

Let me introduce myself as a new partner on your journey. I'm Miriam Neff. You'll get to know me through this video series. I wish I could get to know you personally as well. I have discovered we grow stronger through traveling this journey of widowhood together. That's why we created this series.

You have made a bold decision. You have decided not to travel alone on your journey. It is my prayer that you will be a richer, stronger woman for having experienced this series. We say when we meet that we have joined a sorority no person wants to join. Yet, here we are!

In this session you will see that we gain so much from sharing the journey.

Strength: you'll hear how another person has faced struggles similar to yours.

Encouragement: you'll learn that great upheavals in your life and intense emotions are normal, not unusual or unique.

Information: we'll share tools that will help you with the challenges you face.

Comfort: you will see that you are not alone. Others are with you and we're stronger together. This mutual understanding brings comfort.

You'll see that our backgrounds and perspectives are different. But we agree on one thing: we're here to encourage each other. An important connection. We also don't compare ourselves with each other. The events of our lives and our loss are different, as is the very fiber of how we are individually wired up. Clearly our journeys will have differences in processing and successfully moving forward after our loss.

You also can see that our faith was important during this turbulent, trying time in our life. We've discovered that ultimately we are stronger women of faith than before. God knew this event would occur in our life. He created within us the potential to be God honoring through this time and the strength to face each new day.

Here are the women you'll meet in this lesson and a bit about their stories.

Joyce Rosensteel

Diane Turrubiarres

Diane's favorite verse Isaiah 43:2 You will pass through deep waters.

But I will be with you.

You will pass through the rivers.

But their waters will not sweep over you.

You will walk through fire.

But you will not be burned.

The flames will not harm you.

When I began this journey I was feeling all of this, consumed and overwhelmed but my faith in the Lord guided me through with his strength and this verse. It's one I really cherish and realize how true it has been through my grief journey.

Sandy Knepper Quote of Sandy Knepper. "I had lots of tools, I just didn't know how to use them."

These women show us some important truths about ourselves.

1. We are more resilient than we think.
2. New friends will be discovered in new ways and in new places.

3. God is creative in his plan for us.

I Will, I Am, I Can

Table Talk

Share with the group a bit of information about yourself including the following:

how long you've been a widow
you're living circumstance at the time
your support group at this time

Share with the group one of the greatest challenges you face this week.

Share in the group what steps can you plan to take this week for self care physically? emotionally? and spiritually?

Prayer Suggestions: Pray for each other: 1. that you have the courage to step into new opportunities, 2. that you resist the temptation to become self focused during this season of loss. 3 that you are able to accept God's comfort in your new circumstance.

Personal Reflection

Write your story. It can be brief, long, and focus on what is important to you.

Space to write the story

The temptation to become self focused during loss can keep us stuck in the past and negative thinking. Looking outward helps.

What are simple plans you can make to comfort another person this week?

Be prepared for God's amazing multiplication. When we give away comfort, it comes back multiplied in new and surprising ways.

Looking forward, we have the opportunity to build on our past strengths and even do completely new and different things we never had imagined. Taking time to think of the positive habits you have had, your strengths and skills, may help you discover new meaning in your new life.

What were some of your positive personal habits before you became a widow? Were you orderly, good at gathering information, inclined to go to the Bible for help? Were you good at managing money? Writing down these personal strengths can be helpful.

My past positive personal habits including living and health matters

My past positive personal habits related to money

My past positive personal habits related to communicating with others

Some of our strengths and skills were either used in jobs we've had, or developed through our work and career experience. Let's examine them.

What jobs have I had in the past?

What were the skills I used on each job?

Job # 1 _____

Skills used in Job # 1 _____

Job # 2 _____

Skills used in Job # 2 _____

What restricted you in previous jobs? Often marital constraints of husband's schedule, geographical necessity of his job or family or other aspects are no longer factors in our new life today. This can be a positive new freedom.

Restrictions in previous jobs _____

Many women have developed skills through volunteer work. In marriage, volunteerism might have been as a couple or individual. Regardless of whether you volunteered as a couple or alone, you brought something to the project and probably grew because of the

opportunity. List some of the volunteer work you have done and the skills you used in them.

Volunteer task # 1 _____

Skills used in volunteer task # 1

Volunteer task # 2 _____

Skills used in volunteer task # 2 _____

The next step is a bit more visionary, and can be more fun.

Now what would you LIKE to do? OK, dream. Just write it down.

Start your own business.

Tutor elementary students at risk

Learn to develop a web page.

Tutor adults so they can pass the Graduate Equivalency Degree exam

Become computer literate. (Be able to send and receive email and research products on the internet)

Sell or buy real estate (you may have to pay to play, but you don't have to pay to learn)

Create stained glass artwork.

Learn about investments, stock markets, and mutual funds.

Go to law school.

Learn to appeal your property taxes

Become certified at scuba diving.

Run for an office in your town (school board, trustee, etc)

Work in a coffee shop.
Sell your junk on eBay.
Work in a book store or library.
Learn to play one video game with your grandchildren.
Travel
Encourage other widows you know
Take a course at your local college or junior college
Take a class at your church
Learn to polka

You'll think of endless opportunities that interest you. Don't rule out anything at this time.

My dream list

Space

Begin to explore the dreams that spark your interest.

Ideas gleaned from what I see other widows doing to help others?

writing appropriate cards with personal words of comfort to others in need
spending more time being 'Nana'
volunteering when they can to their favorite charities and ministries
starting new ministries to help those less fortunate
widows with young children stepping up to parent alone
managing their resources in order to give to support widows in other countries
tutoring children in reading and math
tutoring young adults to pass the Graduate Equivalency Degree

The list of opportunities is endless and as diverse as each of us have been created to be.

***One cannot comfort others without its sweet essence infusing one's own soul.
One cannot bring joy to others without an inner smile growing so unstoppably
that it breaks onto the most weary, worn face.***

Ours is not a journey to be endured, but rather an adventure to be embraced.

Scripture Reflection

Psalms 139: 13--16 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.