

Avoiding Feelings

Erica Honoré & Sharon Brubaker

Grief Specialists

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

Erica and Sharon are 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. In 2015 tragedy struck the family. Once again, when Eric, his 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 ([00:40](#)):

Hello, quarantine friends.

Erica ([00:43](#)):

Hey guys. Welcome back to our our regular podcast, but we're hosting quarantine series special, I guess.

Sharon ([00:53](#)):

Yeah. What did you see that I almost couldn't get it out. I was so either excited or just crazy. I don't know. One of the two anyway, friends, this is Sharon and Erica with healing starts with the heart. We are grief specialists and we help people that are grieving from a loss of any kind. And we're so glad you came back to join us today. My friends, cause we have an amazing cell set up for you.

Erica ([01:15](#)):

You know, these are just such unusual circumstances right now, never in a million years did I think that we would be doing podcasts about being quarantined from a pandemic.

Sharon ([01:27](#)):

Okay. Never. Did you think you'd be doing a show about it, but then when you think of all of the areas that this pandemic and the corn team is causing in our grieving heart, it's blowing my mind and the calls that we're receiving from people, the ones that are arguing, fighting, broken, and the ones that are having their their inactive grief, the amount of stress and added pain, this experience has added to that has been unbelievable.

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

Yeah. Well, and that's, that was one of the things we did in our weekly Wednesday about just thought of having a grieving experience during this time. Like if you have anyone that's lost someone or gone through a divorce recently or, you know, whatever, and then having the quarantine on top of that, like it's almost mind blowing to think that how you would even begin to process that it just, it doesn't even seem like it would be fathomable to have that happen. So that's why it's important. We've put these messages out there because people are struggling.

Sharon ([02:47](#)):

It's, it's really sad. It breaks my heart, but we know for a fact, and one of the things that you and I teach in our program, that there are 45 or more, no losses that a person can experience over a lifetime. Now we just added and pandemic to it, which then it grabs up some of the losses that are already there losing your job, having financial difficulties, having trouble with your kids in school, becoming a teacher,

becoming the teacher is now a grieving experience having to become the teacher, having your gym at home, not being able to leave your home on top of and I want to give a shout out to everyone out there that has experienced a loss due to COVID-19 over the past four months, my heart is really, really breaking for you and your family.

Erica ([03:36](#)):

That's the thing. When you look at those numbers every day, cause that's the first thing I do in the morning is turn on the news to check the numbers and to see, you know, today there's 373 deaths just in New York alone. Like it's heartbreaking, that's 373 families who have had to think what couldn't even say goodbye to their loved one. You know? Cause it's like, you can't go be with them. So Sharon, this is something outside of our norm because it's like, how do you even begin to deal with you? Couldn't be there to love that person into their next life.

Sharon ([04:17](#)):

Right? Right. And that's exactly where I was just going so that not being able to go into the hospital, not being able to go to the funeral, Erica, that's huge not being able to go to the funeral. And we know for a fact with every loss due to the death, there's at least six grievors and that's the minimal amount. So a father may die. There's a wife and three children. Right. But then add on the grandparents, the friends, his brothers and sisters, you know, all of those people are experiencing this. And then to not be able to go to the funeral is just unfathomable. Is that the right word, fathomable? Sorry, I couldn't get it out.

Erica ([05:04](#)):

No, that is true. And so we're, we're giving a long intro into the, this series. But one of the things that we do when we're hurting is we tend to avoid, we take up these techniques to avoid the hurt. So drinking overeating, binge watching Netflix, I've seen a lot of people posting about, you know, tiger King or Ozark or, you know, just a couple of the titles that have jumped off of social media. We're finding ways to engage in behaviors that we want to take away the pain. And unfortunately these can have long-term consequences.

Sharon ([05:52](#)):

Absolutely. So Eric and I call these avoiding behaviors, but first I to get out there, did you end up watching all of the tiger King?

Erica ([06:01](#)):

I did. Okay.

Sharon ([06:02](#)):

I did too. Anyway. these avoiding behaviors are techniques that we have built within our human body years and years and years ago, they came about when, when you were a little children, because we didn't know what to do with these uncomfortable emotions or feelings that come into our heart. And they started out just small. But a lot of times they were led by the adults that were in the room. So you would start to cry and our parents would tell us, I don't want to hear that crying. You take that mess in the room. You get outta here with that crime. So right away we learned that, okay, showing emotion is not a good thing, but then we were also taught honey, stop crying. Let me give you a cookie. Let grandma give you an ice cream. Let me try to fix it. Let me try to make you feel better. And that thing, guess what it did, having that cookie, it made those emotions feel better for that minute. For that 10

minutes, I was able to forget that my friend, Sally didn't come to my birthday party. I was able to forget and move on. And so we took those processes and we learn them and we started feeding the animal. Within every time we got hurt and pain in our heart.

Erica ([07:20](#)):

So then you fast forward to mom's coming home. She's had a bad day. Oh my God. Today was terrible. I need a glass of wine. You know, these behaviors continue. And they just manifest themselves in different ways. And unfortunately we can have longterm problems if we, if we don't tap into why we're using those as our technique.

Sharon ([07:47](#)):

So one of the things that happens is that our brain gets a hit of dopamine. It gets a hit of feel-good. It gets a hit of, Oh man, I don't have to worry about that anymore. I'll use this as an example given the, the cookie, the sugar in the cookie and that sugar will bring on the dopamine in our brain and lets us know everything's okay, well guess what happens every time your heart starts to hurt your brain starts to look for that dopamine hit and whatever you did in the past and whatever you did before that solve that icky feeling in your heart, your brain is going to start looking for it and it will start calling for it. Right? And so it is not uncommon for us to see people at this time that are actively grieving, start using more and more of the avoiding behaviors to cope.

