

Ep #93: Take the Damn Trip: A Widows Unfiltered Interview with Bevin Farrand



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 93, Widows Unfiltered: An Interview with Bevin Farrand.

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 know sometimes that most of us out there in Widowed Mom land feel like we're on islands by ourselves and we don't typically have a lot of other women to look to who have walked a similar walk, and it can just feel very isolating and lonely.

And so I love the Widows Unfiltered interviews that I've done and what I hope is that when you listen to them, you hear other women who are relatable and get you, who inspire you, who help you see what's possible for your life. Because if they can make the changes that they want to make, then the rest of us can too, right?

So I'm excited to bring you this interview with a former client of mine, Bevin. I will not tell you too much about her. I'm just going to let the interview unfold, but I know that you're going to love her. I know that you're going to find her story inspiring. She really is a pretty fierce woman, if I do say so. I'm sure that's how her friends would describe her too.

Compassionate but also, she knows what she wants and she just inspires me. So let's jump into it. Without further ado, I'd love to introduce you to Bevin Farrand.

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Krista: Welcome Bevin to the podcast.

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Bevin: Oh thank you. I'm excited. Thank you so much for having me.

Krista: It's my pleasure. So I have to tell the listeners who this came to be. So Bevin and I coached together about a year ago. So your husband died in November, I'll let you tell the story, but November of 2019 and we started coaching sometime in the early spring, right?

Bevin: Yeah, I think it was early 2020. Because I think it was right before COVID started. I don't think we were actually in COVID when we started, so I feel like it was February maybe.

Krista: There's life before COVID and after COVID.

Bevin: That's how we mark time.

Krista: And so we hadn't talked for a while after we had coached and then I got a message from Bevin and it exploded my brain. And I decided that all widowed moms must hear Bevin's story because it will explode your mind too, and so I'm super excited. Okay, so little teaser there. So why don't you just start by introducing yourself and kind of telling us your widowed journey.

Bevin: Sure. So my name is Bevin, and I was married to the most wonderful man named Mark. And in November of 2019, he took me on this whirlwind trip to France for my 40th birthday. And we were literally on the ground for I think 39 hours, the plane rides took the same amount of time that we were on the ground.

And he had planned this. He told me about it on Mother's Day and we had planned it. It was the first time we were going to be away from our two kids. My son was 10 months at the time, my daughter was two and a half. And I was like, that is so crazy. We have to put so many plans in place in order to be away for this three and a half days.

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And he picked Bordeaux because in his words, Paris would have been a copout, which has never been uttered in the history of the world. I was like, "It would be so much easier to go to Paris, it's a direct flight." He's like, "Paris is a copout." So we went to Bordeaux because neither of us had ever been there. And it was amazing.

We got to reconnect with each other as a couple, as the two of us, who we had been before we were parents, we got to eat delicious food, we got to drink delicious wine and wander the city. It rained the whole time, but it didn't matter. We just had such a great time.

And we came back, and we got back I believe on Sunday, and that was Thanksgiving week. We had Thanksgiving dinner with our friends, and then the next morning Friday, Mark just didn't wake up. We had no idea that he had undiagnosed heart disease. One of his arteries was 95% blocked and the other was 50% blocked. No idea.

He weighed the same he did in high school, there was no indicators. And so I - obviously my whole life was flipped upside down. In some ways, he had his perfect last week. We went on this epic trip together, he took the week off work, we took our daughter to her first movie theatre movie, we had Thanksgiving with our friends and family, which was always our favorite holiday.

And but then I've now spent the year, 15 months obviously adjusting to this new normal as a solo parent and running my own business. And after he passed away, I made a post on Facebook explaining this trip and explaining what we had done and that Mark had passed away.

And at the end of it, I just said, "Whenever you're faced with the choice, just take the damn trip." Because thank god we did. Thank god we had that time together. And that really resonated with people, and it sat in my brain, I said that is something. Take the damn trip is something. And several

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months later, the restaurant where Mark and I met, where we went every year on our anniversary, took a selfie in front of the sign, wore the same clothes, sat in the same seats, it closed down.

And I put out a post just, hey, does anybody know the owners? I'd love to get the sign. And it blew up. And people got really attached and inspired by this, and so I started selling these t-shirts that said, "We're not promised tomorrow. #takethedamntrip."

And it became to me, this really rallying call to people to do the crazy thing that's in your heart and connect more with the people that you love. And that can change your life. And so now there's this movement of take the damn trip, which is not about travel, thank goodness, because it's COVID. But it's about finding that thing that means so much to you and going after it because now is truly the time.

Krista: Right. Yeah, now is the only time that we have really, that we know for sure. So before Mark died, so you have two little children at this time, that was pre-COVID. And then you were running an online business and I remember when we talked one of the first times and you talked about how because you had an online business and because you had an online presence, that people thought you were fine because you were showing up for your online business and doing your thing, but what you were feeling wasn't matching what they were seeing. What was that like?

