

Ep #262: What Taylor Swift Got Wrong About Grief



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

Ep #262: What Taylor Swift Got Wrong About Grief

Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 262, What Taylor Swift Got Wrong About Grief.

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. Exciting stuff if you are listening to this on Monday when it releases because tomorrow is the start of Grief Essentials. Grief Essentials is my brand new program, which I am only teaching live once for people who are struggling with the chaos of navigating grief, feeling overwhelmed by it. Realizing that they don't actually know much about grief, or that what they thought they knew isn't helping. Being told things by people around them that are actually perhaps making it harder instead of easier.

And really just looking for what I would have liked to have been given, which was an easy button in grief. They want grief to be easier. That's what Grief Essentials is for. If you are interested, there is still time, but you must act quickly. So go to coachingwithkrista.com/griefessentials and you will learn all about it. You can make sure it's for you and you can enroll.

And if it's still up by the time you hear this, maybe you're not hearing it on Monday, if it's still up, haven't yet exactly figured out if we're going to be able to accommodate late registrations, but go ahead and check. If it's still up, there might be a possibility that we have figured out a way. If not, hopefully we'll do it again at some point in the future.

This topic is cracking me up, you all. I posted something on Instagram about it and somebody was like, "I've unfollowed you." Listen before I talk about it, I have to tell you, I love Taylor Swift actually. I'm not a Swiftie, meaning I don't know all the details of her life and all her songs and everything, but I actually have a lot of admiration and respect for Taylor

Ep #262: What Taylor Swift Got Wrong About Grief

Swift. I think she is a phenomenal businesswoman. I think she is a phenomenal artist. She has a list of accomplishments that is just spectacular. What she is doing for setting an example for women is absolutely phenomenal.

I happen to be a Kansas City Chiefs fan, mostly by nature of the fact that I live in Kansas, even though technically the Chiefs are a Missouri team. Still, I have with great joy followed Taylor Swift dating Travis Kelsey, even got a shirt strictly to annoy my partner's son, who couldn't stand it. Every time he saw Taylor Swift in the stands he'd just roll his eyes. I got a t-shirt that said, 'Go Taylor's Boyfriend' because I thought I was being funny. But anyway, I like Taylor Swift, nothing but respect.

So, what I am about to say is in no way to diminish her or my respect for her or to insult her. That said, she missed the mark a few weeks ago and we can't blame her but we still need to talk about it. So, here's what happened. I happened to get a call, well, an email actually. The people who do my public relations got an email from Time Magazine and they were looking for me to comment as someone who does grief work all day long. They were looking for me to comment about what I thought about Taylor's decision to categorize all of her breakup songs using the outdated five stages of grief.

Now they didn't say outdated. That's my word, I am saying outdated. Five stages of grief, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. You've heard of them. And they were wanting someone who deals in grief on a regular basis to comment about it. First of all, so excited the Time Magazine reached out to me. I had a moment. Sadly, even though we responded as quickly as possible, by the time we responded, they had already gotten whatever quote they needed.

So, I didn't actually get into Time Magazine, which that was going to be so cool. But I'm guessing whoever commented probably felt the same way I do if they really are somebody who does grief work like I do, which is that,

Ep #262: What Taylor Swift Got Wrong About Grief

heavy sigh, kind of frustrating. The five stages of grief, you all, is from 1969. It does reflect some people's experience of grief but for the most part, it doesn't reflect most people's experience of grief.

Now, in its day, it was really important work. In 1969, when Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross started this conversation, it was a conversation that really wasn't being had. And she never really meant to her credit to imply that denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance were the only way people should experience grief. She was studying hospice patients, people who were coming to terms with their own terminal diagnosis, they were in the dying process. She was taking note, an anecdotal study, if you will, on what she was noticing.

And she was noticing that a lot of people would go through this phase of denial and then they would get angry. And then they would bargain to live and then they would fall into a depression. And then ultimately they would accept their terminal diagnosis. And she wrote a book called *On Death and Dying* where she documented these five stages. Then later she wrote another book called *Grief and Grieving*. And she took the five stages that she had observed in hospice patients and applied them to what it's like to grieve a loss, to lose someone that we care about.

So that was 1969. At the time of this recording, we are in 2024. As you can imagine, just like any field of study, what we think about grief is very different now than what we thought about it then. That doesn't make her work somehow not valuable. It just means that things have changed since then, and we have learned more. And what frustrates me and I'm sure it's frustrating to you too is that somehow we aren't really talking about what we have learned about grief as a culture, we're not talking about it. We're only talking about it on podcasts like this.

And other people who are interested in grief work like I am are talking about it. But for the most part, as a culture, we're not talking about anything other than the five stages. In fact, we just keep perpetuating it. We keep

Ep #262: What Taylor Swift Got Wrong About Grief

perpetuating it so much so that of course, Taylor Swift comes along and has this brilliant idea to create a list of breakup songs and categorize them by these five stages. It's cute. It's clever. It's catchy. And would she have known that there is anything beyond the five stages? Probably not. Is that her fault? Not really. Not really. We understand.

When you came into grief, did you know anything besides the five stages? I didn't. And I think that's what makes it so sad and frustrating to me is because (a) I'm sad that that's the only grief theory people seem to know, but I understand why, we've got to have other conversations. And then (b) I'm sad because God, now we're perpetuating it, a whole another generation. Think about the reach of Taylor Swift.

She has a phenomenal reach and such dedicated fans. And they are going to take what they hear from her and treat it as truth. It makes sense. So now we are perpetuating the five stages of grief to a whole another generation through this. So not mad at Taylor, just frustrated that it's a conversation we want to change. And we still haven't managed to change it to the extent that I would like to see. I would love it if someone showed up on my doorstep and said, "Oh yeah, five stages, that's old. That's totally not what I think grief is supposed to look like." But that's not what I see. And that's not what I see.

And when I go on other people's podcasts and we talk about grief, almost everybody's like, "What, the five stages of grief isn't current?" That's not the only grief theory, that was originally about people who were terminally ill. So, we love Taylor, at least I do. I'm still going to listen to her music.

And also, I need you listeners to help change the conversation. Let's talk about things beyond the five stages. Or at least if we're not talking about other grief theories, let's at least talk about how our experience hasn't lined up and how every grief experience doesn't look that way and that no emotions in grief are wrong. And that there really are no stages. That grief really doesn't end, that acceptance isn't a place.

Ep #262: What Taylor Swift Got Wrong About Grief

You can go back and listen, I've done so many podcast episodes on this. One called Stop Saying the Five Stages of Grief. I've talked about the Myths of Grief in multiple episodes. These are the conversations we need to be having so that another person who we love and care about, when they lose someone that they love and care about, they have an easier time than we did and we don't keep perpetuating this.

And maybe you have that conversation with somebody who labels themselves as a Swiftie and not in a way to make them defensive or anything, but just in a way to help them. Honest conversations about why perpetuating a one size fits all approach might be the antithesis of helpful. I want us to spread the word for all the widows that come after us. Are you in? We're in this together, we really are. And we're up against a lot of pop culture references that don't accurately describe what it is like for most of us to lose someone. And we can change that. It happens one conversation at a time.

Okay, that's what I have for you this week. Come join us in Grief Essentials if it sounds like a thing you might want to do, if it sounds helpful to you, coachingwithkrista.com/griefessentials. Remember, I love you. You've got this. Take care and I'll see you next week. Bye bye.

If you like what you've been hearing on this podcast and want to create a future you can truly get excited about 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.