone listen to me and not really seek to understand really. Just kind of was like, okay, well, did you try this, did you do that? And it just didn't clique for me, it wasn't like Mom Goes On. Mom Goes On is just a totally different feel. And I mean just the camaraderie that you get is amazing. I mean I've met quite a few girls now that I just, I love. And I hope we're forever friends, so I think we will be.

Krista: Yeah, I love it. I feel like I interrupted you. What were you saying before I interrupted you and asked you about therapy?

Cheri: I was talking about things that I could tell myself if I went back and I could talk to myself. Then I guess just trust yourself is my big thing, is that know what you need and try and find the help that you can get so that you can, like you said, maybe some people are okay with being stuck or in grief forever. Maybe they think that's okay.

Krista: I like to think of it, some people just don't even need it. I mean it's totally fine not to need support. It's when you would benefit from it and you don't give it to yourself that worries me but not everybody needs it. But the human body is designed to grieve. So I'm glad I found support because it was really helpful to me.

Cheri: Yes, me too. Because if I went back and thought about what I was like then and what I'm like now it's 180 degrees different. And for the first time, and I mean I met Mike when I was 17 so we grew up together. I grew and changed because of him and in my life. And so now I got a chance to kind of figure out me for the first time alone and what that looked like.

Krista: I'm so glad you brought that up because I think a lot of people relate to that but they maybe haven't thought it through of when you do meet someone at such a young age and you never really did live out on your own or kind of do your own thing. And then that happens to you in midlife, it can be kind of shocking.

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Cheri: Devastating. I didn't know how to eat alone. And I mean just the alone, it's just overwhelming, my gosh, so overwhelming. So yeah, that was the biggest thing for me, the change is to figure out that I am okay even in being alone, that I am okay no matter what life throws at me, I can handle it, I can do this.

Krista: Yeah. And who even are you at that place where it's like your brain has completely encoded the we-ness of the relationship. So you literally have to learn what it's like to live without a person. And then also I'm taking leaps in thinking about people that are just not just you but as women we're taught, what we need is so much less important than what everyone that we're taking care of needs. So at some point we kind of lose touch with even understanding what it is we want and value and are interested in and care about because we're so busy doing things for everyone else.

So to navigate that I think is not for the faint of heart to figure out who you are and what you want.

Cheri: I think that leaning into the hard is a huge thing that I learned too, even though it's scary to run towards that and let go of those inhibitions that are holding you back, that inner critic that's saying, "Oh gosh, no. No, no, no. Don't do that, this is not going to go well for you." To trust that I'm going to learn, I'm going to figure it out. I may not do it right. I may not figure this out the perfect way. It may take me some mistakes, it may take me some stumbling. But in the big picture this is what I want. I want to experience something.

Krista: Yeah, and that's how you figure it out is you are willing to be uncomfortable and you are willing to not know and you are willing to learn from experience and you get out there and you try some things. All of a sudden I look in our online community and you're on the ski slopes as a ski instructor. And I'm like, "What? Of course. Of course it would be Cheri."

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Cheri: Yeah. Well, that, yeah, my boyfriend he's – well, now fiancé. But anyway he was a ski instructor in Colorado and said that COVID kind of shut him down. They closed down the ski resorts. And so he just felt he had some unfinished business out there and he said, "I'd really, really like to this winter go back out and coach some more, what do you think?" And I said, "I'd never thought of myself as a ski instructor but if they want to hire me, absolutely, I'm going to give it a shot, why not."

And so I applied and they hired me immediately and I was a ski instructor for three to six year olds and it was amazing. It was an experience that I will always hold dear and wonderful. I don't know if I'll do it again in the future but perhaps.

Krista: How would you even know? Just so awesome that you are willing to put yourself in places that aren't super comfortable and get experience and see what it's like and see if you like it and if you don't like it, so what. But you're out there living and doing and experiencing and [crosstalk].

Cheri: That's exactly right. And I never imagined myself doing that but I'm so glad that I got the experience now. It was amazing to see those little kids' faces when they got down the slope the first time and they did it. They listened and learned and I was able to help them get down the slope, it was amazing so yeah.

Krista: So what's next for you?

Cheri: Well, lots are on the horizon. I'm going to plan a wedding, I am engaged.

Krista: She sprung it on us at our last master's meeting. She was like, "I have an announcement." I knew it was coming and the ring showed up, it was so fun. Do you have timing on that yet or are you just kind of still figuring [crosstalk]?

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Cheri: No, not yet. We're still talking about that but I'll let you know when it is.

Krista: Yes, please do.

Cheri: Yes. The other thing is, my fiancé is a business owner. And so we've got a new business venture that we're looking into. It's an exciting, coffee shop and event venue.

Krista: How fun.

Cheri: Yeah, so exciting new stuff. Again, don't know how this is going to turn out but I'm willing to work hard and try and keep moving forward.

Krista: Not that I don't want you to know how it turns out but what I love about it is that so many people are so uncomfortable with uncertainty. And we think we need certainty and we need to know exactly how it's going to happen and when it's going to happen and what it's going to look like before we can feel good. And what I see from you is, yeah, I mean you're planning and you're working towards it but also the ability to kind of let it unfold and be in the adventure of it without needing to have all of the details ironed out immediately.

Cheri: Yeah. So we're working on that. And then the third thing is, we're building a house together.

Krista: Good for you, yeah.

Cheri: Yeah. So we found a really great lot and we're just, we're planning and organizing that and trying to figure that out so I can sell my house in Omaha and move here and get married.

Krista: And move out of state, I love it. You still won't be too far from me anyway.

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Cheri: Yeah. No, it's not bad.

Krista: So was there anything that you wanted people to hear that maybe I didn't ask you about?

Cheri: I think we did, I think we've hit so many good things. I can't think of a parting word that I have missed.

Krista: Well, if you think of something let me know but I'll just tell you again from my perspective, I'm just incredibly proud of you and how much you value yourself and were willing to put in the work and the time to create what you wanted, it was fun to watch.

Cheri: Well, thank you so much.

Krista: It's an honor to have been your coach.

Cheri: Yes. And I appreciate it and we're not, not going to be – I'll be in touch.

Krista: No, you're stuck with me.

Cheri: Yeah, we're stuck together.

Krista: You're stuck with me. I love it. I love it. Thank you so much for coming on the podcast, Cheri, I wish you all the best.

Cheri: Thanks for having me, this was an honor.

Krista: Yeah, so good. Alright, talk to you soon.

Cheri: Bye 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 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.