Bevin: I was just telling somebody this the other day, about I had so many people come up to me and be like, "Oh my god, you're so strong, it's amazing." And I was like, "Well, you didn't see me curled up on my closet floor last night crying my eyes out. Just because I just missed Mark. Nothing happened. I just was sad."

And I think social media makes that. People forget that we can choose what we show and what we don't. And I think because I have a business

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and even more so now, an online presence, it's like, I can still choose what I decide to share and what I don't. And so sometimes that's great, but sometimes then people get really defensive about it. They're like, "Well, how could you not have told people that?" Not everything is everyone's business.

So it is a balance. I remember talking to you and I said, "Well, I didn't have a choice, I just had to keep going. I have two kids and a business." And you said, "Well, no, I mean there's lots of people that just stopped." And that had never really occurred to me. So that's part of the take the damn trip part.

So about - I guess it was nine months after Mark had passed away, and people had said, "Well, how did you keep going and how did you do this?" And I was thinking back to the fact that there's been a lot of things that I've overcome in my life. I lost my house in a house fire in 2010. My dad passed away from cancer when I was 24. Both my kiddos are IVF babies. Just a lot of things.

And I had to think about what is it that I do differently. Not better, but differently than some people that helps me navigate these types of things with creativity and grace. And that became the damn framework because I said take the damn trip, but there's something there. So damn is actually a framework.

And the D is decide and declare. A is attend your own party, which is staying present in the moment that is your thing. M is meaningful moments and N is now is the time. And I looked back and thought about how I used that framework to get through things. And then once I realized that framework, now I've used it going forward making new decisions about what I'm creating in life and it makes things so powerful.

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Krista: What did you decide and declare? Maybe even before the framework. What did you decide and declare after Mark died that you just really remember doing it?

Bevin: Yeah, so the whole thing about the decide and declare is that we have to choose what our top priority is. If everything is a priority nothing is. And so for me, I decided that my top priorities were my kids and my house. Because obviously my kids, they are my whole world. They're how I structure my business is so that I can spend time with my kids.

And Mark and I built our house together in 2015 and he is in every stud, every tile that we picked out. And so when I thought about how do I create some kind of normalcy, it was like, I take care of the kids and I do what I can do keep financially in a place where I can keep the house. And that was it. And I felt like if I could just keep those things, then I was doing okay.

Krista: At what point do you feel like you kind of realized that you had done that? Like those two things were okay. When was that?

Bevin: Okay, so I think with the house it was, for me, I just knew I could make my business continue to work. And this is again sort of looking back, because I had overcome losing my house in a fire and figured that out, and I had figured out my business in lots of ups and downs over the years, and I'd been laid off three times and I'd overcome that. I just got to a place where I was like, I have the resilience and the creativity to make this work.

So the house to me was kind of an inevitability, but people - I think there was a little bit of people being like, you're going to sell the house, right? And I was like, no, I'm not. But with the kids, that was really to me a day by day just check in. Like are my kids - do they feel safe and supported and taken care of? Do they know that it's okay to be sad? That was one of the things - my daughter was two and a half and she was actually in the room where Mark passed away.

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And that was a really hard reality for me to deal with because I hate that she experienced that. And every once in a while, she will bring it up and will say, "And you wouldn't stop yelling mommy." And I'm like, "Oh my god, that's that morning." Because I was yelling for my in-laws to call 911.

And that's hard. But what I felt like - and a lot of this was work that you and I did and I had an amazing grief counselor for her is we named it. We're like, it's okay to be sad. And it's so funny because she knows that. She'll say, "Mommy, it's okay to be sad. Are you happy now? Can we be happy now?"

But just knowing and again, some of this stuff you do with the 100 felt feelings, it was so great to be able to say to her there aren't any bad feelings. You can feel every way that you want to. And I think that for her in particular, Johnathan was so young. He really didn't understand. But Guinevere, for her, it was like because we've never said you can't feel sad or don't feel sad or don't be angry, my experience has always been that when I dive into a feeling it passes faster. So I'm not trying to fight it, and then it sticks around longer.

Krista: Totally, absolutely. And I love - that's probably my favorite thing to hear is when people tell me stories about how things like learning to allow feelings have impacted their children, it's like the most meaningful part - I mean, I love it all, but that part, that one tugs on my heartstrings every time.

I'd love to hear more about - because it can be so different for different women, but you've mentioned how this house has just - Mark is everywhere in the house and the house is so important to you. And so was there a point in time where you didn't feel that way about the house? Has that shifted at all? Have you always been decided that you would stay in that house? Because that's something a lot of women struggle with.

Bevin: Once he passed away?

