

Replace the Loss

Erica Hono e & Sharon Brubaker

Grief Specialists

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 (00:41):

Hey sisters. Welcome back. You're listening to healing starts with the heart. We are Sharon & Erica and we are grief specialists, and we wantWelcome you into our show today. Hey Erica.

Erica (00:53):

Hey Sharon. Good morning. And welcome back friends. Thanks for coming back for another episode of the podcast.

Sharon (01:00):

Hey, I love the topic that you came up with for this week. I love this idea because it hits hard with both of us. I think, I think we both have experiences of this. I don't know. What do we call it? Replace the loss?

Erica (01:15):

Right Yes.

Erica (01:15):

Where grievers actually go into trying to fill that void.

Erica (01:25):

Well, because, because there's such an emptiness and grief can get so dark, you want to do whatever you can to not feel the feelings. So it's so easy to get caught up into whether it be a new relationship or a new puppy you know, whatever, to try and distract yourself from the pain you're feeling when your heart's broken.

Sharon (01:49):

Absolutely. So I'm going to go back to 24 years ago and tell a story. I didn't know anything about grief and healing at the time. Daughters both had dogs. They were chihuahua's. Lauren, I was gonna say Erica Lauren and Brittany both had a Chihuahua and they were Thelma and Louise and Lauren's dog smell Thelma got bit by a snake and he and she died. And so we still had Louise and it was the cutest little thing. And Brittany carried that dog around everywhere. She put her in her stroller when she was playing house and she put her in her purse and she slept with Louise Louise literally worshiped the ground that Brittany walked on and Brittney loved this dog. And Louise was a bitten by a bigger dog and die. And so when we, Brittany was 10 years old at the time, and when we told Brittany what had happened she naturally went to grief the grieving process. As we know, a lot of children will do. They naturally gravitate to the grieving process. So she got a box and she put pictures of Louise in the box.

She put her collar in there and she wrote her a note. The dingbat that I was, didn't recognize this as, Hey, you know, I should take this a little further, maybe bury the box, maybe do a ceremony, all of that because in my mind, and I'm going to just tell the truth. I was like, it's just a dog, which a lot of us do. A lot of people do that. It's just a dog. She'll be okay. She'll get over this over time. And I'm talking about six months span. She started not sleeping at night. Brittany started not sleeping at night. She started coming into our room. She would be crying at night and just had this overwhelming sadness. And so I, and my bright mind said to my husband, one day, this is about that dog. She's still upset about the dog. We need to fix this. And so for \$1,600, I went out and bought a full breed Jack Russell terrier named Jackie, who has haunted me for years. But this dog, Brittany loved that loved Jackie. And you almost could see guys, if you would have been there and this was made into a movie, you would have seen how it just did not work in the beginning. Brittany absolutely. Took Jackie and she loved Jackie. She did everything for Jackie, but it was, it was quickly apparent that Jackie was just a replacement for Luis and Jackie could never fill the shoes of Luis. And even Brittany's attention to Louise was different. The way she approached Louise, the way she Jack cams or the way she approached Jackie, the way she took care of her, I had to constantly tell her, Hey, did you feed your dog? Do you feed your dog like that? Those kinds of things. Now looking back on, it was so apparent because the truth is Erica, you cannot replace the loss. You cannot, you cannot.

Erica ([05:08](#)):

And that that's, that's the saddest thing when you and I bear witness to this happening in adult relationships. And we see it for what it is when You know, Monica Just gets a divorce and then decides that she's gonna start dating Wil the next week. And we watch it unfold where all the drama and the pain and everything comes out in that relationship. And that relationship is unsuccessful. That's because you cannot replace the loss will, can't be a stand in for Bobby. You know, it can't, it doesn't work like that. So, so it's so important for us to tell our sisters out there, you have to allow the pain to, to come through you. You have to sit in the pain and then you have to go on a journey towards healing. You have to actively mend your heart in order to be successful with whether it be a new puppy or a new Bobby or new whatever, because if your heart is so broken, right, let's just say, let's say you got fired from your job. And you're so hurt and devastated. And you get right into a new job, which obviously you, you would need to do for, you know, to pay your bills, but your your love and your enthusiasm and your passion for your workplace is going to be completely impacted by the grief of you losing your job. You know what I'm saying?

Sharon ([06:41](#)):

Yes. 100%. I think the most amazing story you tell is after Austin die with replaced the loss and how so many people came up to you and said, have another baby, because you were still so young. You were 34. Y

Erica ([06:56](#)):

Yeah. And that, and that's so common with the, you know, that instance with child loss, miscarriage or infant death. So people did at his funeral at his funeral, or walking up to me and saying, you're young, you can have another baby. And, and, and it wasn't until, cause I, you know, was sadly shaking my head, crying thinking, because you're just totally, and it wasn't hitting me until later. And then when we found this program and we learned, and it was like, wait a minute, that's right. How did I get the time when I am mourning and grieving for my ten-year-old son? Talk to me even about the thought of trying to have another child. And I could actually have had 15 more children, but not one of them. Would've been Austin, not one of them would've been Austin. Austin was his self. He was his crooked little smile. He

was his raspy little voice. He had his little prickly hair. There was not one other child that that would have been him. And it's sad that we, as a society, don't allow people to feel their pain and to grieve before we start telling them they need to start replacing their loss.

