

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Tobi Fairley

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Tobi: You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 134.

Female Announcer: Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*, a show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth, and joy. Here's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Tobi: Hey, friends. Happy Fall, this is my favorite time of the year and for me it's sort of redeeming 2020 a little bit for me, I don't know about you. But I am happy that the seasons are changing.

Okay, so speaking of 2020, I'm bringing you an amazing, amazing person, an amazing interview, amazing resources and tools today to deal with what life has served us over the last several months. Today I have for you Krista St-Germain. She is a Master Certified Life Coach, a grief expert, a widow, a mom, and the host of *The Widowed Mom Podcast*.

So, Krista and I met back in 2017 just a few months, I don't even think a full year after – or right about a year, maybe, after her husband was killed by a drunk driver. We met in life coach training in 2017, so since that time she and I have gone through Master Life Coach training together, but she is just really an expert on grief, dealing with grief, post-traumatic growth which we'll talk about today which is a really interesting topic, and just really has become such an expert at feeling all the feels, all of them that we go through all the time.

I really think this episode is so timely. I think it's going to be so helpful to you whether you've lost a loved one or you're dealing with other kinds of grief and challenges or really you're just grieving the fact that this year looked nothing like you thought it was going to. This episode is going to be so helpful in teaching you how to process all those emotions even when things feel really uncertain.

So, grab your note pad because I think you'll want to jot down a few notes and enjoy this episode with Krista St-Germain.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Hey, Krista, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm so glad you're here today.

Krista: I am so excited to be here, Tobi. Thank you for having me.

Tobi: You're welcome. So fun. So, just for everybody who's listening the way we know each other is through The Life Coach School and our Master Coach training and you are now a Master Coach. I'm still working on becoming a Master Coach. I'll get there. I will for sure get there.

Krista: You will get there.

Tobi: I'm making progress, but we got to know each other – well, we actually met way back when we first certified, I think, in 2017. We went through the original coach training in the same class, too. So, we've had a little bit of a journey together, but we got to know each other really well through Master Coach training and in Grand Cayman which was – gosh, doesn't that seem like 3 years ago?

Krista: I know, anything pre-COVID seems like years ago.

Tobi: Yeah, it was like six or eight weeks before COVID when we thought that 2020 was going to be amazing and normal.

Krista: It was going to be normal, yeah. It was going to be normal or not.

Tobi: Yeah, so why don't you tell everybody a little bit, because you'll say it so much better than me, about who you are and what you do and we're going to get into talking about grief today which definitely is applicable to all sorts of things happening during COVID and in normal years, right?

Krista: 100%.

Tobi: So, start by telling everybody a little bit about you.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Krista: Yeah, so like you said I'm a Master Certified Coach, I am also a widow and a mom and I host a podcast called *The Widowed Mom Podcast*, but primarily the work that I do as a life coach is to help other widows figure out how to love life again. Not love life again in spite of their loss, but actually how can we use the loss as an opportunity to go forward and grow because of it and create a life that we truly love.

So, I kind of got into this work by accident, literally. My husband was killed after a drunk driver hit his car while he was trying to change the tire on my car and that happened a little over four years ago. So, I just had my own grief experience. It was kind of my first big brush with loss and therapy was what helped me get back to functioning and kind of unfurl myself from the fetal position. But after that there came a point where I was functioning and everyone in my environment was telling me how strong I was and how great I was doing. But I didn't feel so great.

I was feeling like, "Ugh, I think maybe I missed my chance at happiness. I think my best days are probably behind me," and also, simultaneously realizing how short life was and how I really wasn't in the career that I wanted to be in. As much as I love the people that I work with it really wasn't work that filled me and so I just really was so grateful to discover, kind of at that exact point, life coaching.

That's what helped me figure out, along with the research that I was doing and the education that I was doing on post-traumatic growth and just grief and healing and all of it. How do I go forward and build something again that I love? How do I love life again?

When I figured that out for myself that's what made coaching just so magical for me. I had actually almost become a therapist and decided coaching was really what I wanted to do. It was the less safe and the path that most people in my life didn't really understand.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Tobi: And tell people just in case they don't know the difference, just a short description between – what's the difference between therapy and life coaching.

Krista: Well, I think you'll get a different answer depending on who you ask, right? Everybody has a different thought on that, but for me, I can speak from my own personal experience, I think therapy is incredibly beneficial especially when you're kind of below that minimum baseline of wellness where there is some sort of dysfunction and we need to get back to the place where we're functioning.

