

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 233, Unapologetic Tears.

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.

Welcome to *The Widowed Moms Podcast*. I'm so delighted you're here. My name is Katie Castricone and I'm 53 years old. I never anticipated adding the descriptor, widow, to my bio. But I am a widow, a mom of four, a legal professional, and an MGOer. I joined the program just five months after my world was turned upside down and inside out. When I lost the love of my life, Andy and our beautiful dynamic 20 year old daughter, Nicole in a car accident in July of 2022.

I applaud you for being brave and taking this time for you just for you by watching these podcasts. I know how hard it is from experience to take time just for yourself. That being said, I invite you to apply for the *Mom Goes On* program and learn more. The lessons I have learned from and with women that truly understand have been priceless. While our stories are different, our common journey is intertwined with grief and the loss of our beloved person. We are widows.

I hope you enjoy this podcast. And please reach out to MGO to get more information. You won't regret it. You're stronger than you know. Believe in you, believe in your future. You're worth it. We've got your back. Join us and have your back too.

Hey there, welcome to another episode of the podcast. I just got back from a cruise. I think I mentioned that I was going on the cruise before I left. Never been on a cruise before. And listen, I got to pet a sloth and hold it, I actually got to hold a sloth. The coolest thing ever, I highly recommend. If you have not gotten a chance to hold a sloth and you can find a chance to

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

hold a sloth, you should do it. I did not realize how much joy that holding a sloth was going to bring me. And I'm telling you, so much joy.

Also I don't know if every sloth is the same, maybe they're different, but the sloth that I held, whose name was Patricia, by the way, at the sloth, it was an animal sanctuary, not just a sloth sanctuary. But Patricia was remarkably lightweight. I expected that when they put her in my hands, she would be heavy. She was not heavy at all. She was very light. They kind of have you cross your hands in front of you and hold them down by your belly and then they put the sloth's butt in your hands and then wrap its arms around your shoulders. And it's kind of funny.

It sounds kind of gross, but I mean, I think a lot of people have been holding it. It was kind of sweaty, a sweaty little sloth and so cute, so slow and adorable. They said, "Don't rock, don't pat it, don't swing around or anything. Just hold very still." And it was awesome. So anyway, highlight of the cruise holding Patricia the sloth. We also got to have capuchin monkeys jump on our head. And we got to feed iguanas. We went to, it was a carnival cruise and the first port was Roatán Island off of Honduras, or, I guess, part of Honduras.

And then Belize, where we got to go cave tubing and then Cozumel and we got to sit on a private beach. And they brought us food and drinks and we just enjoyed the weather. So lovely experience, but highly, highly recommend sloth holding, which actually, by the way, made me a little teary eyed, fits well into this episode. Okay, enough about sloths.

I want to talk about something that I don't think we've really talked much about before, but it's really important. And the reason I want to talk about it is because it keeps coming up in coaching sessions. And it came up for me not too long ago. Well, very recently actually, last week as I'm recording this. So tears, we're apologizing for them and I really want us to stop. We're making them mean things that I don't think we have to make them mean.

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

We're using them against ourselves in ways that I don't think help our grief. And that's why I want to talk about it.

I think tears are as natural as breathing. And I don't see any of us judging ourselves from breathing. But if I could quantify for you, I wish I had a number, the amount of times I have had someone in *Mom Goes On*, or on a free call, or any number of conversations, in Facebook. Just people approach me and what they want help with is that they are worried that they will cry. They don't want to cry. A deathiversary is coming, an event is coming, they really want to keep it together. They are afraid that they will fall apart and cry and they really, really don't want to do that, especially in public.

And on one hand I get it because I also have had that worry. And also it's worth talking about because while it is a very common worry, I think we can change that. So I want to talk about why we actually cry, the benefits of crying, why we are so worried about crying. What we make it mean, what we worry other people will make it mean. All of these things that keep us wanting to avoid and apologize for our tears so that we can perhaps change that.

And then at the end of the episode I want to tell you kind of what happened to me within the group and how I cried on a call. And then how my brain judged me for that and ultimately what I've decided I want to believe about that. So I did a little Googling. I am not an expert on, I have cried a lot, I have helped a lot of women who are crying, but I'm not an expert on the body and crying. So I did a little research and what I learned is that there's basically three types of tears according to the Googlies, the scientists on the Googlies, which I think the article I ended up liking the most was one from Harvard Health.

