

Ep #15: Who Am I Now? Redefining Our Identity After Loss



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With Your Host

Krista St-Germain

[The Widowed Mom Podcast](#)

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Welcome to *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, episode 15, Who Am I Now? Redefining Our Identity After Loss.

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, welcome back. Here we are; another Monday. I spent my weekend, well, doing lots of things, but have you guys played Minecraft? I think I might be a little late to the game, but my 12-year-old begged me this weekend to play Minecraft with him. And can I just say that I am terrible. I'm awful at it.

But he absolutely loved that I took the time to play Minecraft with him, even though, honestly, I did it with a lot of complaining and whining, it was still a really good time. So if you have a game that your child wants you to play, just play it. Don't resist like I did, just play it. It means so much to them, little things like that. You can be the butt of the jokes in the game that you're playing as I was this weekend with my son.

Before we get started, I want to announce another winner for the podcast competition. Well, it's not really a competition, but if you've been listening for a while, you know that I've been giving away gift certificates to Amazon for \$100. And the way to qualify for that – you can still win – is to go to coachingwithkrista.com/podcastlaunch. That gives you all of the details about how you can enter to win. The odds are very good, by the way, of winning because this is a brand-new podcast.

So today's winner – I was really excited. I've been using a random number generator to draw the names for this and I was really excited to see this person's name because I actually do know her and I'm just excited that it's

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her. So today's winner is Brandi Horn, and the title of Brandi's review is "Coaching with A Friend."

She wrote, "Krista has helped me navigate through the waves of widowhood. She sincerely is here to help because she has been here; so very personal and gives me hope that this will get easier to get through, but I'm not losing my mind that it's part of this journey. She's so kind and helpful. I've personally worked with her and she's never hesitated to answer any of the questions that I have and the what-if and what-about moments that we go through. I cannot thank her enough. From all the way in Ohio, you are amazing, thank you sincerely."

Thank you, Brandi. Brandi's always just so honest and real and supportive of other people going through the same experience. So, Brandi, we will be in touch with you and get your gift card on its way. If you would like to qualify to win one of the remaining cards, then just go to coachingwithkrista.com/podcastlaunch.

Anyway, okay, let's jump into this week's topic. So the things I bring to you on the podcast are always the issues that either I've struggled with or issues that I see my *Widowed Mom* clients struggling with. And that's why, today, I want to talk about what often happens with our identity after we lose our person.

Because I hear statements all the time that maybe you can relate to. They sound like this, "We were always together and I don't know who I am without him. He was everything to me and now everything feels so foreign. Sometimes I'm not sure where he stopped and I started. I just don't know who I am and I don't know what I want."

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Many of you tell me that you don't know who you are or what you want. Perhaps you've identified as a couple for so long, a unit, a team, that you aren't sure who you are without that. Who is this unfamiliar version of you?

Perhaps you were together since you were young and all of your adult years were spent in the partnership, or maybe you were the long-term caregiver of your husband and you put your needs and wants aside to make sure that he was taken care of or that your children were taken care of, and now you're no longer in touch with who you are or what you like, the things you enjoy.

Sometimes, clients tell me that they don't know what to buy at the grocery store because they always bought what he liked and they didn't take time to consider what they liked. Now, going to the grocery store might be enough to warrant an entire podcast episode because, holy cow, does that bring up the drama. But you're following me.

Sometimes, I hear from you that you don't know what kinds of hobbies you enjoy because all of your free time – sometimes it was very little free time – was spent doing things as a couple. And maybe, as a couple, you had your activities, but you didn't have any hobbies that you necessarily pursued on your own.

Sometimes, I see widows who spent lots of time with other couple friends, and now they aren't in a couple situation anymore, they think they don't fit in anymore or they see themselves as a third wheel, or they find it too painful to spend time with all of their old couple friends, assuming they get invited, which many don't. That's, again, probably another podcast.