That's where therapy, I think, is absolutely amazing. Life coaching can help a person go from that minimum baseline where they're already functioning, there's less dysfunction or any sort of other issue that they might be having. Maybe they have depression or something else going on, but that part of their life is being dealt with and they're getting the help that they need from the appropriate clinical professional.

A life coach can help someone go forward and love life, take it from surviving to thriving as cliché as that is. Let's take something good and make it great.

Tobi: I love that so much. That's a great description. Okay, so this is so timely because there are people who have actually lost loved ones right now for all sorts of reasons including COVID, but any other reason you know disease, cancer, accidents, there's all kinds of things as we know happening all the time in life, then we layer COVID on top of it and as you were telling me before we started recording, too, and I'd love for you to tell people that and kind of start with that definition of grief and the misconceptions about it, but I think it's so timely right now because we're grieving all sorts of things right now.

Krista: Yes.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Tobi: I mean, I don't know if it's the right word to say grieving, but in a sense, kind of grieving what life used to be, normalcy, interaction, there's a lot of things happening emotionally with us right now that I think could even fit under this umbrella of grief probably. So, I'd love for you to just kind of take us down that path of what is grief, what does it really mean, and just kind of take us through some of these misunderstandings that we have about it and help us get more clear on this whole topic.

Krista: Yeah, I do think to your point that we are grieving for lots of different reasons and I think the reason that can be a little bit confusing to people is that so often we associate grief with death. We think that someone must die in order for us to grieve, but that's really not grief at all. That's my primary focus when I work with people who are grieving, it is about the death of a spouse, but really grief is just our thoughts and feelings about a perceived loss.

It's our natural response to any perceived loss. So, when we look around right now everyone's experience will be different because everyone's perceptions of loss is different and everyone's thoughts about those losses are different. But for sure we can all relate to we thought we knew what 2020 was going to be and we've all experienced those losses in different ways.

For my daughter it was a loss of club volleyball. That's not death, but in her mind that's a big deal. She's a competitive volleyball player and it's a big deal to lose that and so for a lot of us it might be a loss in how we expected our business to go, or that new program we were going to launch that we didn't get to launch, or whatever. The loss of a vacation you thought you were going to take. So, grief can really be anything. It doesn't have to be just death.

Tobi: I think that's a great point that you validate that those things could be grief because I think sometimes when we see things we're sort of putting them on a scale of is my thing as bad as that person's thing? We start to

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

feel guilty about it and all of that stuff. It's like, how can I be grieving a vacation or two when these other people literally have lost a family member? That's confusing and hard to deal with too because sometimes our feelings are just as strong for whatever reasons and it's not – of course, all of that is subjective, too, of like what degree of seriousness is my grief versus your grief, right?

Krista: Right. It's really just the wrong question to be asking ourselves. Compare and despair just never leads anywhere productive so the better question is how can I support myself when I'm feeling whatever I'm feeling?

Tobi: Yes, that's so good.

Krista: Instead of, "Is my feeling valid?" All feelings are valid, they're caused by thoughts. Right?

Tobi: Right.

Krista: So, "How can I support myself when I feel this?" And by supporting myself, no matter what I'm feeling, I'm not doing a disservice to someone else who might also be having some feelings or experiencing some loss.

Tobi: I love that. I think we should just sit there for just a second and chew on that. It's never about comparing because whatever feeling you've created with your thoughts is just as real for you in that moment as anything anybody else could be feeling, right?

Krista: 100%, yeah, I see this all the time even in my clients, too, where they have these thoughts of, "Well, she was married for longer so her grief must be worse than mine." Or, "She was married for less time so it must be worse than mine." Or, "He died of a long, drawn-out illness which must be better or worse than this accident."

Tobi: Right. He lived a long life. His was cut short.

Krista: It's just completely not useful.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Tobi: All those things that we can find.

Krista: Yeah, it's more like, "Okay, when I'm in pain how do I support myself? When I see another human in pain how do I support them?" How do we all find connection in our human experience of pain as opposed to create disconnection with comparing it.

Tobi: Yeah, this is so good. I think this is so, so important because I do think that we exacerbate the problem so often because we are going down those thought spirals, that rabbit hole of even judging ourselves about our own feelings. We know, we use the thought model and it's like models on models on models on models, but I think that that definitely happens. I mean, you would be the expert to know for sure, but in things that are super traumatic in any way I think that, especially if we're in the habit of doing a lot of self-judging, self-editing, all of that, I think it probably gets real easy to go down that path too when you're feeling these feelings, right?

