

# Couples and COVID-19

Erica Honoré & Sharon Brubaker

Grief Specialists

Sharon ([00:01](#)):

Hi, Friends welcome back. This is Sharon and Erica with Haley starts with the heart, the podcast where we talk about grief. Welcome back everyone.

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

We have a very unusual circumstances these days. So we are taking an unusual approach at recording our podcast now. So I hope you like love the new form.

Sharon ([00:25](#)):

The new format has unstable wifi as well. So we're doing the best that we can, but we were like, we want to get this message out so much. We, we don't care. We're just gonna do it. And we'll put it in YouTube and put in the closed caption. We'll do the best that we can. Right, Erica?

Erica ([00:44](#)):

That's all we can do. I mean, we, we are really having to become very inventive with our process, so we'll see how it goes.

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

So, Erica, let me ask you, how has quarantine been for you?

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

Quarantine initially was not a problem for me at all because I'm pretty much a homebody anyway. Now that being said, it's been a struggle this last week. I have really, really been struggling. I'm over it.

Sharon ([01:20](#)):

We shared on our weekly Wednesday last week I was really down and out. Like, I, it really got to me and this one day, this week, I, I actually said to myself, am I depressed? And it's so funny. It's not funny. But when the quarantine first happened, I was like, yes, I get to stay at home. This is going to be so cool. But that didn't last the whole time, because are we on week six? Right. Of quarantine.

Erica ([01:52](#)):

Yeah, I think it's week six. Which in I mean, I just saw a story on the news this morning for Spain. They weren't even able to go outside. So at least we have that in that regard that we could at least go outside and people are saying, if you need to take a walk, you know, go get some fresh air. Thankfully we still can do that. I don't know what we would do if we couldn't go outside. Like that would be like 10 times worse.

Sharon ([02:19](#)):

Yeah. And, but even going to the grocery store, you think it would be like, okay, let me suit up, get my mask on my gloves, let me get out to the grocery store. But I find it. So it brings up so much anxiety for me, trying to make sure that I'm not touching anything, trying to make sure that I'm not bumping into anybody. Then coming home. We have a system where whoever goes to the store goes right into the shower, the other person's in the home clean and put away all the dishes, wipe, disinfect, everything. So it's like a process, right?

Erica ([02:53](#)):

It's absolutely a process. I think that and especially it's weird cause we're in two different States, so our States have taken different approaches. So, and I think everyone knows I'm in Texas. Texas has taken a more lenient approach I think, compared to California. So it's, it's, that's also interesting in that regard.

Sharon ([03:15](#)):

Absolutely, absolutely. But the one thing that the one bit of information, I think the most helpful thing that I think I can put out there is that after nine 11 we learn our new normal of going through the airport. Right. We learned our new normal of how to go through the airport. Now you have to take your computer out, you have to take your shoes off. You practically have to undress. You know, you may get the best pat-down of your life at the airport. You know, we've learned that I think as a species of humans and people we can adapt, right. And so we can adapt to this new normal, like you and I like to call it this new normal, but there's one part of the new normal that's been harder for us to adapt to. And that's been being locked up with your significant other.

Erica ([04:06](#)):

Yes. And for some people that would seem like, Oh, yay. I get to be at home. You know, you hear a couple say, Oh, we're each other's best friends. And you know, we get to be at home together. Yeah. Not so much for everyone. That's not, that's not the case because when, especially like for Louis and I, Louis travels for work. So him being home is completely out of our norm. And it's where we would have a routine when he would come home and we would find activities to do together so that we could spend time together. Now we're just having all this abundance of time, crammed down our throats. And it's, it's taken us out of our routine, out of our normal. And it's kind of given us like the bickering is starting the, you know, the eye rolling the attitude, the muttering under the breath, like, yeah. I'm noticing some things where we're not each other's best friends right now.

Sharon ([05:10](#)):

That actually hasn't happened for me. But you know, now that you and I are talking about it, cause you asked me about this just before the show started. And I said, no, that's not happened to me at all. Well, I just realized I'm still going to work. So I still leave every day and go out into my office. And I'm putting in putting in a full eight hours between seeing clients, you and I do in grief, support groups and working with one-on-one clients. I still go to work every day, writing the blog, doing all that stuff. So I'm not with him all day long. And that's probably why you just, you just brought that to my attention. So we also have had an increase in marriage, merit, married couples calling us needing help, not just as counseling, but literally. Wanting to pull their hair out.

