

*Getting in Trouble with
Your Grief*

Erica Honoé & Sharon Brubaker

Tony ([00:02](#)):

Erica and Sharon, are sisters who began a grief journey in 2006, when Erica's 10-year-old son, Austin drown. Together they participated in a grief education program were so moved by this experience. They studied and became specialists so they could help the broken-hearted find recovery. In 2015 tragedy struck their family once again, when Erica's oldest son, Donovan was killed in a motorcycle accident. Erica and Sharon are committed to sharing their experiences of love, loss and healing through this podcast. Now your grief specialists, Sharon and Erica.

Sharon ([00:40](#)):

Hey ladies, welcome back today. We're talking about when you get in trouble with your grief and it is a deep subject and Erica, and I really want to dive into this because one, it was one of her experiences getting into trouble with the grief too. I think that some people get so in trouble with it. They don't talk about it.

Erica ([01:02](#)):

Hey friends, thanks for coming back and listening to another great episode of our podcast. Some I'm excited getting in trouble with your grief is something that we definitely need to share because, um, it's easier than you think to get in trouble. And then when you are there, it's hard to get out. So it's, it's something that we need to make people aware of that this is something that can happen to you, but also let you know, not to panic because there are ways out of it. So, just from my own personal experience, I got very, very dark after Donovan died. I got very dark. I didn't share that I was boring dark with anyone. But in my own internal dialogue, every single day was me saying, you know, this isn't right. You shouldn't do this. Don't do that. But then I would do it because I was just so, so miserable. I was so miserable and I don't even know miserable is not even a word. Like if you could put misery times a thousand, that's how bad I felt.

Sharon ([02:10](#)):

Death in itself is debilitating. Uh, experiencing a death of anyone, especially someone very close to you, changes the trajectory of your life forever. You were going this way and now you've experienced a death. And now you're going this way, having to navigate through that grief, the loss, the pain, especially when you've never done it before, that can be a second added, uh, pressure to it. Right? You and I had been through grief. We kinda knew the path. We knew the journey, and yet you still got into trouble. And when you were saying this isn't right, did you know you were in trouble?

Erica ([02:52](#)):

I knew well, and so let me go back because you said we knew the path we grief, but this was so different than anything I had experienced before. This was completely different from Austin. So I think that's what caught me off guard because it felt totally different. It was, I was so much more angry than I had. I didn't have anger after Austin died. I was just had the sadness. So this was already starting out, um, darker and heavier. And, I didn't, so that's why it caught me off guard. I think that's why I was, I was able to get into trouble because it wasn't the same.

Sharon ([03:38](#)):

Right. And what does it look like when you're in trouble? Let's talk about that. When you're in trouble with your grief, when someone is in trouble with the grief, number one, they're not telling anyone, right?

Erica ([03:49](#)):

I remember you and I were not talking about it. I was so this is the thing I was lying. I was lying every day. I was lying to myself. I was lying to you. I was lying to Louis and I was lying to my children. And I think that's the first indicator that there's trouble when you're lying to the people closest in your circle and including yourself, that's trouble. That's a red flag.

Sharon ([04:11](#)):

So someone who is also in trouble might not even be processing it. When we say processing the pain of grief, we mean crying, letting it out, talking about it. Looking at pictures to crying, listening to songs and crying. m, maybe not even crying to just allowing the feeling of that sad and heaviness when you're in trouble with grief, you're not doing any of those.

Erica ([04:34](#)):

Well, yeah, I wasn't crying. I wasn't, I wasn't looking at pictures. It was, well, I'd go on his Facebook. I would look at Donovan's Facebook. Um, and I would go through our text messages. I was doing that a lot of that just rereading cause you, and I know one of the first things a person does when they experiences a loss is review the relationship. Yeah. So it was all the things I was going back over and think, Oh, I should've said this. I should have done that. I should have, I should have, um, made him come and see me that day. You know, it's like, cause you, you want every last little more soul and tidbit of the person that you could get. So you live in the woulda, coulda shoulda for a long time. Yeah. And I think that also is a red flag because that's the only thing I was doing was going back over and over every single day of things that I could have done different, better.

