

# Grief and Anxiety

Tony (00:02):

Erica and Sharon, her sisters who began a grief journey in 2006, when Eric has 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. And 2015 tragedy struck the family. once again, when Erica's oldest son, Donovan was killed in a motorcycle accident, Eric and Sharon are committed to sharing their experiences of love, loss and healing through this podcast. Now, your grief specialists, Sharon and Erica.

Sharon (00:41):

What is the scariest thing you've ever been through? What is the scariest thing that has ever happened to you? Is there anything scarier than grief and the anxiety that it brings out?

Erica (00:57):

I have never had a panic attack in my life prior to, um, getting into the grieving experience. And it's, it absolutely shook me because on one hand, your heart is so broken from your grief and then to have this physical expression of it through your body was so terrifying beyond scary. It was terrifying.

Sharon (01:29):

Yeah. I said that the name of the title of this show is grief and anxiety. But recently I said to you, we ought to do a show about people, women that are scared to grieve that are scared to let it in. So I think these two go together cause fear and anxiety, they go together, right? Oh yeah. Grief brings on fear and anxiety and they go together.

Erica (01:54):

Right, right. One, I think that what people don't, um, often don't understand when you have a grieving experience, is that, uh, in addition to your heart, obviously being sad and you're having these feelings you're your body is, uh hyper-aware. So it's like open your senses, your nerve endings, everything is just on edge, which I think opens you up to the experiences of the, having the anxiety and the panic attack. Then the claustrophobia, like, cause I am claustrophobic. All of that was like went to 10. Yeah. And I didn't, I didn't, I wasn't prepared for that right now. The the difference though, that why it's so, um, profound and why we need to talk about this. It didn't happen to me after Austin die. It didn't happen to me after our dad died. It only happened to me after Donovan died.

Sharon (02:50):

Do you know why?

Erica (02:53):

I think because, uh, no, I have no idea what, yeah. I have no idea why. And um, and the what, the way, the one thing I would, if I had to make a guess, because of the way I managed or tried not to manage that experience the way I resisted. Yeah. So, and that's what had me turned the phrase grief. We'll find a way. I think that's why, because I was so reluctant to, to deal with it, to accept it, to embrace it. I fought against it. So that an attack it's my body.

Sharon (03:27):

A hundred percent. So it went inward. Right? So it was exactly how we got the processing, the pain of grief, one we're trying to avoid the unpleasant thoughts and feelings and emotions. It turns in on us. Yeah. We implode, we go inside and we implode. And so sorry that I threw you off with that question, but that's exactly what it is. It is, um, sort of like a learned response that we take upon our body. You know what I mean? Because one of the thoughts that runs through our mind is I can't live here without him. I can't live here without her. I can't do this without them. That's fearful. That's scary to think of that thought. That is so scary.

Erica (04:09):

Right. Right. And in what we teach is that we, as humans are designed to grieve, we actually are born with the ability to breathe. Yeah. And so as children, we grieve openly and in real time, but as adults, we lose that because we talk ourselves out of it. Right. So then we get to this point where, uh, what's happening and you know, you have like this, this crisis, right. And then like you said, you implode and your body because we're already designed to grieve. It's like, okay, well it's not going out of the normal channels that I used to go out of. So here, let me try this and give her a panic attack.

Sharon (04:49):

Yeah. Yeah. So, uh, we were just sitting with a client a few months ago and she was like, I'm going to have, I have a panic attack. I'm going to have an anxiety attack. I'm going to have an anxiety attack. I was like, okay, go ahead. Have it. And it like shocked her. And she was like, what? And she never anxiety attacks. She never had the panic attack, but what did it do was she just started talking and we can get that out. And we blow it out. We blow out the pain through our breath and our mouth. It releases the pressure of that anxiety attack, that pain and everything we're feeling. Yeah. It can, yeah. It can, that, that conversation has to have happen over and over again.

Erica (05:32):

Well, and I, I, I would, uh, equate it to is like, you're holding your breath. Yeah. And finally start to slowly blow out in very small increments. And it makes you like, you like a balloon, you're releasing the pressure and that's what happens. You have to release pressure in some fashion.

Sharon (05:52):

Yes, exactly. Um, the feeling of, I can't do this without him is so common. I can't do this without her is so common that, um, we literally start to live that. So every day we wake up and we're reminded that we can't do it without him. We're telling ourselves we can't do it without him. And it, it sends this fear so deep that we just grab onto it because it's certainly a tangible thing we have right there.

