

## Ep #3: How to Feel Better Now



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

## Ep #3: How to Feel Better Now

Ready to feel better? You're in the right place. By the end of today's episode, you'll understand three simple steps to feeling better, and more importantly, you'll think about emotions in a whole new way.

Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode three, How to Feel Better Now.

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 actually look forward to. Here's your host, certified life coach, grief expert, widow, and mom, Krista St-Germain.

Hey there, I'm so excited to bring you this episode. But before you listen, I want you to stop and take a minute to think about why the name of the episode appealed to you. What is it that you're feeling and why do you want to feel better?

That may seem like a really dumb question with a really obvious answer, but understanding why you don't want to feel the way you do is more significant than you might think. And the reason for that is because we think that the emotions we are experiencing are terrible.

But the real truth is that most of us aren't actually feeling our feelings, and that's why our experience of them is so awful. We think we're feeling our feelings, but what's really happening is one of three things.

I don't know about you, but I was not taught how to feel emotions. I don't really know anyone who actually was. But for sure, what we teach in our culture by example and what we demonstrate, we either resist our emotions, we react to them, or we avoid them.

And I want to walk you through each of those three common ways of dealing with emotions so that you can recognize where you might be doing

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each of the three. And then I'm going to offer you a fourth option and teach you how.

So, the first is resistance. This is when we're pushing an emotion away. This is when we're trying to convince ourselves that we should feel something else. And I see this so often in my clients. Grief is a rollercoaster of emotions. That's just the way that it is. And often, we're telling ourselves things that are very unhelpful; that we should be somewhere other than where we are emotionally. We shouldn't be angry. We shouldn't feel guilty. We shouldn't be sad. We shouldn't be so lonely.

And so we resist these emotions that are part of grief. And because we're so resistant, we try to will ourselves into other feelings, which actually ends up making us feel worse. So we start trying to find the silver lining. We start trying to force gratitude. And instead, we create more misery.

We think things like, "He's in a better place now. He's no longer suffering. I'm still young, I should be strong. I have to put on a happy face." We fake it until we make it. But the truth is, we really don't make it by faking it.

Now, if any of those thoughts feel believable to you, that's fine. But what doesn't work is resisting the emotions that are real for us and trying to will them away, trying to force them into something that they aren't, because what we resist persists. I'm sure you've heard this.

And with grief and with the emotions of grief, the fastest way around, the only way around, is through. Resistance never works. It just perpetuates negative emotion and it prevents us from processing emotions that need to be processed. So resistance is the first way and it never works.

The second is that we react. And this is when we notice an emotion, but instead of allowing it to be there, we react to it. We act from it. So if we're angry, maybe we cry and yell. Maybe we slam doors. If we are frustrated, maybe we snap at our children or maybe we lecture ourselves in our

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minds. Instead of noticing the emotion, we let it control our behavior. Maybe we stay in bed all day because we're feeling sad.

So reacting is when the emotion is what drives our behavior. So we resist, we react, or the third, we avoid. I wonder, in life, if you're avoiding any emotions. Often, this looks like what I call the overings; over-shopping, overeating, overdrinking, overworking, over-busying.

This is when we distract ourselves because we don't want to feel what we're feeling, so we numb it out with something else. We try to get away from it, try to avoid it, keep ourselves really busy. Maybe we work more than we're normally working. We go shopping for that high. We drink more than we normally would or more than we want to. We eat our feelings.

We're avoiding them because we don't have the tools to do anything else but resist, react, and avoid. But here's the honest truth; emotions cannot hurt us when we know what to do with them. And so what's hurting us isn't the actual emotions as much as it is our inability to experience them for what they are, because we really don't need to change our emotions to change our experience of them.

And so you probably came to this episode thinking that I was going to teach you how to change your feelings, which I will later in another episode. But in this episode, I'm not interested in teaching you how to change your emotions. I'm interested in teaching you how to process them, how to actually feel them. Because when you learn that skill, emotions aren't such a big deal.

The reason we're in such a rush to get away from emotions is because we've been taught that they are a problem. This isn't true. Emotions are a part of our human experience; all of them are a normal part of grief.

I know this may not be what you were hoping to hear, I completely understand, but stay with me for a bit and I'm going to teach you the three

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steps that you can take to start feeling better now; not changing your feelings, that will come later, but first actually feeling your feelings. And this is a skill, so let's jump in.

So, if we don't want to resist, react, or avoid, what do we want to do? The fourth way, the way that I want to teach you is we want to allow. We want to allow emotions to be there without making their presence mean that something has gone wrong. We want to allow them so that we can go through them, we can process them, we can digest them.

And when we do that, they will pass faster and our experience of them will be so much more pleasant than when we are resisting, reacting, and avoiding. I love mnemonic devices; things that help us remember easier. And so I came up with one for this process.

And that is the word NOW. If you can remember how to feel better NOW, you will know these three steps, and here they are. N stands for name. So the first step is that you have to name the emotion that you're having. You have to notice that you're having it and then figure out what it is. Is it happy, is it sad, lonely, anxious, disgusted, amazed, humiliated, proud, rejected, loving, what is it? What would you name it? What is the one word that you can use to name this emotion that you're noticing?

Then – that's the N – O, open up to it. So often, because we don't have the skill of feeling a feeling, when we notice it, we close. We close down, we go away. We try to avoid. We even kind of physically recoil. But that won't work if we're trying to actually allow an emotion to be present. When we're trying to process it, we have to welcome it into our body. We have to open up to it so that we can process it and digest it.