Krista: Yeah, for sure, and I think our misunderstandings of grief compile that problem and make it so much worse. When we buy into the popular stereotype and myth which is just so pervasive in our culture that there are these five linear stages. That's what most people know or think they know about grief because it shows up everywhere that we're supposed to be in denial and then we're supposed to bargain and then we're supposed to get angry and then be depressed and then at some point we accept. That's not the way that it goes, surprise, surprise.

Tobi: Where did that even come from? Did somebody write about that one time and then everybody accepted it as fact?

Krista: Yeah, for sure. It came from Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler. She was a psychiatrist and what she was really studying was the dying process for terminally ill patients. So, it was really not about the phases that someone might go through when they lose someone they love, it was the series of emotions that they might have as they make peace with their own terminal diagnosis.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Tobi: Interesting.

Krista: Yeah, it was from a book called *On Death and Dying* and then later it was applied to grieving the death of someone. She never meant it, and she expressed this in her writing later, she never meant that to be taken so linearly. She didn't ever mean for people to think that you have to go through these stages and that there's an end of grief at all, but that's, unfortunately, what we have heard from that.

So, people think that it's a journey as though we're going to walk down a sidewalk, walk down some trail or path and then reach a destination and then we will be done with grief, but that's not it. As long as we are humans we will have thoughts about the loss and as long as we have thoughts we will have feelings about the loss. So, we will always have grief in life. Instead of thinking about it's somewhere that we're supposed to get to, which then means we start judging where we think we are relative to the end of the path, like we start telling ourselves, "I should be farther along by now." So not helpful.

Tobi: Ever.

Krista: I just coached a client today and she was beating herself up because she had taken her husband's bike, which kind of like the last major possession of his and it was very important to him, and she had taken it to the bike shop and it was really hard on her. It was really hard and she was beating herself up because two years has passed and in her mind it shouldn't have been that hard. It meant something about her or her healing or her progress or her strength that it was hard. It's just not useful.

Tobi: No. Not at all. I think that's something that as much as we study thoughts, the brain, how we process feelings, I think that's one of the things that's a term you hear us say a lot that could be a term that people can start to notice in their own life is is this useful? Not, is this real? Not, how does this feel? But, is this useful?

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Sometimes staying in grief is very useful like you haven't even processed it or you clearly need to sit with some things for a while. It's not useful to rush through it and at other times it's not useful to judge ourselves or it's not useful to keep thinking a thought that keeps us stuck. Each person is different, right?

Krista: Totally, yeah, I love that lens because even – what's so fascinating when you start looking at the way that you're thinking is that most of the thoughts that are the most unuseful feel the most true and are often the ones that other people in our lives validate.

Tobi: Right, like the, "I should be farther along," or, "This shouldn't be happening," or whatever those things are.

Krista: "He shouldn't have died. COVID shouldn't be happening. This election shouldn't be so difficult."

Tobi: That's a whole episode all by itself because we would all agree on that on either side of the political issue. We would all agree, right, it shouldn't be yet here it is and that's not helpful.

Krista: Right and look at the suffering we create for ourselves when we tell ourselves things shouldn't be as they are.

Tobi: Right, yes, so interesting. That's so good. Okay, so not buying into the five stages of grief is one of the first ways that we start to get a little more clear about – I don't know if that actually makes us more clear, but at least it doesn't confuse us and take us down that path of suffering in comparison to the five stages. Anything else that people really kind of get wrong or confused about the feeling of grief?

Krista: I like to think of grief as more of an umbrella than a feeling.

Tobi: Yeah, that makes sense to me.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Krista: So, all of the feelings are part of grief. So, if we can just make space for all of them and stop judging them, and that means – we expect the anger, we expect the sadness, but sometimes what we don't expect is what we judge the most, so sometimes people feel relieved in grief. Maybe they were caring for someone, it was really difficult, and that person was suffering and then they feel relief.

Tobi: Yeah and then they feel guilt.

Krista: And then they judge themselves and then they feel guilt. Or maybe they feel joy. They notice that they're starting to feel joy and then they make that mean, "I didn't love that person enough," or, "They're not here and therefore I shouldn't be happy."

Tobi: "I've forgotten him. I've moved on. What's wrong with me?" All those things.