Sharon ([05:28](#)):

And somebody who's in trouble with their grief is also using avoiding techniques. They're coming up with every avoiding technique that they can come up with to not feel the pain. So they are drinking the alcohol. They're using the drugs. There are over the top with the Xanax or the Advan. They are, um, using sex and pornography or isolating. So big isolating, staying away from family events, staying away friends, not doing their pattern of behavior. That's, that's another sign for the outside of family and friends to know that she's getting in trouble here. We need to help her.

Erica ([06:06](#)):

Yeah. We, as people know, we've shared on the show quite a bit that Louis and I are quite the social, uh, butterflies. And so we do have a huge social circle and had Lewis had this information. He would have been able to see that it was a red flag, because he would say, you know, when, when you have a inexperience and you have a great support system, like we do, everyone just wanted to love on us. They just wanted to be next to us. They just wanted to hold our space. And so he would say, you know, soand-so want us to come over tonight. They want us to have some drinks. And I was to know you go, I'm going to stay here. I don't. I'm like, I don't feel like it. I'm just going to watch a movie. I did that a lot. I isolated a lot. I didn't want to be around people because this is what was happening to me when you get around people. And we did a show that we aired not long ago, fake it until you make it. Yeah. It takes

every fiber of your being to put on a smile, to exchange pleasantries, to talk about things, even in, on the inside while you're thinking my hardest broken, I'm sad. I want to go home. So I just didn't have the energy to give because I just, I was going through this whole internal fight of my own. So I didn't want to be in the social environment. I didn't want to put the fake smile on, I didn't want to do the things. All I wanted to do was be by myself because it hurts so much. And I didn't want to talk about it because I didn't. I think I felt people not understanding how bad I felt was going to make me upset. Like I am, I'm drowning here. I've just had to say goodbye to my son, my friend, my, you know, this bright light in this world. I don't want to talk about your kid's high school theater play. I don't care right now. Like, and I don't mean to sell. I mean, but that's how I felt. That's how I felt. I was like your, and uh, you know, Dracula and you know, all the dark stuff. I was all of that. You know, he kinda like, he just was very melancholy. That was, that was me. I didn't want to be smart filing and doing all that stuff. So to turn down a lot, I turned down a lot of things and, and Lou would say to me, you know what? They really want to see you. They really want to be around you. And they did. And I love that about my friends, but I

couldn't do it. I couldn't do it. And so he would go off by himself and go, cause he needed that he needed the love. Right? We needed them to, to distract him. I didn't want it. I did not want it.

Sharon ([08:47](#)):

Anyway. One of the other things is that, , you're going to be the last one to know that you're in trouble, the people around you going to be the first to know you're going to be the last one to know that this is really trouble because if you don't know grief and you don't know the experience, yeah. You're going to think this is the way it's supposed to go. This is the worst experience I've ever had. And this is so bad. So it's going to be someone around you. Who's going to say, and that's who we're speaking to today. The supporting staff, all the people around that's around the griever, you're going to be the first one to see that, that he or she is really getting in trouble.

Erica ([09:23](#)):

Yeah. Now, and we, we had a conversation with a woman this week and she was so sweet when we talked about isolating and avoiding it and worrying about that. And she said, well, there's this one woman that keeps calling me. She wants to have lunch. Am I doing it wrong? If I don't want to have lunch with her? So we were like, absolutely not. You know, that doesn't mean you're getting in trouble just because you're not there yet to just go have lunch and be, you know, your normal self.