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Krista: Yeah.

Bevin: No. And I think partially because when Mark and I built this house, we consciously said we're building our forever home. We want our kids to bring their families back here for Thanksgiving, so that - we live on two acres and we are on a river. I cannot imagine living anywhere else but here.

And this question leads really well into the blowing your mind part, but I feel like there was some of it where I thought I lost my husband, I am not also going to lose this dream of a forever home for my kids and for me. It felt so unfair. I guess I just never even considered it. I was like, no, this is our home.

And in a way, I also - I'm so glad I didn't have to pack my house up and move because I haven't sorted through all of Mark's stuff. It's been 15 months. And I'm okay with that. I feel like if I'd had to do that right away, that would have been gut wrenching. That would have been really hard.

Krista: Yeah. It seems like it's been a consistent experience for you. I notice it's so different. Not everyone is having those same thoughts. For some people they're having thoughts about their house being a very painful place to be and being surrounded by those memories and the way that they think about their house is creating a completely different emotional experience.

So yeah, I love to see that really, where we live, it isn't what creates our emotional experience. It's what we think about where we live. And not that it's good or bad or right or wrong. But it's just interesting to me how for you it's such a great source of security and comfort and connection with Mark.

Bevin: Yeah. I did redo my room. I have a friend who's a designer and I said, "Sarah, I need a place where I'm not sad and a place that's mine."

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Because my kids, I've basically given them the run of the first floor because it doesn't matter and because COVID hit, my mom and my sister kind of took turns helping when Mark first passed away because my kids weren't sleeping through the night.

And so I needed help because literally one of them was awake at all hours of the day. And so they came and helped and so I gave my office to my niece because she was staying there in the guest room to my sister. And so I needed a place where I felt like this is just for me. And so I redid my room and that has been a sanctuary for me.

Krista: Yeah, and with COVID then of course, more so than ever, most of us are spending more time in our houses that we used to. So glad there's a sanctuary there. So I'm kind of curious to know too a little bit more about how you navigated the whole business thing. Because online business wasn't new to you, but if I remember right, you were at a place where you were kind of full essentially in terms of your client load, and so you kind of saw that in order to grow, you were going to need to transition from serving one person to serving groups of people and more than one online. So how did you do that and deal with Mark's loss? That's a pretty big ask to completely restructure your business and mourn your husband and parent two small children.

Bevin: Well, I've gone even farther than that now because I've totally changed my business. It's not the same anymore. So when Mark passed away, I remember I sent this email to my clients. It was like, guys, I'm not going to be working this week because my husband passed away.

Krista: This week? This one week?

Bevin: Right. I mean, in my head it was like, I just need a week, guys. And it was so ridiculous. And I ended up - I don't even remember how long I took off. Five or six weeks or something. Maybe up to eight with some

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clients. But there were some clients, they went back to sooner because I wanted a distraction.

I felt like one of the hardest things after Mark passed was the paperwork and the insurance and everything. And I felt so ineffective with all of that. I would call and I remember I called his 401K and I was like, I'm just calling because my husband passed away and I need to know what to do. And they were like, well, you have to fill out this form and if you're the beneficiary, we will let you know.

And I was like, what do you mean if? And they were like, we can't confirm anything over the phone. And Mark had been married before, so I was terrified that somehow his ex-wife was on. So I'm sick to my stomach for weeks waiting on this and I said, I just can't sit around and be ineffective and deal with banks and insurance and how painful that was, or calling the credit card company to close his card and them saying, "Could you please put the cardholder on the phone?" And I'm like, "Did you not hear me that my husband has passed away?"

So I went back to work with a couple of clients, maybe three or four weeks after Mark passed away. And then I eased back into the rest of my clients. And everybody was amazing, said I could take as much time as I needed. But I realized yes, I had to shift my business because I am now the sole breadwinner and I knew I had to replace a big chunk of what Mark had brought in.

And I could not do that in one-to-one work and still be present for my kids the way - I want to pick my daughter up from preschool every day. That's a non-negotiable. I can't do that if I'm working 80 hours a week and I don't want to. So I started to shift away from the one-to-one, but then when I started talking about take the damn trip, I became so much more passionate about that that I decided to stop my other business and just talk about take the damn trip.

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And so I'm writing a book about it, I have a course about it, there's a Facebook community, and I want to do more speaking about it. Because I could talk about, not just Mark and our relationship, but like, the mindsets and how we can apply those to anything. To relationships, to jobs, to businesses, to health, whatever it is. I talk about that all day every day.

And so that - I didn't expect it to happen last fall when the sign happened, the momentum took it, but I knew I wanted to shift that. And so I'm still in that process. I'm still in the process of making that shift and figuring out exactly how to build the financial model around it.