Krista: Yes, yes. So, if we can just decide that okay, if all of the emotions are part of our human experience all of them – not some of them, right, and then make them not mean that we're off base or something's gone wrong when we notice them we do ourselves a big favor. If we also just learn how to handle emotions when they show up because most of us really aren't taught that skill. I know I wasn't. I didn't really know how to allow a feeling to flow through me. So, when we don't know that then we tend to spend a lot of time and effort avoiding feelings.

Tobi: Yes, definitely. This is, to me, like a skill you develop because I agree we're not taught that and I've been practicing this for a while and I'm definitely getting better, and then there are other times when I find myself falling right back into old habits of wanting to numb, buffer, whatever you want to call it, and kind of forgetting how that feels for feelings to flow through you, right?

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

It's very normal that if we've practiced not knowing how to do it for 40 years then we're not suddenly going to be in one little lesson or podcast like trained to know how to feel our feelings, right?

Krista: Oh no, I ask my clients to do it – when clients are coaching with me, I ask them to feel 100 feelings.

Tobi: Wow. You have a process for helping people feel feelings, right?

Krista: I do.

Tobi: Can you talk to us about that? Because I think it's a really great kind of simple way to catch yourself in the moment and be able to use this tool to process the feeling.

Krista: Right, I call it The NOW Process, The NOW Feeling Process, N-O-W, and I love things that make it easy for me to remember. So, NOW stands for notice or name, either one, but you need to see what it is that you're feeling. This is anger, this is sadness, whatever. Then the O is open up. Say yes to the emotion because what most of us do not only in our minds, but kind of physically with our body is we tend to recoil from the emotion, we don't really want to let it in.

It's like what you learned when you were going – preparing to have a child is that the labor pain is coming and you better just breathe with it and let it pass through you, so open up to it, say yes to it, drop your shoulders, open your chest, let it come in.

Then the W just stands for witness which means go to that place in your mind where instead of thinking about how awful the emotion is, instead of thinking about the feeling, go to that witness place, that watcher place where you actually are able to watch what's happening in your body as the feeling is there.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

So, an example might be this is anger and I open up to it, that's the O, and then I witness it and I notice that when I feel angry my cheeks feel flush and my throat maybe feels tight and it's like a hard ball in my throat, that kind of feeling like I want to cry. It's like a buzzy, vibrational kind of feeling in my body and I just watch it. Because what feelings really are is just the chemicals that our body experiences after we have a thought. It really only takes about a minute and a half for those feelings to flow through us, but we have to have a process for letting them flow through.

I always also like to think about it kind of like, if you could be a screen in front of water, most of us want to build a dam, we want to block off the water and then that just makes it worse.

Tobi: Yeah, all the pressure builds up, right? When something is going against a dam, but when it can flow through you're releasing that pressure. I love that.

Krista: Yeah, so you just imagine yourself as a screen, so now name it, open up to it, witness it, and just let it kind of – breathe it in, blow it out, and it really only takes about 90 seconds. So, I make my clients do that because I want them to have the skill of knowing that they can and of not trying to avoid anymore and then that will also play into what I'm sure most of your clients want which is, "How do I go chase my big goals and dreams?"

Tobi: Right.

Krista: Because I have to be able to allow fear, I have to be able to allow all of that stuff that I'm otherwise inclined to push away.

Tobi: Yes, and all of them are valid, overwhelm, fear, confusion, excitement. There's so many that we go through no matter what we're doing including building businesses like you're saying. All of them we don't – maybe joy we like, but even that I think a lot of times we're like, "The other shoe is going to drop soon. What's happening here? I better not get

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

too happy,” which is so funny and interesting, but yeah, you’re right. I think you have to be able to let those flow through you if you’re going to be successful.

It’s fun to notice once you get better at this. Recently, just a couple of weeks ago I was on a Zoom call with my whole team and I was expressing frustration about something and my integrator said, “Well, you knew,” whatever. She was right. We weren’t really having an argument, but I just had this instant anger flew all over me. An old habit would have been to yell or get mad or have an argument and I was like, “You know, I think that’s a good time to stop the meeting. Let’s call it.”

I watched myself and I felt all of the visceral anger feel, but I had never really in the moment been able to notice, as you say, open up, witness it, watch it, all of that. So, instead of having a tantrum and leaving I just said, “Let’s go.” Then when I stepped away, instead of letting myself go into all of the storytelling and the drama that also would have been an old habit, I was just like, “Okay, well, none of that is going to solve anything or help anything.” So, I just literally let it – I just released it and I thought about it a few days later, we never brought it up again, it wasn’t a problem, it wasn’t an argument, I didn’t call my mom or my husband and tell some dramatic story. It just evaporated, but in that moment I felt just as angry as I’ve ever felt when I’ve experienced anger and it was such an eye opening thing, to me, to witness it in that way, maybe for the first time because anger is my go-to – we all have some of our favorite emotions that we love to go to. That one’s real easy for me to access.