But essentially what I learned is that crying, there's three types of tears. So there's reflex tears, continuous tears, and emotional tears. And the first two types of tears, reflex tears and continuous tears, basically, those are the

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

kinds of tears that help us keep stuff out of our eyes. So if we have debris, if we have smoke, if we have junk that needs to be cleared, like an eyelash. The reflex tears, continuous tears help us do that. If we didn't have those kinds of tears, our eyes might be dry.

So those kinds of tears lubricate our eyes and help keep our eyes healthy. Those are not typically the types of tears that I find we are judging ourselves for. We tend to judge ourselves from the third type of tears which is the emotional type, emotional tears. And emotional tears actually flush stress hormones out of our body. Did you know this? They flush toxins out of our system. There's actually health benefits to emotional tears. And you know how after you feel good after you cry, finally, when you eventually let it out, you get it out of your system and you cry you feel better?

Well, we feel better because of the hormones that are released when we cry, so those feel good hormones, oxytocin, endorphins. It literally makes us feel better. It is a release for us when we cry. And when we don't cry, which, I keep hearing different people talk about this in different ways. And the common thread is that when we don't cry and we want to, when we're suppressing it, it actually can lead to health problems. It can lead to problems in our immune system. It can lead to mental wellness problems, more stress, more anxiety, disconnection from other humans.

Heart problems, long term health complications and it would sound like disconnection from other humans might not be that big of a deal. But let's be honest about it. At a time when we really need support, grief, spousal loss, partner loss, if we are being honest about how we feel, if we're putting on a fake front because we're worried about what people will think. We actually don't give ourselves a chance to be supported because we aren't being honest.

So people don't know that we could use support, that they are fully capable and willing to give us. But we hide what's really going on and then block ourselves from getting support. So tears are good, they help us.

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

Suppressing them doesn't help us for a multitude of reasons. Agreed? I don't think I have to convince you of this, but let's get on the same page first.

So why do we apologize for them? Why are we so worried about tears coming? Why don't we embrace them when they do come? I think there's a few reasons. One, I think we make crying mean something about us. We make crying mean something about how we're doing. Think about what we're told when we're little, "Keep it together. Be strong, if you want to cry, I'll give you something to cry about. If you're going to cry, go to your room." We're told things about crying and different people are told different things. Not all of us learned the same things about crying.

But many of us have been taught to think that crying is weakness, that we aren't really supposed to cry. That when we cry it's a problem. And even worse, if we're women and differently for men. Men are often told that it's a feminine thing to cry. So they're judged for crying for different reasons than we are. We're not told that we need to suck it up as much as men are probably, but we are judged by our tears. We are perceived as less capable, emotionally unstable. She's unstable. She's too emotional.

We're taught this, so of course we don't want to cry in a meeting if we think that everybody in that meeting is now going to think that we're unstable or we're incapable of doing our jobs. So this makes sense. We're taught these things about crying. And we're so misinformed about grief yet we use other people's opinions who are misinformed about grief to measure our success in grief. Can we think about this for a second?

If most of what other people know is the five stages of grief, which, if you've listened to me for any length of time, you know is old, outdated, not helpful, grief isn't linear, there's no finish line, it doesn't ever end, there are no stages, none of that. But that's the lens that most people are seeing our grief through. By the way, emotions are problems and crying makes us weak or unstable and yet we measure our success. I was doing so good

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

and then I started crying. I thought I was doing so well, but now I'm crying more.

We measure our success in grief as though there is such a thing, with how much we cry. Do you see the ridiculousness of this? Do you see why we should have so much compassion for ourselves? Because we were implicitly and explicitly taught to do this. It makes so much sense and it also makes me crazy at the same time. It makes me mad. It makes me really want to change this which is why I'm really glad you're listening to the episode because I think we can. I think we can.

Then I'll add one more layer. Women in particular are carrying a weight that I don't even know that sometimes we realize we're carrying until we put it down. And it's this deeply embedded belief that we have that we are responsible for the emotions of those around us. And we've been passing this down, I think from generation to generation. That we are the caretakers. We are the caregivers. We are the ones who are responsible for how other people feel.