Sharon (06:23):

Right. And that's usually the process of it. You get your eyes open and your brain wakes up and then you go, Oh, what day is it? It's Tuesday. Oh yeah. Yeah. He's not here. Yeah. And then you go into the, I don't want to be here without him. And then it's, and then it's like rinse and repeat because then it's like, what day is it? It's Wednesday. Oh, he's not here. And it's just every single day you're doing that. Right. One of the other things that causes the fear and the anxiety is that our inability, um, in our combo to have confidence in our ability to cope with it or that we know we have the right tools to deal with it. We don't, we forgot those tools. We came here with those tools, like you said, we know that a child between the ages of four and seven can figure out the grieving experience all on their own without even being taught because they know it was innate with them. What a 47 year old child is not going to be able to figure that out so easily. And so the confidence that I can, I can do, this is not there. That lack of competence causes fear.

Erica (07:33):

Sorry. No, I'm sorry. But in also the weight of the feelings, the weight, because you don't realize, you know, we talked about long-term illness versus sudden death. We, when we're experiencing a long-term illness, so we know that our dad is going to die and we say, okay, I'm going to be ready. I'm going to be ready. And then the day that he's gone, you're not ready when the heaviness and all this sadness comes in, you get fearful of those feelings because they're so strong and you're not prepared.

Sharon (08:02):

Yeah. Yeah. I agree with you. Or you're surprised that some of the feelings that do show up yeah. The hate anger, anger, uh, the mad, the, um, just mad, the fear, the wanting to punch someone in the face, constantly, all of that shows up and it shocks you. It really throws you for a loop because you, in your mind's eye, you think it's going to be love and joy and hummingbirds and butterflies. And that's not always what it is.

Erica (08:36):

Right? Right. Well, everything we see or the information that's given is you're going to cry. You're going to feel sad, but then next week you'll be out and you'll, you know, you're picking up the pieces. That's not true. Right. Right. So I think when we start living out, what we think is the expectation, and it's not really playing out that way. That also brings in a layer of anxiety. I'm doing this wrong. I'm going to get over this because I'm not doing it. Right. I'm going to be stuck here.

Sharon (09:06):

Yeah, yeah. Or I'm going to be like this for the rest of my life. Yes. I want to be stuck here and I'm going to be like this for the rest of my life. That's fearful sometimes the only emotion we allow in is the fear. And then the fear starts to formulate every aspect of our life and how we function in every aspect of our life. And we can hold onto that fear because we do, we turn inward and we start blaming ourselves. When someone dies, we review our relationship with them. We also review the, uh, the death over and over and over again, our mind two days leading up to it, the day of the death, two days after it, what could I have done differently? Why didn't I do this? Why didn't I say that? Why didn't I get in the car and go see what she needed? All of those things. Right? The why has become so huge that it could have absolutely take us out.

Erica (10:03):

Well, because you, you, you beat yourself up about it. Yeah. I should have said, this should have said I, I loved her in that moment. And we know as human beings life happens, you're a wife and a mother and you're not lovingly looking at Tony every single minute, ever every single day, just preparing for the day that he's going to die. We know he's going to die. I know you're going to die. You know, you know, I'm going to die. We all have this information, but life happens and we don't walk around going, okay, why? I love you so much, you know, you made me so happy. We don't talk like that every day. But when the minute that person is gone, we regret that we didn't do that. And we beat ourselves up about it.

Sharon (10:46):

Yeah. What about just letting the emotions in, what if we have this novel idea and you, and I said, Hey girlfriend, we got you just letting that anger, just let it in. Call it what it is. Call it by its name. I'm mad. I'm mad as hell. I want to punch somebody. And for 10 minutes you just sit in the anger. What did, that was our advice, right? Hey, wait. That is our advice.

Erica (11:16):

Yeah, it is. I'm like, what if we just did it? No, but seriously.

Sharon (11:26):

Um, it's because of your response to Donovan and the way that you reacted, that we created this resisting. But what if I would have said to you, well, Erica, just be mad. It's okay. Just be mad if you just call me up and said, okay, So fricking mad at him. I can't believe he got on that motorcycle. I can't believe he drove that fast. And I would have said to you, so be mad, right? It's okay. That have made a huge difference. It would've made

Erica (11:57):

It. Well, one I wasn't saying I wasn't communicating anything. So you didn't have that piece, but yeah. To know that, you're allowed, you're allowed whatever emotion it shows up for you. You're not only allowed one emotion. You're allowed, whatever shows up at any minute at any given time, any day. So you can see, Start out in a numb fog and then go to eight anger and then go to deep sadness. All of that is okay. And normal. You're allowed all the emotions, all of the emotions all the time, every single day.