It was real empowering to be able to feel that at that really strong physical vibration and do nothing and literally watch it dissipate. It was remarkable, actually.

Krista: Yes. It’s a little counterintuitive and it definitely contradicts what we mostly understand which is we think we shouldn’t be angry or we imagine that we might act on that anger or we try to white knuckle our way through

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

it as opposed to just realizing, “It’s just a vibration in my body, I can let it flow on through. No harm done.”

Tobi: Yeah, and it doesn’t mean we have to become a victim or become anything else. There’s literally no words that have to be – or stories that have to be applied to these feelings that we’re feeling. I think that’s so interesting.

Okay, so talk a little bit about the concept of clean versus dirty pain. Does this transition to that at all? How do we start to know if it’s clean or dirty and why does that matter?

Krista: So, I subscribe to the philosophy that pain is part of the human experience, but suffering is optional. That we’re supposed to have pain as a part of being a human on the planet. So, when that pain shows up we can either process it in a clean way which is doing what we just talked about, supporting ourselves through it, not judging ourselves for having, not making it worse, but just loving ourselves as we let it flow through us or we can create suffering. We can judge it and tell ourselves there’s something wrong with us, that we shouldn’t be feeling it. That we aren’t where we’re supposed to be and all of the inner critic thoughts that we often have and then we start to create these layers.

So, instead of just allowing ourselves to cleanly process the first emotion then we heap on the second one and the third one and the fourth. There’s a Buddhist concept of the first and second arrow. The first arrow you know what happens you don’t have to fire the second arrow. So, can we process one emotion without layering and creating suffering on top of it. Clean pain, dirty pain. And clean pain doesn’t hurt less.

Tobi: So, clean pain is the first arrow.

Krista: Yeah.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Tobi: That you haven't amplified, exacerbated, piled on to, and dirty pain is all of that extra baggage that you bring into the story that's optional? Every one of those are optional.

Krista: Yeah.

Tobi: Because the thoughts that create them are optional, right?

Krista: I've heard this described as clean pain is when you stub your toe and it hurts. Dirty pain is then when you tell yourself how clumsy you are and you curse the furniture and you curse the person who put the furniture there and you curse the person who turned the light out and you decide that now your day is ruined and you can't wear the sandal. It's like all of the things we do to ourselves after the initial pain.

Tobi: Yes, 100%, and that is exactly what I was describing in an essence because I would in the past have created all of that suffering, the more dirty pain if I experienced anger and we do that so often through this I think almost unconscious habit that we've created of just jumping to all of these thoughts and looking for why did this happen? And who's to blame? And all of that stuff. We don't have to do any of that ever if we don't want to. When we learn not to life becomes so much easier. Not that we ever get rid of the first arrow as you're calling it, things are going to happens, circumstance happen, but most of what is hard about life is all of the other stuff that we create ourselves.

Krista: Yes, agreed.

Tobi: So good. Okay, I really want to talk about this topic of post-traumatic growth that you mentioned earlier. You kind of alluded to it at some point of one of the things you love to talk about and I think this is such an interesting concept because it could be anything. It could be something after death, it could be after a miscarriage, it could after a failed business, it could be literally anything that we are having happen to us, circumstances,

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

all the time where we have options of either shutting down or we use that to grow.

So, I want to hear from you. There's a book that I literally have had sitting on my shelf for I don't know eight months maybe longer and I keep saying it's going to be the next and I haven't read it yet, but I know in theory, I think it's about this concept pretty much, it's called *Anti-Fragile*. It talks about whether you're fragile, robust, or anti-fragile. I think about post-traumatic growth almost like being anti-fragile which means something hard happens to you, but you grow out of that thing. Is that what we're talking about with post-traumatic growth?

Krista: Yeah, that really is. First, we have to kind of understand that trauma is subjective. There aren't things that are universally traumatic. Trauma is interpretation. So, for someone childbirth might be incredibly traumatic. For someone else it might not be. We want to get away from judging what is traumatic and just know that trauma is determined by the person that the thing happens to. It's not determined by the thing that happens.