And that's been stressful and my sister has asked me about it, and I will say honestly, I have not touched Mark's life insurance policy and I've considered that as my cushion in following this dream is like, okay, let's just remember that if I needed to supplement some of the money that I'm transitioning, I have that there. And that has made me think okay, it's okay to do that. That's what it's for. It's for helping support our family.

Krista: Yeah. Well, I love that that thought comes so easily to you.

Bevin: It doesn't always. Because sometimes I'm like, I'm not allowed to touch it.

Krista: Right, I'm not allowed to touch it, so many thoughts about money that we could do an entire episode about I'm sure.

Bevin: I mean, I had people say to me don't blow the life insurance money by making impulsive choices. And I was like, probably not going to do that but thanks.

Krista: Thanks for minding your own business.

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Bevin: Right. They're like, you never would. Then why would you say it to me?

Krista: So fascinating. Talk about that a little bit more. Thinking about relationships, what has changed for you? What have your relationship challenges been since Mark died? How have you navigated those things?

Bevin: Yeah. I think that Mark and I were so perfectly matched in how we balanced each other out. He used to say he would keep me grounded and I would get him on the dance floor. He was very solid and steady. As an engineer, he was a planner, and I am a total extrovert, I love being around people, and I would bring him out - I remember the first time literally his friends saw us dancing at a wedding, they were like, oh my god, I can't believe you just got Mark on the dance floor.

And so I think that there has been some relationships where Mark was a buffer. So I think there are some relationships where I'm dealing with people more directly one to one and they're not used to my style of communication or the way that I share things, or that I'm an over-communicator. And so I think that's been hard.

And then there are some relationships that honestly, we had them because of Mark. And so a lot of friends that - it's not that they were Mark friends but maybe they're couples, and so it feels weird the three of us being together. And so they - and again, COVID hasn't helped that because you have to be so much more specific about who you're spending time with.

But I think that's been - there hasn't been this buffer I guess. I see this a lot with Mark's family in particular who I adore and I love them, but they primarily - I would say for most things they communicated through Mark and they were hearing what he was telling them. But they weren't necessarily hearing it from me, and on top of which I am - my responsibility, my number one priority about everything else is me and my kids.

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It is their happiness, it is their safety and security, and if that doesn't fit with a vision somebody else has, I'm still going to choose them. And so that I think sometimes people maybe think I'm being a little bit too, I don't know, rigid about things, but I'm like, no we're not going to be able to do that because we weren't able to go stay at a hotel with some friends because it was like, Johnathan goes to bed at seven.

And I have to stay in the room with him because I can't - the monitor is not going to reach down to wherever we're hanging out. So I'm like, it just doesn't make sense for us to do all that, but I'm happy to come and hang out with you until 6:30 and then I'll even push their bedtime, take them home. But it doesn't make sense. So I think there was some disappointment there, but I just had to say - it was not going to be fun for me at all.

Krista: Yeah, and don't say yes when you really want to say no.

Bevin: Yeah. And that's something with the D, the decide and declare part that works really well in the framework is that when we find our yes, the no's become easier. Because when I'm really clear about what my yes is, then it's like, does that support that yes or not? And if it doesn't then it's like, no thank you.

Krista: Yes. Because saying yes to something when you really want to say no is like saying no to the thing that you really do care about.

Bevin: Because every yes carries an implied no. I can't be two places at once. So if I say yes to being in a hotel where my kids aren't going to sleep and I'm going to be stuck in a room, then I'm saying no to a good night's sleep for my kids and for me and probably a pleasant day the next day.

Krista: Yeah. And when you're saying yes so that someone else will not have a feeling...

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Bevin: Yeah, I know.

Krista: You're kind of creating your own negative emotional experience and putting theirs above yours, which...

Bevin: But we will bend over backwards and twist ourselves into all sorts of knots so that somebody else doesn't feel inconvenienced.

Krista: We do that.

Bevin: Yeah, I try not to do that anymore. But it's hard.

Krista: Yeah, it's a work in progress in different areas, right? I think in some ways it's so much easier than others for sure. When you kind of think back over what you've been through since Mark died, what surprised you that maybe you just didn't see coming or didn't anticipate? Either positive or negative.

Bevin: Well, I think I've been surprised by what will knock me off my rails unexpectedly. And I think the other thing that's really hard - so every important date of Mark's and my life happened between August 31st and February 23rd. So our anniversary of when we met, his birthday, my birthday, when we got engaged, when we got married, all the holidays, Johnathan's birthday, Guinevere's birthday.

So he passed away at the end of November. I was like, I just got to get through February 23rd. That's Guinevere's birthday. And so from February 23rd until the middle of August, I was like, I have got this under control. It's not easy and I miss Mark every minute, but I'm doing okay.