And this is not a healthy belief in many ways. This is a belief that keeps us being dishonest about how we feel. This is a belief that keeps us unwilling to express the truth of how we feel. This is what makes us, in part, suppress tears, which as I mentioned before. It's not healthy, it's not honest. But think about it, were you taught that you need to put other people's comfort above your own? Were you taught to read the room and adjust accordingly? Were you taught to hold your breath, to hold your tears, to be seen and not heard? Don't upset your parents. Don't upset your father.

Don't make a scene. Don't air your dirty laundry. Don't make other people feel bad. Don't be awkward. I'm going to bet that you were. And what did we learn from that? We learned that other people's emotional state is our responsibility. That other people's peace is caused by us or taken away by us. And if we learn that as kids then of course, we brought it into adulthood,

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

didn't we? And now, doesn't it make sense that we've brought it into our grief?

That we're trying to navigate one of the most painful experiences we've ever been through and constantly monitoring ourselves to make sure that we minimize the burden we create in expressing how we're truly feeling to other people. It's absolute suffering. And so we're having these moments where the tears want to come out. And it makes total sense why they do. And we shove them down. You know that feeling when you get that pre-cry feeling in your throat and so you know that if you keep talking you'll cry so you just stop talking.

Heaven forbid we would make someone uncomfortable. Heaven forbid someone would pity us. Heaven forbid they wouldn't think we're doing okay, that they might have an opinion about how we're doing with our grief, that might make them feel disappointed. So what I'm really hoping is that at this point it makes sense to you why we worry so much about crying in public. And that you are extending a lot of compassion to yourself about why we worry.

And I didn't even mention this, but also primitive brain, primitive brain associates other people's approval with life and their disapproval with death at a time when we actually did need a tribe of people to survive. Our brain learned that those people are important and whether they like us or not or approve of us or not matters to our survival. That old programming is still there and we're always carrying it around. So of course also doesn't it make sense that we would extend that into this, that our primitive brain would associate their disapproval of our tears with rejection which equals death?

Sounds dramatic, but that part of our brain really is pretty dramatic for our own survival. So it makes sense why we do it. We're not to be mad at ourselves for doing it. And also it's not healthy that we do it, it's contributing to the problem as opposed to lessening it. And I think we can do something

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

about it, which is to stop apologizing for our tears. They're not contagious. They're not a disruption in someone else's day. They're not a sign of weakness. They don't mean anything unless we decide that they do, anything bad. They're not a problem for us to solve.

They're not a problem for other people to solve. They're just an outward display of our inward experience. It's just emotions coming out of the eyes. And it doesn't make us responsible for other people's feelings. Holding back our tears does not preserve anyone else's well-being. It just neglects ours. It doesn't help anyone else. It just hurts us. And so I think it's something we can unlearn. And it's not just for us that I want us to unlearn it.

I want us to unlearn this for future generations, for people that we care about, for the women in our lives, for the girls in our lives, for the little boys in our lives. For all of these future generations who could have a different experience of crying if it started with us. Who could have an honest expression of their internal experience and get support around it and have a healthy release of it. That could literally be experiencing better levels of wellness and human connection because they don't apologize for their tears anymore.

Here's when I knew I had to do this episode. So I was on a coaching call within *Mom Goes On*. And I was coaching someone and I'm okay to cry on the podcast. You've heard me cry probably quite a few times. And sometimes I'm even okay crying on a Facebook live. When I read a testimonial, sometimes I will cry. When I get myself all fired up about the idea that you might settle for a life that is less than what you want, that will make me emotional. There are times when I have cried and I'm totally cool with it.

But when I am coaching, it's typically not one of those times, because when I'm coaching, I try very hard, first of all, these women are paying me. They're paying me for support. They're paying me for coaching. And here I

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

am, the Master Certified Coach, I'm the grief expert. My job is to focus on them, to help them, not to make it all about me. But to stay laser focused on what they've got going on so that I can be of service to them. That is usually where I am coming from.

And for some reason I needed to cry on that call. And what I was talking about with that client, it just hit me and her experience just felt like my heart felt so much for hers. And then in that moment I started thinking of Hugo and I missed him and I just felt all the same feelings. I remembered feeling how she felt and so I started to cry. And I kept coaching and the little chatter in my brain was like, "Okay, Krista, pull it together. We've got to coach here." And I think it actually ended up being a really good coaching session.

But afterwards I was kind of a little disappointed in myself. I should have been able to just keep it together because you're the coach, come on, Krista. I didn't spend a whole lot of time thinking about it but those were the thoughts that I had. And then later, Suzanne, who's a member of my team, if you've ever considered enrolling in *Mom Goes On* you have probably texted with Suzanne. But she's a *Mom Goes On* member, graduate, widow and friend. And she'll tell it to me straight.