Tobi: That's really important, right, because other people might want also want to judge someone else like, "Oh my gosh, why are they acting like this is so traumatic?" We've seen that happen a lot this year with things like COVID or with the racial injustice or whatever and people judging other people about whether or not their life and their experiences are trauma or not trauma and I love that you're saying that's not really for you to decide. It's only for the person who experienced it to decide if they're going to call that trauma or define it as trauma in their own life, right?

Krista: Yeah, exactly. Before the idea of post-traumatic growth appeared which was basically like mid-90s the idea was that the best-case scenario for someone who had experienced trauma was that they could return to the baseline of wellness. They could get back to where they were before the trauma and what post-traumatic growth teaches is that trauma can be the springboard to greater well-being, to greater satisfaction and meaning and

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

purpose and spiritual connection and relationships and whatever. It can be that we can grow not despite but because of how we choose to respond to what has happened to us.

Not everyone grows from trauma, but for most of us the opportunity exists and it's not something that you have to have a diagnosis of PTSD, you don't have to have post-traumatic stress disorder to experience post-traumatic grow. Anybody can choose to grow and it is a choice.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that so much and I think that I love that we're talking about this and just kind of validating and giving permission for this because I do also think this is confusing sometimes in the same way grief is confusing or having joy in the midst of grief is confusing. I think sometimes it's confusing or uncomfortable to grow because of something that you deem negative that happened to you or traumatic that happened to you.

I think in my own life there's certain things that have happened in my marriage or in my business or whatever and I literally say to myself, "I'm almost grateful for those horrific moments because they really did springboard me to another area." But if I were to say out loud to some people, "I'm so thankful that this horrific thing happened," they would think I was crazy, but that's what we're talking about.

I'd love for you to address that a little bit. I think it's normal, probably, but also a little bit confusing to be like – well, like you said, my husband died and now I became the best version of myself or I had a miscarriage and this happened or I had an affair or my husband had an affair or whatever all these things that happen in life and then we're like, "That's the best thing that ever happened to me." It's kind of confusing at first.

Krista: Yeah, I think part of that we can clarify with when you choose no matter what has happened to you or because of what has happened to you to create a result for yourself. That didn't happen because of what happened. It wasn't the terrible thing that made the good thing happen, it

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

was that you didn't let the terrible thing stop you from creating the thing that you wanted next.

Tobi: Right, and even sometimes used it, right? Because it's in those moments, like you even said, when this happened with your husband you suddenly realized you weren't in the job or career of your dreams or that you wanted to spend your life doing and that's the very thing a lot of times I think these – I mean, COVID has been that for so many people. I've heard so many people say, "When this hit I got very aware of how I wasn't living in alignment with the things I really value or what I really want or how I was overworking all the time and ignoring my children or I was not seeing my friends enough or I had relationships fall by the wayside."

That's kind of the same scenario where this happens that seems super traumatic, but it is sort of a blessing in disguise sometimes, right?

Krista: Yeah, I'm kind of thinking about it as opposed to COVID being the best thing that ever happened to me, it's kind of like I chose to create the next version of me when COVID happened. It's not that COVID caused the growth or lack of growth, it's that the human recognized what they could control and couldn't and made a choice of who they wanted to be when.

That's always the question I'm always asking myself, "Okay, who do I want to be when... Who do I want to be when my husband dies? Who do I want to be when I go to court and have to deal with the drunk driver? Who do I want to be when – "whatever. Whatever the thing is that I can't control who do I want to be? In the face of COVID who do I want to be? Whatever it is that we think is the terrible thing doesn't have to be what defines us or limits us. It's not a moral obligation to grow. It's not right or wrong to grow. It's just a choice that if we want is available to us.

Tobi: I was thinking as you were saying that, it also doesn't have to be on a particular timeline because I think about myself and with COVID in particular there were some things that I immediately became a different – I chose to become a different person and I liked that. Then there were other

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

areas where I let habits that were already working for me fall by the wayside and then later on I noticed, and I was like, “Okay, I have another choice here, I can either beat myself up or act like, ‘Oh, here we go again, Tobi, you always do this.’” Or I can just say, “Now is the time to turn my attention to this particular thing.”

We don’t have to think, “Well, COVID hit and I missed my chance for post-traumatic growth.” You’re still having that opportunity at any moment. If thinking about COVID triggers you to make a new choice or think a different thought use that to move yourself forward, right?