Sharon (12:32):

Um, because what was happening to you besides the anxiety attack was these, um, hives that were showing up in your face and your lips and your mouth and all over your body. That was the imploding. That was the feelings of you not sharing the anger. So if I would have said to you, okay, so be mad. It wouldn't have come out in another way. You say grief is going to find a way it's going to find a way out. It is a way out. Anxiety is one of those ways. Hives is one of those ways. Drinking is one of those ways, you know, avoiding isolating, or one of those ways.

Erica (13:15):

Now, if, if you don't feel comfortable sharing and expressing, cause you have to get it out, write it out, write it. If you are starting to feel an anxiety attack coming on, sit down and start journaling. Right? The ugly. Sometimes people are not comfortable saying ugly. Yeah. So that's why then they hold it in because they're shameful that they feel these feelings, write it out in a journal way that no one has to know about burn it after if you need to. But when you start To feel the feelings and you start to feel whatever, sit down and start journaling it. Cause you have to get it out. So please release it. So I think that'll help, um, manage the intensity and the duration of the anxiety attack.

Sharon (14:00):

Yeah. I agree with you a hundred percent and have the anxiety attack rather be okay with it. Have the ugly cry. I don't like it at all, but let it out. It might just be snuck crying. Let not all this not and crying Be around somebody. Don't do it by yourself, but stop trying to hold it in. Stop trying to hold it in. It's the holding in that feels like you're gonna explode right there.

Erica (14:29):

Right out. Yeah. Get out and start moving. Like if the writing doesn't help the journaling start moving, take a walk, start walking. If you have your own backyard, you know, privacy walking, scream Yeah. Scream it out. Yeah. Yeah. Definitely do that in private. Cause you don't want people getting it idea about what's happening, but yeah. Do what you gotta do scream goat drop to your knees and do the guttural scream. Right? I did that. I got to do that one day.

Sharon (15:02):

Yeah. And the other thing is you have to also let people around, you know, that it's okay. That you're going to be okay, that this is part of processing and this is how it is. And this is, um, it's built up too much and I got to let this out. I got to get it out because if you don't let those emotions in and let them out, you're going to take them out on someone else. And it's probably going to be the poor guy at 7/11. And he had no idea that you were going to get mad over this candy bar or IC with the candy in it. I don't know. I don't go to 7/11.

Erica (15:42):

So you know, or your kids, unfortunately, it's people closest to you. It's your spouse, your significant other, your parents, your parents. It's the people who are in your tight circle that, that who, you know, love you. But even though you know that they, they, they love you. They don't want to be the person. That's not fun. Yeah.

Sharon (16:06):

One of the other things we know and we talk about it so often is that, um, grievors, we used to talk, Erica and I are here to let you know that we are here and we're great listeners. She gives you some tips. Um, at the end of this podcast where you can set an appointment with us, we're great listeners. And even just 10 minutes sharing, this is what's going on. What can I do here? We're, we're great listeners for that. So, um, if you can't get with us, get with someone that you know is a great listener and just talk it out.

Erica (16:41):

You know, I think, uh, we get the feelings of anxiety, one with all the things that we've already listed, but we feel like we don't have control. Right? When you're grieving, you just don't feel like you have control. You, you have had an experience happened to you. That is outside of your control. So that creates all of the subsequent feelings. But one most important fact that I'm going to here to tell you, sisters is you drive the ship. Yeah. You drive the ship. You get to say who, when how to say it, don't be afraid to say it. Yeah. Show be whatever you need to be. And just like Sharon said, let the people know this is what I need today. This is who I'm going to be today. And I'm, I'm sorry, but I gotta do this. And that will help.

Sharon (17:28):

It really does. It really does girl friends. Thank you so much for allowing us in. This is a great topic. It was a great topic. We can continue on with this for hours. I hope some of these tips will help you and know that we are available to you. Have a great day.

Erica (17:43):

I just want to leave one last thing. We have a video about this up on YouTube already. So please check that out too.

Sharon (17:50):

Bye. Hi friends

Speaker 2 (17:54):

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@healingstartswiththeheart.com](mailto:website@healingstartswiththeheart.com). There you will find not only today's podcast, 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.