Erica ([08:41](#)):

So true. So true. I know that when when we lost Austin, the first things I did was I said, give me a cigarette to our sister and I hadn't smoked in over four years. And, and then I had a margarita. Someone gave me a margarita. And from that started on this pattern where I ended up not being able to quit smoking. I think for six or seven years after Austin died, it was a long struggle. But you, you go to these things of, I need to distract myself. I don't want to feel this pain, give me something. And, and then, you know, like I said, you, you go on these rolls SIRS. And, and for a lot of times specifically when there is a death and you go to your medical doctors, your even Christian medication that you become problematic. So it's, these are just things that we need to be very mindful of, especially at a point in time when we are trapped in our homes.

Sharon ([09:42](#)):

What happens when we use these avoiding techniques is that we start to avoid the healthy grief, the healthy, grieving process, the healthy anxiety that's come up so that we can take a look at where we are. We can examine where we are. Here's the one thing that we know about alcohol also, Erica, is that our brains will have a drink and it slows down the thinking process. You literally can have a drink and literally get away from thinking about what was causing the pain. I didn't get my stimulus check. I don't know how I'm going to pay my bills open, let me have a glass of wine. And then you're not thinking about it anymore. Your shoulders come down, you feel this relaxing state. You don't think about that. It's almost as if it was a magic and made everything okay. But the problem is that you have to get up in the morning and guess what comes back that next morning, the exact same pain, anxiety, fear, and grief that is in your heart will show back up the next morning. And I'm speaking to you, my friends from experience,

Erica ([10:52](#)):

And then not just show up, shows up with a vengeance, because then there's also if you've turned to alcohol to numb the pain, then there's like, you know, and you, you know, you're getting on this little

this little cycle of doing this, then there's a little bit of shame involved too. Cause you're like, why did I do that? I shouldn't have had a whole bottle. I only wanted to have a glass. You know what I mean? So then you're adding on another layer of, of the behavior.

Sharon ([11:24](#)):

Exactly. And then what eventually will happen just with the alcohol. I'm only using this one example right now is that the brain will start to build up the tolerance. So the one glass is not enough. You now have to have two glasses, you know, have to have three glasses. And we know so many grieverers, including myself that can get in trouble with alcohol because of this. And that was the main reason we wanted to bring the shows. Just to make you aware. There are literally avoiding techniques that we do. And sometimes it's not alcohol. Sometimes it's not drugs. It's not the big, bad Wolf. Sometimes it's just sitting down and vegging out on a TV show or jumping on the treadmill or biting your nails or using sex or using a surfing the internet, surfing the web, staying on social media, talking on the phone, calling every girlfriend, you know, and having conversation after conversation, after conversation, instead of just sitting and examining what is in your heart and what's making you feel uncomfortable.

Erica ([12:28](#)):

Online shopping is also another way we've seen a lot of people get, get themselves in trouble by overspending. And then that adds another layer because then you, you have that buyer's remorse. And then especially when you're looking at your bank account and you know, you just spent \$400 on something you didn't need or you know, could have waited. And as in, during these you know, strange economy that, you know what I mean, it's like, you're just, you're digging out a deeper hole for yourself and causing more layers of worry for you

Sharon ([13:04](#)):

Exactly. A hundred percent. So here's the deal. You got to sit into the grief. You gotta lean into it. I am not telling you not to have that glass of wine. I never would tell you that, but have the grieving process first allow the grieving process. First before you grabbed the glass of wine before you grab the cookie big, before you grab the M and M's or the entire chocolate cake, grab a piece of paper and write down just for yourself, what's hurting. Write down what it is that feels uncomfortable. Come up with as many emotional words as you can to describe what's going on in your heart, sit in your chair and lean forward, physically lean forward, lean into it, close your eyes for a second and see if you can figure out what it is that is really upsetting you right now. And write it down on a piece of paper. That's all I'm asking you to do is process a little bit of the grief and pain. Before you go to grab that glass of wine

Erica ([14:08](#)):

And tell the truth about yourself. Always tell the truth about yourself or your significant other or whatever. You have to be honest. The only way to get those feelings out is to be truthful. Sometimes I feel like we try to act as though we can hide things from ourselves, but you can't, you know, what's in your heart and you know what you need to get out. And it's only going to get better if you let it out

Sharon ([14:40](#)):

That telling the truth is we tell the truth about ourselves, knowing that I'm, Hey, I really drink too much wine. I'm really ate a whole cake, but we tell the truth about the other person as well. So we have tell both sides of the story. It could be that you're not the one using the avoiding technique. It could be your partner using the avoiding techniques. I am absolutely not saying that you challenged them to this time,

but understand what they're going through and maybe try to get them talking as well. That will also be helpful.

Erica ([15:12](#)):

That would definitely be helpful because if there's tension, if there's conflict, it just, like I said, it's like another layer, which you say all the time, grief comes in layers and you have to start peeling those layers back in order to get the heat.

Sharon ([15:26](#)):

One of the other things that I definitely say is that grief sucks, but I want to add to that. Quarantine sucks too. And you have to say, this really sucks, and I really want it to be over. But for the safety of myself and my family, I have to at least do the best that I can and follow the guides of what's out there. Friends. We see you, we know you're here and we know you're hurting. We want you to know that we have many resources on our website. If you go to healing starts with the heart.com there, you can download our ebook, which is the definition of grief. Or you can set up a mini session there to meet with Eric and myself. And we would gladly sit with you and talk with you and help you through anything you may be struggling through right now.

Erica ([16:10](#)):

Thank you so much for joining us for another podcast episode, but part of our quarantine series. So thank you again. Bye friends.