Erica ([06:00](#)):

Yeah. This, this, I think I think because everything is so up in the air, we've never experienced anything like this before there is, I think some underlying anxiety, especially about, you know, people we're seeing people being laid off. And so I think there's just this this underlying anxiety of it all, and it's, it's affecting the relationships because we, I think people are trying to make the best of it. But when you're fearful about the future, about bills, about car payments, I think then that goes into other areas of your relationship, right?

Sharon ([06:43](#)):

Oh 100%. And you're you are right. The, how am I going to pay my bills? I didn't get my stimulus check. What about my unemployment that hasn't kicked seen yet, and for people that are truly struggling or trying to figure things out. So you've got that underlying thing going, but then what happens to you when you're now the, your gym, your house is your gym. You are, the teacher classroom is taking place in the house. You're having family time in the house. Your church is going on in the house, right? Your church services, your around each other 24 seven. You're not given that break, but you also have a grieving heart with underlying issues that you've never taken care of. That you've never mended. Where do you think that's going to come out? It's got to come out somewhere.

Erica ([07:37](#)):

Absolutely. And that, like I always say, grief will find a way and it will interfere in your relationship. And it, so that, I mean, if anything comes from this, I hope that we can encourage people, start having real conversations, sit down, write things out. So to have those real conversations, because emotions get in the way. So if you have to write it out for yourself, just so you can be clear where you're coming from and your points, and then have your encourage your significant other to do the same. And then when you come to the table, have at least talking points of where you want to start. Right.

Sharon ([08:18](#)):

I think that's, that is some great advice as definitely some great advice. Try not to as much as you can hold onto it and let it become a big tornado because there's going to be so many of them. You got to keep going through it over and over again. I mean, we just got, I just got a text from one of our clients that is her and the husband had an active argument today over taking dishes out of the dishwasher just this morning. It's, she's trying to take the dishes out of the dishwasher. She asked him to watch the kids. He wasn't paying attention. The little one is trying to help with the dishes, a plate broke. And the next thing you know, this whole thing exploded. They both are grieving. They both have grief work that they're working on, but now this thing has escalated. So yes, try and handle each situation as it comes up and sit down and talk and you may need to separate. You may need time away. You may need one minute to go in one room, one, go in the other room and just write it out. Here's the deal that we both know though, Erica, if one of us will write it out and think about it and calm down and come up with that idea, it will help the others. And it will help that conversation. You both don't need to write it out,

Erica ([09:30](#)):

Right? You definitely don't both. Don't need to write it out, but it might, it might just help in, in terms of being helping to get your thoughts organized. Cause I know as couples, we tend to drift, you know, you start at one point and then you end up over here with, you know, five years ago. Remember that time you left the garage open and then, you know, so you could get off topic very easily. So if it, if writing it out helps you to stay on topic, I would suggest that. But also you got to know when to walk away. Don't in the argument too long, where you're just beating a dead horse, take a timeout. If you need to agree to disagree, have cooling off periods because you don't want to have these conversations go left where you're just yelling and screaming and mad at one another, you know, take know when to walk away and say, okay, we need to table this for right now because it's getting too heated. I'm going to go outside and take a walk or go take a drive. And then we'll we got to come back to this with calmer cooler heads, right? We don't want people just tearing each other apart

Sharon ([10:38](#)):

I agree too. Here's the deal? Friends. Unresolved grief is everywhere. Unresolved grief is everywhere. It is in everyone's heart. If they haven't actively gone after the work. So let me throw this scenario out there. He's a, he was a young boy. He has best friend drown when he was in the eighth grade, his father died just before he graduated college and he never handled those issues. He and his mom haven't spoken in years. That is unresolved grief that is sitting. You are a woman who his father passed away and also your mother has passed away. You never gone after that issue. You, this is your second marriage. You have unresolved grief from your divorce. You guys are a blended family. You have kids, both have kids from your other marriages. So you've got all of that grief. You take all of that up and then lock that couple into a house and say, you can't come out, but you must get along. What do you think is going to happen with unresolved grief? It is going to start coming up and here's the other thing. He only has to say one word that reminds you of what it was like dealing with your husband. One time when you went on a vacation to Tahiti 20 years ago, and you had the biggest fight of your life, and guess what's going to come up for you that fight into Haiti from 20 years ago.