I've also worked with clients who have been in more than one marriage or more than one long-term relationship and still struggle with this issue. So maybe their husband died and they went into another relationship and it

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didn't work out, or maybe they were miserable in their first marriage and finally changed that situation, and then their new partner died and now it's time to take stock of exactly who they are and what they want and they think that they don't know or they must be wrong about what they've wanted in the past.

And then sometimes – and I want to acknowledge you, if this is you – sometimes the relationship wasn't all roses. Maybe it was abusive and you're just now in a place where you see the possibility of redefining who you are, figuring out who you are and what you want.

So, the reasons for the podcast topic are many. And the problem can range from a mild lost feeling to a full out identity crisis. So wherever you are on that spectrum, it's okay. And it's also an issue that is completely within your power to solve, and I hope this episode will help you with it.

So here's what's likely in the way of your having solved this problem already. First, you might still feel like you're on an emotional rollercoaster. You might still be experiencing widow fog. Your hormones might still be out of whack. You might not be sleeping well. All of the other fun things that grief brings might still have you feeling all out of sorts.

If that's you, I want you to show yourself some grace. Grief takes a toll on our brain and our body. We know this. So be kind and loving toward yourself. There's no rush.

Secondly, you might be telling yourself that it doesn't really matter or that you don't have time to figure it out right now because you need to focus on your kids or your job or your aging parents or your house or all the other million things that you're telling yourself you need to get done. But I want to promise you that it does matter and that it is worth the time to consider because getting your internal compass straight is important. It guides every

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decision you make going forward and you are absolutely worth the time and energy required to think this true.

Thirdly, some of you probably feel guilty when you think about a life where you've figured this out. You block yourself from moving forward because you tell yourself you shouldn't. You make your progress mean something about your relationship or your love for him and you equate your own growth, somehow, to leaving him behind, to forgetting him.

You make progress mean you didn't love him enough. You should on yourself. Remember, no shoulding on yourself or others. That word is a giant red flag of unhelpful, okay.

The fourth thing I often see that might be in your way is that sometimes we cling to the way we've defined ourselves in our past because it's familiar. And even though it's stagnant and painful in its own right, sometimes, clinging to past versions of our self or tightly holding onto the, "I don't know who I am" story feels safer, more familiar, less threatening.

And so, here we are, believing that we don't know who we are and that we don't know what we want. I wonder if any of these sound like you. And if they do, I want to assure you that all of these reasons and patterns are understandable. So I want you to show yourself some grace. Speak as kindly to yourself as you would to someone who you love dearly, okay?

Alright, now, let's talk about the solution to this, "I don't know who I am" business. And I just kind of need you to go with me because it might not make sense at first. I get it, okay. But here's the truth; "I don't know who I am" is not objectively real. It is not a fact that exists in the world.

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“I don’t know who I am” is an optional sentence. It’s not like gravity. We’ve talked about gravity. Everyone agrees that gravity exists. When I talk about facts, I’m talking about things that everyone in the entire world agrees on.

We all agree that you’re listening to a podcast right now. We all agree that your partner died. These are facts. “I don’t know who I am,” on the other hand, is a thought. But this is tricky, because when we’re thinking “I don’t know who I am,” it feels so true. And this is important because thoughts cause feelings, not situations.

Our brain is what causes our feelings. And when we think the thought “I don’t know who I am” we feel lost, confused, untethered, disoriented, stuck. But, “I don’t know who I am” is just an opinion that’s hard to recognize as an opinion. It’s an interpretation of the facts. And so it’s so easy to get really committed to this “I don’t know who I am” thought. It’s easy to think it so often that it becomes a belief.

That’s what a belief is, did you know that? A belief is just a thought that we’ve thought enough times that it feels true. And people come to me for coaching and they deeply believe the sentence, “I don’t know who I am.” And it makes sense why they believe it.

Maybe you’ve been doing this. Maybe you have some variation of this thought. Maybe it’s not exactly “I don’t know who I am,” but it’s in the same family, along the same theme.