So we name it, we open up to it, and then the W in NOW is we witness the emotion. Emotions are just physical vibrations that are the product of thoughts. So we have a thought and it creates a feeling and that feeling or emotion is experienced in our body as a vibration.

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And when we can kind of go to this watcher place and witness what that feels like in the human body, it will digest. It will process. And it usually only takes a couple of minutes for that emotion to run its course. So we name it, we open up to it, and then we witness it.

So when you're witnessing the physical experience of an emotion, I want you to imagine that you are talking to a robot. Imagine you've got a robot that has no concept of what it could possibly feel like to have an emotion, because it's a robot, it's never had that before. How could you explain to this robot what it's like to feel an emotion?

You would be very objective in the way that you describe it, right? So questions like, is it big or is it small? Is it more fast or more slow? Does it have a color? Does it have a texture? Is it soft? Is it bumpy? Is it slimy? Is it shiny? Does it move? Does it start in one place and travel to another? Where is it? What part of your body is calling to you? Where do you notice it? Does it make you want to do anything? And explain that experience to that robot and in doing so, watch it dissipate.

Last year, when my eleven-year-old was about to start middle school, he was feeling particularly, you know, nervous about it, right? It's middle school. He's never been. He had a lot of thoughts about what it was going to be like, and like most kids his age, he was nervous.

And he told me the night before school, he said, "Mommy, I feel nervous." Now, what most parents probably say and what I may have said before I started studying this kind of work, you know, most parents would say, "Don't be nervous. It will be fine." Because we've been taught that emotions are a problem to be fixed, especially in our children.

But what I'm really telling him is, "You shouldn't be feeling what you're feeling." I'm encouraging him to resist feeling his feelings and push them away and convince himself that he shouldn't be feeling that way and to

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silver-lining it, right, find better thoughts. That's not useful to him in that moment.

So instead, we sat there together and I said, "Buddy, it's okay to be nervous. It's normal to be nervous, and I bet lots of other kids are nervous too. And you can totally handle nervous. What does nervous feel like in your body? Tell me about it."

And I started asking him questions and I helped him witness the emotion that he was having. And 11-year-olds are precious. I may be a little bit biased because mine, I think, is particularly precious. But what he came up with as he was experiencing this emotion and witnessing it in his body was that nervous to him felt like fast, it felt fluttery, he felt it in his belly, it was very big. And he told me – I asked him, "Buddy, if you could give it a shape, what shape would you give it?" He said, "It's an octagon."

I said, "Buddy, if you could give it a color, what color do you think it is?" And he said, "It's purple." So he witnessed that nervous feeling in his body and he witnessed it as a fast octagon that was big and fluttery and purple. And by witnessing it, his experience of it lessened. It wasn't so intense. It wasn't so overwhelming. It wasn't such a problem.

And we talked about what it would be like to take that fast purple octagon that was big and fluttery and carry it around with him for the first day of middle school and he could bring that emotion with him and he wouldn't even have to make it go away because now he knew what it was. Now it wasn't so scary. Now it was something he could articulate and just notice and it didn't seem to have that grip over him that it did before we witnessed it.

And when we experience emotions in this way, and we help our kids do the same, what we're also saying is that there's nothing wrong with you. We're also teaching our kids and ourselves that a range of emotions are part of the human experience and they are certainly part of grief. And we live in

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this culture that constantly seeks and sells us happiness and somehow convinces us that if we aren't happy enough that there is something wrong with us.

So let's learn the skill of allowing an emotion. And I did this for myself, actually just yesterday I was feeling some anxiety. And so I noticed it. I named it. This is anxiety. I opened up to it and then I watched it. and anxiety for me felt like tightness in my ribcage and my chest and it felt dark and it felt pulsing and it felt kind of small but very tense and I just watched it.

That, my friends, is feeling a feeling. And it's such a different experience when you've never done it before. But when you get good at it, what you will learn is that feelings aren't nearly as big of a deal as we think they are. They are not problems to be fixed. They're just part of the human experience.

What I have learned is that as much as we would like to avoid emotions, as much as we would like to resist them, as much as we wish they would go away, that emotions, and especially the emotions of grief, will wait for us to process them. This is why, when I talk to widows who are decades out from their loss, some of them are still resisting the emotions. And as a result, they haven't been able to move forward.

Now, of course, I'm overly simplifying it and sometimes there's a lot more to it than just that, but this skill of learning to allow emotions is something that will serve you forever. You'll no longer have to turn to anything outside of you. You won't need more food. You won't need more alcohol. You won't need to distract yourself with busyness. You won't need retail therapy.

You'll just know that emotions are a part of your experience and when they happen, they're vibrations in your body, you can allow them, and they will pass. And it takes some practice, but it's practice worth doing. So

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remember, when you want to feel better NOW, name the emotion, open up to it, and witness the experience of it in your body as it runs its course.

I hope this episode of the podcast was useful to you. And if you're enjoying the podcast, I would love it if you would take just a couple of minutes to rate and review it because ratings and especially reviews are so important in helping the podcast become discoverable. And as a little incentive, in the first couple of weeks of the podcast, I'll be giving away five \$100 gift certificates to Amazon.

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Thank you for listening to this week's episode of *The Widowed Mom Podcast*. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, head over to [coachingwithkrista.com](http://coachingwithkrista.com).