Krista: Yeah, and I think we can simultaneously hold the belief we don’t have to be happy that COVID happened to still choose growth. We don’t have to be grateful for COVID to still choose how we’re going to show up to COVID. So, I see this a lot with death where people think, “Well, if I want to grow from that, if I want ‘good things to happen’ then I have to be happy about the loss.” I don’t think that’s true. I think you can still not be happy the loss happened and choose to grow even though it happened.

Tobi: Yes.

Krista: Right? Because it happened, but it doesn’t have to be, “I’m so happy that so and so died.” Or, “I’m so happy that we have a national pandemic, global pandemic,” right? It can be like, “Oh, I really don’t like this pandemic part, but that’s the part I can’t control and here’s the part I can, so let’s go.”

Tobi: So, a little bit kind of like silver linings in a way, a little bit, a little bit. I mean, that’s why I think and I started out by saying this gets a little confusing for people. I do think it sometimes is hard to sort of reconcile all of the emotions that come around circumstances for us because we are in that and we love to label things and we like things to be cut and dry. We’re like, “Wait, am I supposed to be grateful I got a divorce and it’s the best thing that happened to me or am I supposed to be still sad, but it’s still that I

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

found an amazing person.” It’s confusing. It’s a little bit hard to wrangle it all, I think.

Krista: Yeah, I think if we can allow for it to be nuanced instead of trying to always make it so black and white like we can be not happy that something happened and still go about and make the best of it. We don’t have to be in a constant state of gratitude to like how we choose to show up. It doesn’t have to be one or the other, we can hold space for both.

So, silver lining, can we find – I’m all for genuine gratitude, I’m never a fan of forced gratitude. I don’t like it when we cause ourselves some suffering with the should thoughts. “I should be grateful. I shouldn’t feel this way. This shouldn’t be so hard.” That’s kind of what tends to happen. If we can just decide to let ourselves feel how we feel and not judge it and then also create experiences on purpose and feelings on purpose it’s the best of both worlds.

Tobi: Yeah, that’s interesting and it does take – it takes a whole intentional approach to learn how to do that. That’s not our natural go-to place to hold space for multiple complex emotions to be happening at once and to not judge them or not make them all neat and tidy and connected, but they just are. They’re there, they are. That’s really fascinating.

I think it’s interesting one of the things that’s come up a lot for me personally through this whole year and we could literally just list all the things if we wanted to, COVID, politics, racial injustice, and keeping your business afloat, kids at home homeschool – I mean, literally all the things, I have found myself and I know a lot of other people have as well, especially tired. Especially tired which we know, you and I know, is not coming from physical labor but mental labor and I think – do you think it is this kind of wrangling? This trying to make things make sense in all of these circumstances that’s what’s exhausting us?

Krista: Yeah, just kind of like we’re all salmon trying to swim upstream against the current and most of us are used to being able to control things

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

that we're now not currently able to control and we're very resistant to that, to letting go, and just kind of rolling with the punches and plot twist. So, the more we can just relax into the newer elements that we used to be able to control that we can't currently the less energy we waste trying to control things we can't and I think there's just been a whole lot of that.

Tobi: Right and well, the reason that it came up for me just then was when I was thinking about holding space for those two kind of complex emotions or multiple at one time that is sort of a – like COVID and this year, 2020, has kind of been a crash course in what you just said because every day it feels something else we can't control is coming at us and we're not used to that rapid fire approach of things, for most of us most of the time.

I think all the more reason to just allow things to co-exist and not try to control them. So interesting.

Krista: I was thinking about this earlier, the idea that, especially as you're building a business that when you get to the point that you realize that your success in business really is not relevant to your value as a human or your worth or your potential or any of that, right? So, when you realize that the big goals that you're chasing don't really matter then you can go all-in on them mattering. Right?

Tobi: Yes.

Krista: It's kind of the same thing, when we just relax a little bit and realize that all these day-to-day things really don't matter then we can allow ourselves to let them matter. Right?

Tobi: Yes, which is so meta.

Krista: And we can hold both.

Tobi: It's quantum kind of thinking, right?

Krista: Yeah.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Tobi: It's a different level of thinking. Again, all of that requires you to just allow things to be not in your control, undefined, uncertain, vague at times, evolving and so many of us don't like any part of our life to be evolving or to be mysterious or who knows what's going to happen tomorrow? We don't like it.

Krista: Uncertainty is very uncomfortable. If we can make peace with uncertainty. I think part of that comes from, at least it has for me, from deciding to believe that no matter what happens I'm going to handle it. If it's an emotion I can process it, if it's some sort of "failure" I can be kind to myself, whatever it is I'm going to be okay.