So if you’re doing this, here’s what’s happening; it probably started in your mind as a question, “Who am I now?” Maybe, like me, you stood there in your bathroom looking in the mirror at a face that felt simultaneously familiar and completely unrecognizable, this kind of ghost of the former you, this you in the world without your person, and you wondered, like I did, who am I now? Who am I now that he’s gone?

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And then, you answered with the only thing that came to you, which was “I don’t know.” And since then, your fabulous brain, which is functioning as brains should, has been doing what brains do and diligently scanning the environment for evidence to support that thought.

“See this? You don’t know what you want to buy at the grocery store. See that? You don’t know how to take a vacation or what to do on a Friday night without him. See, you don’t like your job, but you don’t even know what to do instead. See all this stuff? It’s true that you don’t know who you are.”

And so that innocent little question, “Who am I now?” followed by a seemingly logical answer of, “I don’t know,” became a thought that your brain latched onto and you now have ample evidence to support. And a thought that we think long enough becomes a belief. And a belief we hold eventually kind of lays the foundation for our way of being, our state of being. And soon, it’s almost impossible to consider that “I don’t know who I am” isn’t actually true.

It feels true. And if you’re in it, you might be thinking, “Come on, Krista, I legitimately don’t know who I am,” then I know exactly how you feel. But I also know that what’s happening isn’t an accurate reflection of who you are. It isn’t an observation that you’re making. It’s just a sentence in your brain that’s blocking you from answering the question “Who am I now?” in a way that serves you, in a way that supports what you want to create moving forward.

And the answer to the question, “Who am I now?” it doesn’t exist outside of you. It’s not something we need to uncover or find or be enlightened by. It’s something we get to decide, something we get to lean into and experiment with. If you don’t know whether you like something, the surest way to find out is to try it and see.

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So I want you to consider this; “I don’t know who I am” isn’t something you have to believe just because you think it. It’s equally possible that you do know who you are or that you could choose to believe that you’re figuring out who you are. Even if you just start with a very subtle switch in your thinking from “I don’t know who I am” to “I notice I keep thinking the thought I don’t know who I am, and maybe it’s just a thought,” gradually you will move into “It’s possible I do know who I am. It’s possible I could figure it out. I am figuring it out.”

And eventually, you’ll end up believing and having evidence for the thought “I know exactly who I am.” This is a choice. This is a decision. This is purposefully deciding what thoughts to think because you are the boss of your brain. And those thoughts, my gorgeous friends, are the thoughts that will serve you because those thoughts will get you out of uncertainty and confusion and stuckness and overwhelm. And they will create hopefulness and possibility and decisiveness, and ultimately certainty.

And those are the ingredients that you need if you want to build the life you want. You don’t have to believe it’s possible yet. You can still think I’m crazy. I’m okay with that. I’m willing to allow you to think that I’m nuts. It’s fine. But I can promise you that “I don’t know who I am” is optional. Just because you think it, doesn’t mean you have to believe it.

Of course, I wish it were as easy all the time to change our thoughts and feelings as just listening to a podcast and having a light bulb turn on. Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn’t. So be compassionate with yourself. Be compassionate with the process. It’s okay for you to believe that you don’t know who you are and just kind of contemplate that it’s possible that it’s just an optional sentence in your brain, that it’s just a pattern.

But sometimes, the grooves run deep in the brain and changing our thinking isn’t always the easiest thing to do. That’s why I coach. That’s why

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my clients come to me, right, is because they want help with that. So be patient with yourself. Seek support if you want it, if you need it.

Alright, I hope that's useful to you. I hope you have an amazing week. I love you so much. I think about you, the collective you, those of you that I hear from. I am so grateful for those of you who send me messages and tell me the types of things that you want to hear on the podcast or how the podcast is helping you. It just makes my day, every one of them, all of the ratings and reviews too.

And hey, if you haven't subscribed, I really advise that because you don't need a lot of things to think about. You've already got a lot of things to think about. Click subscribe on your podcast, then you don't have to think about it anymore. Every Monday it will just show up. It's a beautiful thing.

Alright, I love you. Remember, you've got this. I'll see you next week. Take care, everybody, bye-bye.

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.