Speaker 2 ([09:48](#)):

That's not necessarily being in trouble. It's the, , repeated attempts of everyone, not just the caring lady from your church that wants to get together and take you out. It's your close confidant, your person that can see you ugly, cry in the snot and doesn't judge you in and just sits there and lets you do what you need to do. But you're avoiding that person. Those are the things that are problematic

Sharon ([10:14](#)):

I agree. I agree. So, um, for the first question is, do you want to have lunch with her? No, just kidding. That is the truth. It's do you want to have lunch with her? So going back to what you said though, the confidant, the person you feel comfortable with the person, you know, that you can share that and go into the ugly and they're going to understand, and they're not going to judge you. So I was that for you and you were avoiding me, that is, and you were telling a different story to me and I was believing it, but

that is what convincing 20 loads of laundry later. That's where you know that, uh, that that's another sign that you're getting into trouble. Okay. Society, I'm going to say society or the medical field or, um, all the great minds. They want to label our grief. They want to label it. So one of the shows prior, we talked about anticipatory grief. They're calling this complicated grief and we know for a fact that their diagnosis is any grief that lasts longer than six months is complicated grief. You and I also know most people aren't even ready to do their work for six months. Exactly. You got to sit in it and feel it. We, our biggest victories, everyone that we've worked with since the six months, and that's why we created processing the pain of grief to help them from the first to the six months. So they can get used to allowing it and letting it in so that they are ready. Let's talk about this complicated grief. Um, our sister's a nurse practitioner. It's what she learned school. They said any grief that last longer than six months is complicated. Grief. You and I call it grief.

Erica ([12:00](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I have a, I would like to call BS on the complicated grief because first of all, all grief is complicated. Let's just start there all complicated. There is no mild grief. You know, you don't get it in medium and hot. So it's sad that this is what, and just like with the stages of grief, that this is what the medical community latches onto, because they give this to their patient. And for those that don't know better, I think that then there's something wrong with them. If they're not over this after six months, like you said, six months is just you, um, living through the fog, your brain is in a fog. You feel like you're on autopilot. You're going from point A to point B and then looking back and going, how did I get here? Because you're just so overwhelmed by the pain and sadness that you're feeling.

Sharon ([12:59](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. We often meet a women that are in trouble with their grief. They come to us for help. You know, they'll come and meet with us, but sometimes they're so deep in the trouble. They don't take the help because they think they haven't figured out when you think you haven't figured out, but the pain is still not going away. You're probably in trouble with the grief. If you can't figure out the path and you've put something else in the path, you're probably in trouble with your grief.

Erica ([13:35](#)):

You know? And I would say one of the telltale signs for us is when we sit down with our sisters and they, um, give us the textbook, you know what I mean? So we could tell their manager, they're trying to manage their grief here in their head. They're going cerebral. Well, yes, it, it was this and it was that. And they give us like, you know, where like, okay, we can tell, you've read the pages. Yes. The research, but how do you feel? What is your day? We have to get them to the disconnect because sometimes the pain is so overwhelming and that's what was happening to me. It was so overwhelming. I was cutting off the heart and I was giving you my textbook of what I knew you were looking for. And I would say, yes, it's, I'm sad. And this is hard and I've done this and I've done that. And, you know, blah, blah, blah. And so you're like, okay, but also because you were grieving, I think as well, it was not as easy for you to pick up on. I think if I had come to you, I was a stranger and we hadn't had the shared grieving experience. You would have been able to pick up on the fact that I was giving you these rote answers instead of going into my heart. Cause I wasn't going into my heart and hold on one more point. The only thing I was emoting was anger. That was the only emotion I was allowing in was anger. How mad I was. I never moved beyond that.