And then August 31st came around and I was like, wow. And it was every two weeks felt like a landmine. And Johnathan's birthday was just about three weeks ago and I was with the kids in the car and I was in the carwash

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and I just started balling. And I told my sister later, I was like, you know, people don't have to ask me, but it would be nice if every once in a while people were like, I bet today's really hard, are you okay?

And I think that's been part of it. Because again, we were talking before, people just felt like oh, you're okay. And I don't want to be like, I mean, most of the time, but not always. I don't want people to assume I feel bad. I don't want people to think I'm feeling like a victim. But it would be nice every once in a while for people to just say, what can I do because I met you miss Mark?

And I have a group of girlfriends who have been amazing. They sent me flowers on my birthday. But I will say I told them, I said this is a really hard time. I was not shy about saying I am struggling. And they took it from there and ran with it and were like, what can we do? They sent flowers and they did a Zoom birthday call with me. All the things that I needed.

Krista: I'm so glad that you were honest and didn't try to hide the struggle and didn't judge yourself maybe for struggling.

Bevin: Yeah. I mean, you know, sometimes I still do. Sometimes I'm like, I should be over this by now. But I don't think - somebody said that to me once. At the six-month mark, somebody said, "I won't judge you if you're not over it." I was like, "Well, good because I'm not and I don't think that's a problem." And so I think that's been the other thing, has been sometimes where people - what has surprised me are the people who have stepped up and the people who have disappeared. That's been hard sometimes.

Krista: And they were different people than you expected?

Bevin: Yeah. Some of the comments that were made right after Mark passed away, I was just like, oh my god, how were you ever in our lives that you just said that? But then there's been some people who have just

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stepped up in a way that is like, oh my god, how did we not have you in our lives more?

Krista: Yes. It is fascinating. I think that's pretty consistent. We expect certain behaviors from some people and not at all from others, and it's just not what we anticipate at all.

Bevin: Totally.

Krista: So when you think about kind of going forward and grief and its presence in your life, what comes up for you? What do you kind of think is where your work is next? The end goal for you? What comes up for you?

Bevin: I don't know that there's an end goal. I think it's always a work in progress. I think that - I almost wrote about this to say like, I happen to be really good at grief. I've just had more practice. But I think that one thing that has kind of prepared me - I don't know. I think this might have helped me is having lost my dad.

And honestly, having planned our wedding having lost my dad, and thinking about how do I incorporate my dad into the day? And we did that a lot of ways. My uncle walked me halfway in and my mom walked me the other half, and it was because my dad had said he wanted my uncle to walk me down the aisle.

We left the ceremony to my dad's favorite swing song. There were just a lot of small touches and my uncle even came up to me and was like, "Thank you so much for honoring my brother in this way." And I think that that hopefully will help me as we move forward and we're trying to incorporate Mark into our lives.

I will say one of the things that just terrifies me the most is how do I date after this? Because we have pictures of Mark everywhere, I talk about him

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for my career, I mean, I talk about what an amazing man he was and how incredible our relationship was and what an impact losing him has. And again, it's like, COVID has been a blessing and a curse because I think that it has stopped me because - and I want to get to the big part of this.

Because the other reason it stopped me from dating, because I'm like, instead of just casually meeting people and saying like, let's just date and see what happens, it feels like I have to be like, let's try it for three weeks and see if it works. And if it doesn't, then we'll quarantine and go meet other people. Just feels like so much work and I tell my mom I'm like, I don't miss dating. I miss Mark. But I don't feel this urge to have that attention.

Krista: Yeah, it took me a long time to feel that too. And I think it's just different for different people and some people feel it immediately and that's fine and other people don't and that's fine.

Bevin: I had an inkling of it. I was like, oh, I'm kind of interested in this guy but then COVID complicated it so much that it was kind of like, this is more work than it's really worth. And it just kind of fizzled. Because I told my aunt that the other day. I was like, you know, I'm 41, I don't think I'll be alone for the rest of my life. And she was like, I'm so glad to hear you say that.

Because I think some people do think - I have a friend who lost her husband and she was I think in her 60s or 70s and she's like, no, he was the only one, I will not date. And I don't want to think that way. But I do have pretty high standards for how somebody's going to treat me.

Krista: Well, I think you want to keep those standards.

Bevin: I do too.

Krista: Personally. Sometimes I am really surprised when I hear stories about other people's responses and maybe it just is part and parcel

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because they've not been a widower per se, but to just not be understanding of photos in the house and memories shared. And Mark will always be the father of your children, of course you're going to talk about him and make him part of your life. And to me, if you're dating someone that does not support you in that, check you later. It's just not okay.

Bevin: Well, and I will say the other thing that was really hard is when people compared my losing Mark to their divorce. And that was really - it happened a couple of times and I didn't know how to address it because there was part of me that wanted to be like, don't ever say that to a widower ever.

