

Grief Changes Us

Erica Honoé & 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 ([00:40](#)):

Grief changes us in the here and now grief changes us forever. You will be forever changed by your grief. No matter what happens. What we're talking about right now is we're going to break it into two parts. How grief changes us immediately and how grief changes us into the future and for the rest of our lives.

Erica ([01:05](#)):

That's a big topic. I mean, I felt how much time do we have, do we have the rest of the day? Because there's so many pieces to how grief changes you. Yeah, it's, it's, um, almost unbelievable that you can be changed on so many different levels.

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

I'm all of a sudden, all these thoughts just ran through my head, but I want to do it and let's do it in two parts. So immediately after the loss, grief can change your sleep pattern completely. You can be oversleeping. You can be under sleeping, you could be walking around because you just can't get sleep. You can have just disruptive sleep, like just really bad dreams in your sleep. You could be, um, um, exhausted out of energy or you could be really hyped up, like immediately. Those just be some of the changes you can be seen. And this constant urge to eat can also be a part of that, wanting to eat all the time.

Erica ([2:11](#)):

And you could be a person who's pretty quick witted, you know, fast on this, on your feet and go where you can't even complete a thought. Yeah. You can't even maintain one train of thought. You walk into a room to get something. And even though that that's happening more and more at, as, as you know, our age tends to come in, but when grief happens, you're like, why am I here? You feel like it's an out of body experience. Like you're not in control of your own body and your own mind you can't. I was going to call someone who was I going to call you're in the middle of conversation. And you completely forget what you were going to say. What was I saying? What are we talking about? That happens more and more frequently when you're actively grieving.

Sharon ([3:00](#)):

So that is for forgetfulness trouble, concentrating and trouble focusing. Those are the things that happen. We notice those immediately. Grief can also cause you to be very irritable. You're snapping at everybody. It might not necessarily be their fault, but you're snapping out. You're snapping at your husband. You're snapping at your kids. And that irritability can last for a long time. Even the poor doggies, they're getting snapped out. Cause they're in the wrong place at the wrong time. And grief can cause this feeling of, of

being irritable. You can be less patient, right? Um, you don't have tolerance for things that you did have tolerance for in the past, right?

Erica ([3:40](#)):

Like, you know, kids running around and jumping on furniture, which might be a normal Saturday. But when you're grieving the noise, the, uh, you know, commotion, it just puts you on edge and you're just yelling, get off the couch. And that might not be your, your normal Mo you know?

Sharon ([3:56](#)):

Yeah. You can be, um, you can isolate either by choice, by circumstance. You grief can cause you to isolate. It can cause you to have this overwhelming feeling, to isolate, to stay away from people, to stay away from things you normally did to, to really just close down. Um, some people experienced it and some people don't, um,

Erica ([4:22](#)):

you know, I've, I've talked to quite a few people that they're like, I don't know what's wrong with me. Normally. I'm like the life of the party I want I'm in the middle of this scene. I'm talking, I'm laughing. And know when I go to places, I don't want to have a drink. I don't want to really talk to anybody. Yeah. What's wrong with me?

Sharon ([4:42](#)):

Yeah. You also get in your head with that and you feel like an outcast grief can cause you to feel like an outcast. So, um, one of our friends, uh, clients was just sharing with us that she, um, uh, She had her experience of her husband's passed away and she was at a, um, they celebration and she felt like she was the only one in the room hurting. Like no one sees how much I'm hurting. Like everyone's talking and celebrating, but she's not part of the celebration. You almost feel like an outcast. Like you're on the outside of the room.

Erica ([5:14](#)):

I felt like that everywhere I went, I felt like I was in doing this internal dialogue while I was sitting amongst people who are laughing and biggie, small talk and doing what they would normally do. And the whole time I'm thinking that they know that I'm sad right now. Yeah. They know my heart is broken. The thing that I feel like I'm dying, it, it made me feel, uh, like a foreigner, Like an alien in that situation,

Sharon ([05:40](#)):

Your relationships change immediately. Your people that you called every day may still be the people that you call every day, or you just don't have the tolerance to dealing with them, uh, leaning on you. Like they always did. Right. You are, uh, your reaction to family and friends, maybe different, um, your new normal, like uncle Lou likes to call it can be show up different. Um, you could be waiting on people to be there for you and then they never show up. So you relationship with people in the, in the immediate sometimes changes.