Erica ([12:03](#)):

Absolutely. We have to, we have to be very aware that everyone has to do their work. you're just going to keep carrying around all those old hurts and those old wounds. And they're just gonna reopen every time someone says something or it's taken it's misunderstood or you've just watched an emotional movie. That's triggered something for you. All this stuff is going to keep resurfacing. If we don't take the time to do the work, to clear out the junk.

Sharon ([12:35](#)):

Absolutely 100%, you know, and you say it all the time. Grief was going to find a way grief is going to find a way out. And I think you even said it earlier here, it's going to find a way out. It has to come out at some way in some form. Now, one of the other things that we've been hearing a lot of the last couple of days is that spousal abuse is up on the rise, right? So some of these fights are actually escalating to become actual abuse. And that is like a whole different level, right? Erica, where we're getting to that part where it's just a whole separate level of that. I want to reach out to any of our sisters out there that are hearing us. If this is your situation, we're going to put our number in the show notes here so that you can have our personal cell phone numbers. We want you to know that you can call us, pretend like you're ordering a makeup order. Just say, Hey, I want to order reorder some cream and we will get your number and we will be able to help you out. You can send us an email at any time, sometimes just writing us an email and sending us an email. We want to be the resource for you if you need us.

Erica ([13:46](#)):

Absolutely. These are very, very scary times. And I have also seen those numbers about domestic violence being on the rise. And it's so, so unfortunate. It is. I think if ever there was a time someone who's in an abusive relationship felt like they couldn't get out now, is it because we almost are all just kind of on lockdown. So please absolutely reach out email. Like Sharon said, phone call any type of way possible. We want to be a resource for you and let you know that you're not alone. We are here anytime to be whatever type of support you need.

Sharon ([14:27](#)):

We're not here to try and say that we know what it feels like because we absolutely don't. We absolutely don't know what feelings you're having right now and what this quarantine and being stuck at home is bringing up for you. But here's the thing we want you to know. We're in our own boat, having

our own quarantine, having our own set of issues. So we know what it feels like for us. We know what grief feels like. And we know that it sucks. We want you to know that we hear you, we see you and we are here for you.

Erica ([14:59](#)):

Absolutely. And when it comes to couples and struggles, you know, one of the things that I try to practice and hopefully this will, this might be helpful is to try and find activities where it doesn't require a lot of talking, you know, watching movie taking a walk, riding a bike, you know, do things where you're together, but you have to talk because you definitely don't want the void to continue to grow and there'd be irreparable damage. So try to do anything possible to maintain the connection because you love that person. You got involved in a relationship with them for a reason. You know, there are things about them that that should still make your heart smile. So try to find those things and maintain a connection during this very, very challenging time.

Sharon ([15:53](#)):

I think along with that, Erica here, I thought the show was ending. I keep coming up with these great ideas. I think along with that is also set up some separating time. If you guys are in the house, just say, Hey, from one to three, we need to have our own space. We need to do our own thing. I'm going to go over here you go over there, set up some separating time, set up some time with just the two of you after the kids go to sleep. Just some sitting down quiet back to dating time, you know, set some of that time aside. I think all of those things are really important. Do a, read a book together, you know, read a book on improving your marriage together and discuss it. Do some of the activities in the book. There's lots of different ways that you can do things just to help you get through this time. Right through here. Right.

Erica ([16:43](#)):

'Cause you know, like, like they've been putting out there everywhere. We are absolutely stronger together and you and your significant other are stronger together. So definitely you have to do the work though. Like, like we talk about just with grief, you have to do the work. So please take these words. Hopefully they will bring some peace if you're having some challenges in your household. And remind you guys why you got started together in the first.

Sharon ([17:12](#)):

Yeah. Bye friends. Thank you so much for joining us.