Because it's like, I loved my husband. And he died unexpectedly. We had a great relationship. And I know that sometimes divorces surprise people and what have you, but when people are like, "Oh yeah, it's just like when I got a divorce," I'm like, it's not. And so that triggers me.

Krista: Yeah, I think people say it intending to create connection and how it's usually received, we end up feeling less connected to them. But I think their intention is to create connection. It is fascinating what people say.

Bevin: I try to remember that with everything. Even the things that I want to create, like shifting my business or what have you, and people are not supportive, I try to remember - so I have a belief that there's a difference between permission and support. And that we go around a lot of times unconsciously asking for people's permission to follow our dreams.

And we do that, we're like, what would he think? Should I do it? And we don't need their permission. We're grownups. We're not trying to get into the zoo. We don't need a permission slip. And so...

Krista: Trying to get into the zoo.

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Bevin: But when we ask people for their permission, they sort of try it on for themselves and if they're not comfortable with it or they're scared that you might get hurt if you fail, then they can't give you their permission because they feel emotionally attached to it. And so then they try to kill your dream.

If instead we say, hey, I'm doing this great thing, I'd love your support but it's okay if you don't want to give me your support, I'm still going to do it. And that has been a big thing of like - so I try to remember when people are trying to create connection, I try to remember like, okay, they're coming from the right place. When they don't agree with something that I'm doing, okay, it's out of concern for me. But it doesn't mean that it doesn't hurt my feelings sometimes.

Krista: We got to tell the story. I've made them wait long enough.

Bevin: I feel like we're about the time where they're like, okay, and now you can tell it. So when Mark passed away, I've been very open about the fact that my kiddos are IVF babies. And when Mark passed away, we were about 60 days away from starting our third round of IVF.

I have always wanted three kids. I had a psychic once tell me that I was going to have three kids but not with the boyfriend who had brought me there, which I thought was good advice. But I have always wanted three kids and we had talked about it a lot. With each of my kids I wanted to nurse them for a full year. So we were just waiting until after Johnathan's birthday.

And so when he passed away, I felt like that dream had been taken away from me as well. And that to me was not fair. It's the same thing I talked about the house. Like, it didn't feel fair that I lost my husband and this dream of our dream home, our forever home. I lost my husband and this dream of a third kid.

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And so I thought about it a lot and I decided that, and I had shared with you that I don't know if people are going to be okay with this, but I think I want to have a third kid. And I talked to one of my sisters and she was like, okay. I said look, to me, it's never going to not be a crazy idea. It's never going to be oh okay, now that I'm 44, totally makes sense. So I was like, well, I can either do it later when I'm in my mid and late 40s, and my kids are older, they're out of diapers, or I can do it now.

And so I decided to move forward with IVF on my own. I'm now 16 weeks pregnant and so excited about it. But not everybody has been supportive. I totally used that same damn framework all the way through. I decided it, I declared it to a very small group of people to start, and then I expanded it because I don't think you have to shout your dream from the rooftop right away. I think you have to be selective about who you share...

Krista: Yeah, it's like a baby dream and you don't want it - you have to be really firm I think with your own declaration before you're strong enough to expose it to people who aren't I think.

Bevin: Well, I used the analogy of there are some people I would trust to babysit my toddlers that I would not leave my newborn with. And that is the same way I felt about some of these declarations is like, there are some people who I trust with a newborn brand-new idea that I'm still figuring out, and there are some people I'm going to wait until they are - it's a little more formed and I feel a little more confident.

So I increased that very slowly. I actually didn't tell Mark's parents until I was about 14 weeks pregnant. And I didn't know how they would react. I didn't know if they were going to be more worried about me and the kids and not be able to see the excitement, or if they would be immediately over the moon about it, so I waited.

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And I also - the A part, the attend your own party, the staying present in the moment, I even went to our doctor and I said - because he was concerned. He helped us with all three kids now and he said, "Are you sure? This is going to be really hard." And I said, "Yeah I know, I have given myself the permission to change my mind at any moment."

I said I'm going to - I found this phrase really good. I'm going to continue to pursue this until it no longer makes sense. And I've done that with businesses, I've done that with relationships, I've done that with this baby. And I said I'm just telling you now that if at any time I feel like this isn't the right time or this doesn't feel right, up until the point that you transfer that embryo, I've given myself permission to pause or change my mind.

Which he was like, okay, but could you - so we're just going to put this in pencil that you're coming in on this day for your embryo transfer? I was like, I mean, I'll try to give you as much notice as possible. I think we have to - we can so often travel down a path purely out of inertia and just keep walking when we're well past the point where we had changed our minds.