Erica ([6:17](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. W you would expect certain folks to be I'm on my way. You know, the minute they get the news and then they don't come for whatever reason or in the timeline that you think they should have showed up. And then you, you get in your feelings about it. And then that changes the way you view the relationship. Well, clearly I'm not as important to her as I thought, because she would have, if it were me, I would have been there. You know, the day of things happen, situations happen. We shouldn't judge 10, don't rush to judgment, you know?

Sharon ([6:50](#)):

Yeah. Now here's the other thing. Those are the things that usually happen immediately. One of the other things is that we start to use avoiding techniques, which we talked about eating, where we start to pick up a lot of food, a lot of drinking, alcohol, a lot of oversleeping, that sort of thing. Right? Sometimes those things that happen in the now right now, right after it happens, those start to wear off. You start to go back to your new normal. You start to pick up your routine again, that just stopped mean that your grief has over friends. It doesn't mean, Oh, I'm feeling better. Oh, I, Oh, I was able to talk to Susie on the phone for 45 minutes, you know? And the grief never came up just because you're starting to get back to your normal routine. It doesn't mean your heart is, you're just getting back to your normal routine.

Erica ([7:42](#)):

Right? Because in that, you know, Susie might've said something at a 45 minute conversation that normally you guys would've laughed about and you would be like, so stupid. Why does she make that joke? It's not even funny. You know, it's your, uh, interaction with Susie has changed because your heart is in a different space. Your, your brain is in a different space. So the things that you would have enjoyed about Susie now aggravate the out of you. And you're like, yeah, I'm not gonna talk to Suzy.

Sharon ([8:13](#)):

Yeah. One of the things that happens, and I'm just going to go there and say it after you had agreement experience, and you've had such a deep loss, you're just not willing to put up with the bullshit anymore. I'm just saying no, there's like been crap that you've dealt with for years or, and something about grieving. You're like, life is short. I have to do this anymore. And you just go there.

Erica ([8:40](#)):

Yeah. You, and that, that has been one of the biggest effects I think for Louis and I both, and we've had conversations about this. We don't want to spend our time with people that we don't enjoy that. Or, you know, like even some family members, you know, you go, you make the auditory visits. Oh, Oh, did I say that? You know, and you, you just realize, I don't want to be put in situations like that. Where if you're not my cup of tea, I'm not going to force it anymore. Yeah. I'm not going to make the calls or the visits just because we're related by blood. We don't have to do that. You get, you have you, it changes you and you don't want to spend the time doing those, those things.

Sharon ([9:32](#)):

And like I was saying, even though there's parts of you that will miss them and have this feeling of them not being there. Because we talk about that often. What if Austin was here, what of Donovan was here?

This is what they would be doing. You, the pain of that is where we go after the pain of absolutely missing them. Um, many grievors feel like they, they carry that person with them no matter where they go. And that's, that's a great feeling that no matter where I go, I'm going to have them with me.

Erica ([10:03](#)):

Uncle Lou says that a lot. Um, but you know, like you said, there's a piece of you that's missing and that's going to be gone forever, but it's a lot like, uh, amputees, you know, there's a piece of them that physically is missing, but they learn how to navigate their world without that piece. Is it different? Yes. Yeah. Is it, you know, can they still have a good quality of life? Yes. I mean, there's so many advancements that they have made. They can still enjoy a great quality of life. Same with grief. It's different. There's a piece of you that is missing, but you will learn to navigate your world without them in it. The, the intensity that you're missing them does decrease over time while you always miss them. Yes. But it's not. It goes from feeling like a thousand pound weight to maybe like a 10 pound weight. And then you learn to live by carrying them in your heart or with your own beliefs of I'm going to see them again or whatever it is that brings you comfort to move forward. So, yeah, we are forever change, but we don't have to let it break us or stop the weight. Stop us from living still.