And she was telling me about what she witnessed on that call. She brought it up, and she was on the call and she was watching the faces of everyone on the call. And she wanted me to know that she thought it was a really important moment. But she knows me well enough to know that she knew I probably was bothered by it. I was not thrilled about it. And so she wanted me to know that from her perspective that I had given the group a gift to cry in front of them and to be honest. And she wanted me to know what she saw in their faces, the openness and the connection and the love and the support.

She just wanted me to feel good about it because she felt like it was a good thing for the group. And in retrospect, I think she's right because it's true, I

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

am a coach for sure and a good one. But I'm not an emotionless robot. It doesn't matter how many years I have coached. It doesn't matter how many people I have coached. It doesn't matter how many certifications I have. It doesn't matter how many grief books I've read, it doesn't matter. I'm still a human first and foremost.

And yes, Hugo died in 2016 and guess what? I didn't get over it. Nobody does. Nobody gets over it. That's not the point. We don't finish grief. We don't stop being sad. We don't stop being human. We don't turn into some sort of emotionless robot. And so that's why I really wanted to talk about it on the podcast, because if I'm doing what I do and I'm still judging myself, I still have that little judgmental voice about what it means to cry. Then what must yours be like?

How can I normalize that experience for me so that I can normalize that experience for you so that we can both be honest about our experiences of grief? If we can let tears show up whether we're expecting them or not and be okay with it, that's a good thing. I don't think it would be reasonable for that to not happen. We loved deeply, not everybody's relationship was amazing but we loved them. Of course, tears are going to come. And it doesn't make us wrong and it doesn't mean we're not doing well, with our grief, whatever that is. It just means we're human.

It just means this is what's true for us in that moment. It's not right. It's not wrong, it just is. So if water comes out of the orifices in your face, what if we just stopped apologizing for it? What if we stopped making it mean that we were weak? What if we decided to make it mean we were strong? What if we decided to make it mean we are so proud of ourselves for being authentic? What if we stopped taking responsibility for how other people feel? What if we stopped trying not to cry and instead just let ourselves cry?

Do you know how much energy we would save? Do you know how many coaching requests I would not have to even respond to if people would stop asking me the question, how do I not cry? How do I keep it together? If we

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

were just willing to let the tears come out, if we saw it as a testament to our humanity, a normal natural thing just like breathing. Because I don't know when the last time I judged myself for breathing was but I'm pretty sure I haven't. And we could do the same thing with tears.

We could give ourselves a lot of relief simply by un-shaming the experience of crying and when we do cry and when other people do have thoughts and feelings about our tears, if we stopped taking responsibility for them. I did an episode of the podcast called This is the Part Where. And I wonder what it would be like if the next time you cried, you used that for yourself and you said something like, "This is the part. This is the part where I'm worried that people who don't understand my grief will judge me.

This is the part where I can practice being kind to myself even if my inner critic is telling me I shouldn't be crying or I'm weak. This is the part where I can practice kindness. This is the part where my primitive brain is just afraid that other people are going to think something's wrong with me and reject me. But I can support myself through this. This is my chance to be part of changing the culture about crying. And the only thing I have to do is be honest. The only thing I have to do is relax. The only thing I have to do is just let the tears come out." They want to come out, what if I just let them and I stopped apologizing for it?

I think that's available to all of us. And also, I know sometimes we're worried about people thinking that we're depressed. That's probably a whole podcast episode by itself. But depression and grief are different. They're very different. You can be grieving and not depressed, you can be depressed and not grieving. If that's you, if that resonates with you, I want you to ask yourself, not because you're wrong or because you should feel bad about it.

But I want you to honestly ask yourself, why are you so worried that other people will think you're depressed? What would be so bad if someone

Ep #233: Unapologetic Tears

thought you were depressed? What does your brain make that mean? So that you can figure out how to support yourself.

Here's what I want to leave you with in closing, this thought. Your tears are yours. You owe no apologies for them. They are an expression of your heart, a testament to your capacity to love, to grieve and ultimately to continue living. I want you to remember that. And next time you cry, I want you to practice being unapologetic about it because you have nothing to apologize for. Okay, that's what I have for you this week. I love you.

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.