And so I wanted him to know that you don't have to worry, I'm not just going to show up so I don't inconvenience you, even though I don't want to do it. I was going to be fully in. So that was - yeah, and then but there have definitely been people who have not been supportive or have been passively aggressively supportive. And I just try to remember that it is their concern for me. And that's how that's showing up for them. And that I don't need their permission. I don't even need their support.

Krista: No, yeah. And who knows where people pick up - I mean, we all pick up beliefs, some of them like bad pennies, and I'm sure a lot of beliefs that other people around you who genuinely probably love you, but they've been taught to believe two-parent household is better, who knows what beliefs they have picked up.

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Bevin: Or parenting has been hard for them. They've had - I mean, I have friends who have children with special needs, and it's been very difficult because they've had to fight for IAPs and fight for so much for their kids. And it's not that they would change that but they're like, oh my god, what if you had to do that by yourself?

So I get it. Again, they tried it on for themselves and weren't comfortable with it, and so then they were like, I don't think that's a good idea. I'm like, well, it's not a good idea for you but it's a great idea for me. I can't wait to have this little baby.

Krista: That's what I want, it's my dream.

Bevin: Yeah. It's going to be hard, there's going to be hard moments. I also don't think that everything shouldn't be hard. I think there are some things that are hard and that's okay because we can do hard things.

Krista: Could not have said it better myself. In fact, I think I may actually have said that a few times. And I think too it's easy to talk about this after you've made the decision, you're pregnant, but I also - I think it's important for people to hear that that wasn't necessarily the easiest decision for you to come to. It wasn't like just poof, 100%, there's no doubt about it. That was a process too.

Bevin: Honestly, in my heart, I always knew I would have three kids. I don't know why. That part of it, it was harder for me to decide not to. When I thought about it and I thought I'm not going to do that, that felt so wrong. And it felt like it was the one thing I was going to get to 75 and look back and be like, that's the thing I regret. I regret not having the third kid.

And now granted, not everybody would have these frozen embryos that we had. Not everybody would be able to do that. But to me, it was like no, this is supposed to be - I'm supposed to have three kids. And I also - this was

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the hard part. I felt pretty strongly that I wanted them to be genetically Mark's and mine.

And that felt like - it's another part of Mark, my kids happen to look exactly like him. So just felt like that. But I didn't know how that would fit into a future relationship. I was like, how do I say to somebody I really care about you, I want to have another kid, but not yours. Because I'm sure there are some people that are thinking, "Well, you could have just waited and see if you met somebody else and you guys could have had a kid together." And I don't know, maybe, but I just - again, it was like this just felt so right, so in my core, the right thing to do.

Krista: I remember when we were working together and I remember there was a moment where you really wanted to call the fertility clinic.

Bevin: Oh, I forgot about this.

Krista: Yeah. What do you remember from that now?

Bevin: Yes, I totally remember this. So when you go through fertility and you have to sign all of these papers that are what happens if you get divorced, what happens if one of you dies, what happens if you both die. And I remember sitting at the table with Mark kind of laughing about it being like, well, I guess if I die. But then I couldn't remember what we'd said after that.

So I couldn't remember if the paperwork was going to let me have these embryos or if we had said if one of us dies, the embryos don't go to the other person. I don't know why we would have said that, but I was like, we had thought it was so ridiculous at 36 to even consider that. And so I was scared to call the fertility office to know if I could even - if these were mine.

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And I mean, I had backup plans. I was like, I'll get an attorney, I'll do this, but I was so scared, and I remember calling and saying my husband has passed away and I don't know what the paperwork says. Then they did tell me, they're like, oh no, the embryos do pass to you. And I was so relieved. I think you asked me why didn't you do that sooner. And I was like, well, I wasn't ready to. I was okay. I wasn't ready to use them yet. But that just made me feel like, okay, now I know that that's a possibility. Totally forgot about that.

Krista: Yeah.

Bevin: And it was - I remember going in and meeting with our doctor the first time and he was like, it's so weird to see you here without Mark because Mark was at every single appointment and he always wore these white undershirts and he was like, just standing in his jeans and white undershirt behind the door and so supportive.

And I said, yeah I know, but what's weird too is because of COVID, partners weren't allowed in doctors' offices right now. So it kind of normalized my experience that I wasn't the only solo woman in there. I feel terrible because I think it would have just destroyed Mark to not be able to be in the room for all those things.

And with IVF, you got a 50:50 shot every appointment of whether it's good or bad news. And so to have to do that by yourself when you're not expecting it, or my friend went through IVF and her husband sits in the car during every appointment. I'm just like, that's terrible. So now my new take the damn trip is have the damn baby.

Krista: Have the damn baby already.

Bevin: The same mindset, but also I think part of why I'm so passionate again about sharing this is that fertility treatments, whether you're a widow

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or not, but fertility treatments are hard. They're financially and physically and emotionally hard and we don't talk about them.