Sharon ([15:02](#)):

Well, and that, to add to that, we had, um, you had someone else in this situation to, to project that anger too. So that took a lot of the stuff away. Okay. So here's some signs of it. You might be getting into trouble, you have intense sorrow or pain that you're just not allowing it, your focus, as, a little else than your loved one. Like every conversation you're having might be about them or every conversation you're having. Does it include them as this, as this they've never existed at all. Right? You have extreme reminders. There's every time you see a reminder, you have an extreme experience about it, right? So you see a photo and it sets you off for three days, right? You have a problem accepting the death, just even letting it in, right. Or you have this prolonged numbness and detachment that just sits there, or you and I call it the zombie state where your brain is just out of whack. You were have bitterness or anger about the loss in us or anger about the loss. Um, you feel that your life holds no meaning and no purpose. Now, since the loss and that continues on, I'm not just talking about these are these absolutely happen. We go through an array of these, right? They absolutely happen. But what happens when they still are there, right? You lack trust in others, you don't trust others, you just cling to that one person? There you're one person and you've just cleaned to them. You have this inability to joy, enjoy life at all this inability to enjoy life or even go out. There are signs that you're probably in trouble with your grief. It's probably gone on for way too long.

Erica ([16:52](#)):

Yeah. I would say all of the above, except for the, I'm not talking about Donovan. I, we talked about them all the time and you know, so that was very present, but I had all of that, all that. And it's like, even in social situations where I would laugh or, you know, be engaging, I never felt it inside. Yeah. I never felt it. It was just like, it was like I was a robot just sitting around and, and doing the things that I knew I was supposed to do, but never feeling really the joy. And, and we've talked about this before. Um, you know, Kayla came into our life. Full-time at that point. And I look back on who I was then, and I feel so bad. I I'm surprised that girl didn't run away. I wasn't calm person. I was so incapable of being who I am for her. I just, I always feel bad. I feel so bad about what she had to go through that whole first year. Cause I

was not myself at all.

Sharon ([17:59](#)):

So I want to say also that it is not uncommon for the griever to have an experience of their life, not being worth anything and acts absolutely thinking. Um, I should just end it now. Uh, Bob's not here. I can't live anymore. And really having thoughts of suicide. It is not uncommon for a griever to have thoughts of suicide. We see it all the time and our friends. However, when you're in trouble with your grief, the thoughts of suicide can continue on. Continue beyond the thought of it. Just going through your head. You can have trouble with caring, not, not being able to carry out your normal routines, isolating even more experiencing more and more depression and really having this thought of it. Life is not worth living. So I just want to, uh, mention that that, share that with someone, share that with someone and the person you're going to share it with is not the person that's going to jump up and call 911, but they're going to listen to you. And they're going to ask the question, have you made a plan? And if you're literally considering making a plan, you're probably in trouble with your grief more than, you know, and you need to get help. Don't sit here and suffer a long. You don't have to do that.

Erica ([19:20](#)):

Right. Thankfully. Um, and, and I will honestly say every night when I went to bed, if the ground opened up and swallowed me, I would not have fought against it. I would have allowed it. I would have welcomed it because that's how hurt and, and, um, in despair I was, yeah, but I absolutely never had a plan or an intention to harm myself because I love my love for Louis and Jordan and Kayla, superseded my own personal need to end my misery. So I knew that my presence was absolutely needed to, do whatever I, to play my role in this family, right. The mother and the wife. And so I knew that, um, I had to continue and, and fight. And I think watching Louis do that. I mean, for those of you that don't know my story, like Louis is my law children and Kayla has bonus children who he loves dearly, but Donovan and Austin were his biological children. So if that man could get up and put one foot in front of the other every day, I had to find a way to do the same. Now that being said, it did get so bad where, like I said, if the ground would have taken me or I didn't open my eyes the next day, I would have honestly welcomed that because my heart was so broken. It was shattered.