Sharon ([08:19](#)):

I love it. When you say that, I love that sentence because it's so powerful. I could have had 15 more children, but none of them would have been Austin. And I think when we're teaching replace a loss, that's the one sentence that really brings it home and gives people the aha. I will also share that Brittany who is now 34, she might be 33. I don't know. 30 to 32 years. Has never gotten another pet until now. Once she's worked through her brokenness with Louise, she recently got a cat. She's absolutely in love with that cat. She's an animal lover. And all of this time I have watched her not take the animals in because she was reluctant to give her heart away. Even a man who owned a dog. And I could see she wanted to love that dog, but she never invested. It's really interesting to be watching it from the outside, looking in, right? Yeah. You can replace the loss with things. It's not just people or animals or pets. We can replace the loss with addiction to sex addiction too, or alcohol. I don't want to always call it an addiction, but alcohol, we can replace it with laziness, not moving on social media. There are things that we can replace the loss with. It's not always people that step into that place. Right?

Erica ([09:49](#)):

Well actually in material things, you see people turn to retail therapy and you know, next thing you know, they have a breakup of a relationship. And then I started to treat myself, I got this Mercedes and it's like, you just got out of a Hyundai and now you're driving a Mercedes was that financially responsible.

Sharon ([10:11](#)):

Okay. And they were joking about it, but you know, people, we do crazy things in our grief and rational decisions.

Speaker 3 ([10:23](#)):

Yeah, I'm so honestly, honestly, so thankful I did not jump into, I need to have another baby. I'm glad I just, I just knew already in my heart, I was never gonna get another Austin. So there was, there was zero desire to do that. I'm very thankful about that because what, what just like with Brittany's experience with Jackie, God forbid a mother having an experience with a replacement, you know, because it's like that connection, even though you felt that that's what your heart needed was your heart needed, was to heal. And now you have a brokenness in between you and this child and it, and it affects the way you parent.

Sharon ([11:09](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And, and let's be completely clear here. For someone who's had a miscarriage or a, a stillbirth and they want to have, we're not saying don't do that. That's not what we're saying. You're like, I'm a child barrier. She's telling me not to have children. That is not what I'm saying Heal your heart from the brokenness and the grief and the pain from the loss of your child. Then if you and your husband or you and your partner decide that that's having another baby is where you want to go by all means, go after it a hundred percent. But we have with women and sat at the feet of women who have decided to replace the loss of their baby that they lost. And when they have the new baby, they're still crying for

the baby that they never got to hold in their arms. And so instead of enjoying the new birth, their, their hearts are sad and broken and heavy.

Erica ([12:19](#)):

That's absolutely true. We're not talking about rainbow babies when you have tried and you've had problems and things happen. That is not what we're talking about. We absolutely are saying you have to mend your heart so that you can really, really connect with your rainbow baby and love on your rainbow baby. And just be there and be present, be so present because you don't want to be living in the past.

Sharon ([12:45](#)):

I also need to say this cause it's just been running through my head that had you replaced a loss. You'd probably have a 12 year old right now. And

Erica ([13:00](#)):

Yeah, it feels like I would have had a 12 year old cause it feels like this just happened to us yesterday, but also would have been 24, quite an ancient going back to so you know, so what's happened to me in this last week. Last week I lost Shelby, our 13 year old German shepherd. And yesterday I lost our 14 year old dog, sister and sister was my first daughter essentially. Cause I knew I wasn't going to have any more kids. And I had the three boys and I was like, okay, they're going to get a sister and a dog. And that will be their sister. So for me, my heart is so fragile and so tender. The last thing I want to do is think about a puppy like that. I need to spend time crying about them, missing them. You know, when, when we take those trips to the groomers, I don't have a full car load anymore, you know? So it's just, I have to go through this process. I really do. And I'm not saying that I may never have more dogs, but right now I just, the thought to me is so overwhelming and it makes me more sad. Cause I'm, my heart is longing for Shelby and sister.

Sharon ([14:12](#)):

And it that's where we really, really see the replace a loss is in the pets, right? When the, well, what happened when you're an older woman like myself, you know what I mean? And childbearing years are gone behind you and you lose a child. I am sure. And I have seen women and they shared it. That urge comes up to want to replace a loss. But just like you said, that that, that option is not there for them. And just like with you, with Sister and Shelby, the option is not there for you. You go and the journey of grief and brokenness as hard and hard when your pets die. It's not just a dog, but truth is they're your family members who loves you more. That stinky little sister was every time I'm there. She's at your feet. She's wherever you are. She followed you around. She looked at you with like pure love, pure admiration. She thought you were the best thing ever. How are you going to replace that you know.

Erica ([15:18](#)):

Exactly, exactly. So I I'm so glad we did this because I think people get so caught up in their, in their emotions and their unwillingness to feel the sad feelings and to feel the loneliness and the void that they rush out to do all of these things, to replace the loss. Hopefully if you are in that situation, you're listening to our words and you will give yourself some time, some time to really get on a healing journey before you make any big decisions in your life.

Sharon ([15:51](#)):

That was perfect. I think we need to end it right there. That was perfect. Thank you sisters for joining us today.

Erica ([15:58](#)):

Bye friends. Thank you.

Erica ([16:01](#)):

Hi friends, Eric 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 at www.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.