And just in the same way that I think sometimes people were scared to talk to me about Mark because they didn't know how - so many people said to me, "I was going to call and see how you were doing but I didn't know if you were having a good day, I didn't want to," and I was like, "What? Remind me that my husband died?"

I was like, just let me clear that up for you. I'm never not thinking about the fact that he has died. But it's the same with I think fertility and miscarriages and just fertility treatments and journeys in general. People don't talk about them and then they feel very isolated and alone. And so I'm really passionate about creating space for conversation for people to talk about it. Because I've had - again, like I said, one of my friends is going through IVF right now and she's like, I wish that I'd known what you were going through so I could have supported you more. But I didn't know.

Krista: Yeah. And I'm really passionate about - which is why I wanted you to tell your story, about us not making assumptions about what is possible for life when we lose a spouse. And I think as well-meaning as this idea of a new normal is, what most of us hear when we think new normal is resign myself to a life that I didn't really want. Just do the best that I can to get through and give up on those things that are big, like have another baby.

Bevin: Yeah, or keep my house, or sell my house, or whatever it is. I think first of all, we shouldn't rush into big decisions. Easier said than done in some situations. Sometimes we have to make a decision. Sometimes it's like we cannot financially afford this, we have to make a decision. And I get that.

I feel very fortunate that I was not in that position. That I did have an income and we did get social security for the kids and all that. I wasn't

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forced to make that decision. But regardless, there have been plenty of times where I do get that sense of oh, well now without Mark, you can't... whatever that is. And I just don't think that's true. I think I still have big bold crazy dreams and if I can figure out a way to make them happen, then I'm going to.

Krista: Yeah. And it really is worth pausing to say, wait, is this dream I think that's no longer possible truly no longer possible? Because what if I'm wrong about that. What if more is possible for my life than I'm allowing myself to imagine? Because only then can you decide and declare.

Bevin: Right. But I think too it's giving ourselves the space and checking in to make sure what's our dream and what's somebody else's dream for us. And I mean, I think it's - people will sometimes ask me when I talk about take the damn trip and do the thing you're passionate about, they're like, well, when it is okay to change my mind?

I'm like, you can always change your mind. You don't even need a reason. People will be like, they try to come up with this excuse to change their mind. I'm like, if you just want to change your mind, just do it. But make sure it's your mind that you're changing. Not that somebody's uncomfortable with it so I've changed my mind.

Krista: Yes.

Bevin: But I think that is giving ourselves that space to pause and just check in. So the trip part, because people will be like I don't know what my big trip is, I don't know what my big idea is. And so I'll ask them four questions, which just happen to spell the word trip. It's just so I can remember it. Just so I can remember it.

I say, is it your top priority or are you willing to make it your top priority? Will you resource it? So will you put your time, energy, money, attention behind

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it? Is it inspiring? Are you excited about it? And then is it personal? Is it your dream?

Krista: Your dream.

Bevin: Right. Because we so often find ourselves trying to bring other people's dreams to life or trying to keep other people's dreams alive for us.

Krista: That's what I see. That's what I see so much. We tell ourselves we have to honor his dream, live his dream, finish his dream, and that may not be what we want. And to give ourselves permission for that to be okay.

Bevin: Yeah. And maybe there's a way to honor it, to say this was something Mark loved and I honor it, but I'm not going to go - he was a huge Purdue fan. We don't have Purdue paraphernalia all around the house. I mean, sometimes, but it's like, how can we continue to honor this amazing best friend of mine and father of my kiddos and in a way that he would also - he wouldn't want me to stay stagnant and just staring at a picture of him as a shrine. And so I try to honor the fact that he would want me to be fully realizing my dreams as well. He was my biggest cheerleader.

Krista: I love that. I love hearing you talk about him. You always light up when you do.

Bevin: I miss him. Man, I was just thinking about that today like, I miss him so much and sometimes I feel like is he really gone? Because we talk about him and he's so present in my life. So yeah, I know, I hope I always light up about him because he's great.

Krista: Yeah. Thank you so much for being on the podcast. How can people connect with you?

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Bevin: So well, thank you for having me, first of all. I'm so honored to share my story because I know how powerful the work that you do for widows and moms is, so thank you for having me. You can find me, you can go to takethedamntrip.com or takethedamntripcommunity.com and that will take you to the Facebook community where you can join and I share a lot about the mindsets in my journey. And you can find me on Instagram either @bevinfarrand or @takethedamntrip. Just put take the damn trip everywhere.

Krista: Take the damn trip. I think we will find you. And your name is so unique too. Bevin, so unique.

Bevin: I know.

Krista: Thank you so much Bevin. Such a pleasure.

Bevin: Thank you Krista.

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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, even 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 what you deserve. Go to coachingwithkrista.com and click Work With Me for details and next steps. I can't wait to meet you.