Tobi: Yeah, and I even almost liked how you said I'm going to handle it almost even more than I'm going to be okay because yes, ultimately you know you will be, but in the moment it's like even allowing me to not be okay in moments but still be handling something. That's such an interesting also sort of dichotomy as well.

Okay, so anything else as we – this has been such a fascinating conversation. You're so, so brilliant and have so much wisdom. But anything else in this sort of grief conversation and as we send people from this podcast back into the world – anything else they need to know and how can they take this with them to help process? Because gosh, probably by the time, I think this is coming out pretty shortly after we record it so it's probably going to come out still pre-election, so there's still a lot that can happen in the last 60 days or 90 days of 2020. Things can go any which way still. We have no idea what's happening.

Krista: I think if we can kind of do like three things. If we can learn to feel our feelings when they happen and support ourselves as they happen that's like skill number one. If we can learn to separate what we can't control from what we can because there are so many things that are outside of our control and we can give up the need to change them because we're not focused on it so much. We're focused on the part of it

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

that we can control. So, we learn how to process feelings. We separate what we can control from what we can't and we focus on what we can and then we just stop judging ourselves so darn much and judging other people.

I'm big on learning to be your own champion, making that decision that no matter what you feel you will be kind to yourself. No matter what you just said you will be kind to yourself. You will always treat yourself with the highest regard knowing that you're an imperfect, flawed human. I think those are the big three things. That's grief or not.

Tobi: Right, that's just daily life circumstances.

Krista: Yeah.

Tobi: Yeah, I think you're right, especially the judging piece. I think we've been – gosh, we've always been really skilled at that as humans, but I think we've – COVID gave us some more space to kind of armchair quarterback every which angle, no matter which side of any issue you're sitting on. We have just really, really honed our judging skills in the last six to nine months I think.

Krista: It has been a unique opportunity, 2020, for sure. It really has.

Tobi: Yes, for good and bad. For good habits and bad habits, good shifts and maybe not quite as good shifts. Again, not to be judging, but just to notice, does this serve me? Is this useful? That's gone both ways for all of us I think. So fascinating. Well, I loved this so much, and I appreciate you, and I think the most fascinating thing about this topic is so often when we leave a podcast or a training or something – we've invested in learning we're so happy because we walk away with all these clear answers and basically from this podcast we're saying, be completely okay just being unclear and uncertain. That's all you can do, right?

Krista: You're welcome, listeners. Good luck out there.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

Tobi: But it's so true. It is so true because all the suffering comes with the trying to control and be certain, right?

Krista: 100%.

Tobi: So good. Okay.

Krista: Thank you, Tobi. It was fun.

Tobi: I loved it so much. Thank you. So, if anybody wants more of you because they will where do they find you?

Krista: So, certainly they can come and listen to my podcast, *The Widowed Mom Podcast* and I encourage anybody who's interested in grief to listen. I get comments all the time, even people going through a divorce or – it's not necessarily just loss of a spouse, it's all pretty useful. Then, all of my social connections are at coachingwithkrista.com you can find them, so I'm @lifecoachkrista on Instagram and Coaching With Krista on Facebook. So, any of those places.

Tobi: Amazing. Well, you are always so full of wisdom. I learn so much from you and I'm super grateful you were here today, so thank you.

Krista: Thank you.

Okay, are you ready? Are you ready to sign up for embracing the uncertainty? Well, we don't really have a choice, right? It's what life has been serving us and always will no matter what year it is, but especially in 2020. So, I hope this episode has given you so many ideas for how you can show up the way you want to as we talked about post-traumatic growth, making choices that really serve you, making decisions that are useful to you, and I think Krista has just such a great way of making that so simple to understand.

Ep #134: Embracing Uncertainty and Dealing with Grief with Krista St-Germain

So, if you want to hear more Krista, just like she said, check out her podcast, search for her on Instagram. I know you'll love all the wisdom she shares all the time and I'll be back with you one week from today with another really good episode, I promise, of *The Design You Podcast*. Bye for now, friends.

Thank you so much for listening to *The Design You Podcast*. If you are ready to dig deep and do the important work we talk about here on the podcast of transforming your mindset and creating a scalable online business model there has never been a more important time than right now.

So, join me and the incredible creative entrepreneurs in my Design You Coaching Program today. You can get all the details at tobifairley.com.