Sharon ([20:45](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It's uncommon for us to, have the thoughts of, um, not wanting to be here anymore, but we get embarrassed to share that we, we meet so many clients in that they have to get to a point where they're really comfortable with us to share it. But I want you guys to know if you're listening, hear me. It is not uncommon to have that feeling. And, so know that you need to talk to somebody about it. You need to say it out loud. That's going to be the number one thing that's going to help you with that thought of, I don't want to be here anymore. Oh. So, um, some of the things that, the first things that you need to do, uh, if you think you're in trouble, number one is accept the fact that you're grieving. I am grieving accept that in your heart and soul, that this is grief. Number two, accept the fact that you don't know how to do this. I don't know how to do this. I distinctly remember. I was thinking about this last night, walking up the stairs to tell you that Austin had die. I had no idea what I was doing. I, I just was like, I have to get this figured out. I don't know how to do this. Most people don't know how to greet. They don't know how to grieve. They don't know how to allow the pain, allow yourself the experience of the pain and the loss. Allowing feel it, let it be in there. Just even by yourself will make a difference. Allowing the pain in right adjusting to the new reality will help you say this all the time. My new normal, yeah. Your new normal is not perfect. Your new normal is probably crappy, but say, okay, this is my new normal. It's not the best it is crappy. How am I going to, , navigate this and having other relationships are so important, have right. Relationships and allow the other relationships in.

Erica ([22:42](#)):

I think it's also so important to, to know that like, like you said, you don't know how to do the process, but even for those who think like, Oh, my dad died, I'm going to get through that. My husband had a massive heart attack at lunch. That's not the same. No, the experience is not going to be the same. And I think that was my big mistake was, and I said this to Jordan. I said, we can do this. We've done it before, will this day Donovan, we got the news that Donovan died. And I look back at myself. I want to slap that person in the face because I was so naive to think it was going to be the same. It was so totally different. And I, and that was it. I can't believe that I was even dumb enough to say those words out.

New Speaker ([23:31](#)):

Well, I think experience, they experienced as well. It made the difference for us because part of me, I

thought that you were going to follow the same path. I thought you were going to follow the path and you and I were going to do the same thing. So I think that that's a normal experience, right? Like, Oh, well I've been through this before and I can do this. And daddy had just died. So the fact that we had Austin had died and daddy had decided, we were like, and we're grief specialists, right?

Erica ([24:01](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([24:05](#)):

We're like the plumbers whose house needs plumbing work. Right. So we're the group's specialists and we couldn't, get that all worked out and it was 100% different. It was a totally a different experience that as I sit here today, never would, I want Donovan to be gone, but to be able to help people because of that experience is imaginable.

Erica ([24:29](#)):

Well, and I, yes, like we, if I could turn back time and, you know, make undo it all, I would. But thankfully, one of the good things that did come out of this is our processing, the pain of grief program, because we had the, you saw me in real time do all the things we talk about resist, avoid or overreact in situations because we have that piece. We definitely can connect with so many more grievors out there that are having a harder time and that are dark. And we can, I can use dark language with people that I didn't have before. And, and it makes, it gives them a sense of comfort because they definitely feel understood and they feel heard.

Sharon ([25:14](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So, um, anyone in the medical staff, if we offended you today on the medical community, we're sorry, but we just call it grief.

Erica ([25:23](#)):

Well, sorry, not sorry. Honestly,

Sharon ([25:27](#)):

We just call it grief and we deal with it. , pretty much the same and we teach women how to get through the loss of a loved one. And we want to say, thank you so much for art for spending time with us today.

Erica ([25:41](#)):

Thank you friends. Please look for information on our show notes. We're going to have links in there that can take you further and give you more resources.

Sharon ([25:50](#)):

Have a great day. Thank you.

Erica ([25:55](#)):

Hi friends, Erica Honore here with healing starts with the heart. Sharon and I are so glad you joined us for another great episode of our podcast. We hope you enjoyed this episode. We want to let you know for more information you can go to our website@healingstartswithaheart.com. There you will find not only today's podcasts, but all of our podcasts, along with our blogs, the information on the programs that we offer and the griever's guide, which is something Sharon and I put together to document how we came to be your grief specialists. We also have a quiz to take, to identify if you are truly grieving. And if you want to talk specifically with either Sharon or myself, you can schedule an appointment there. You will also find a place to join our private face book group at hope, heal and recover. Thank you so much for being with us. Have a great day friends.