Sharon ([11:15](#)):

Sometimes we pick up new habits and new friends in our grief. We feel this urge to be closer to two other people that that really showed up for us. So sometimes in our new normal, we can gain new friendships. We can gain new people, or we have traditions that we never had before you. And I often talk about the traditions we pick up. Like we will typically do a spend the night at everybody's house on Christmas Eve, and we've added to that wearing your weird pajamas. And so we have picked up new things that, um, um, we love and enjoy now because of our loss

Erica ([11:56](#)):

And like us, we have found meaning through our loss. And we decided to give back, we bring our knowledge and our experience to the world to help whoever is broken. There are people who find a steam, uh, cause you know, whether it be, um, volunteering in hospice care or volunteering at, uh, centers that deal with children who, uh, who have experienced child loss or, or, or childhood grief, you know, things like that. You may find meaning by giving back and being a support for someone who is going through loss.

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

I feel like you're reading my notes. Could you stop going one step ahead? Because you become more compassionate. Yeah. Yeah. You become more compassionate, um, about someone else's grief and loss, even the simple things, you become more compassionate about someone who didn't get their homework assignment in them. You become more compassionate about someone who doesn't have enough money to make the rent, because now you also realize, this is what I think is for me, I've realized life is so short and I don't have to sweat the small stuff anymore. Just find the big picture. It's like, it, it changes in a way that you're constantly looking for the big picture, right? What's the big picture. What is this? What's the meaning in this? And when you're there really looking for the meaning and the big picture, Um, it's, it's, it can be amazing.

Erica ([13:31](#)):

Louis might have this conversation actually, not that long ago, which is pretty crazy. But he, I asked him, I said, how has your grief changed you? And he said, I, I don't put things off. Like I used to, yeah. If I want to take the trip, we're going to take the trip. If I want to, you know, whatever I feel when I get the urge, I act on it versus, you know, Oh, there's time. Because he said, the one thing I know is that you don't time is not promised.

Sharon ([14:00](#)):

One of the things that, Um, our sister Charlene has started and this came about by her grief is she never hangs up the phone without saying, I love you. Yeah. And, um, we're not a big, I love you family, but that she started that trend and that tradition, and I know that it came about, about her grief. So it definitely changes you. And sometimes you pick up, um, new things and great things. I want to talk about something really tough. It can also change your spiritual walk. Yeah. Your grief Can change your spiritual walk. It can literally rock your faith on what you believe, whether that belief in that faith has shown up for you. It, you can start going questioning things that you've always known as your foundation. Yeah. True. And here's the deal. We're not going to say one way or another one, what we believe or two, what you should believe, but just know that grief can change your spiritual walk.

Erica ([14:55](#)):

And it doesn't have to be permanent forever. You may come back to it at a later time and, and reconvene whatever your belief was. You just may take a break from it because you know, there are a lot of people struggle with why did God do this to me? Why did this happen to me? And so if you get lost in that, that's okay. And you may find your way out and find your own peace, your own answers in your own time. And that that's just, it is what it is. And it's okay.

Sharon ([15:29](#)):

Yeah. I think that, um, we have two separate segments that happened in our life, right. So there was before Austin die and then there was after Austin, then there was before Donovan die and I put down women and daddy together. Cause they died. They all die fairly closely together. And then after Donovan and daddy died, like we went through a change then as well. We literally went through physical, mental changes as well.

Erica ([16:05](#)):

Yeah, we absolutely did. And thankfully we had each other to, you know, show up for each other and um, and then also, thankfully you and I have a unique skillset. Like, um, when I said that, it just made me think of that movie taken, he had a skill set and he was going to go save the daughter. Well, we're here to save the grievers, you know, because we, we have that and we're able to be that beacon of light. And we're able to get in the trenches with our sisters that are out there struggling whose hearts have been broken and we're able to show them the way out. Yeah. You know,

Sharon ([16:50](#)):

I thought you were going to say our skill set was sarcasm.

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

Well, we have that too.

Sharon ([16:59](#)):

So great. Hey, you have so many best, um, what, what I also wanted to say, like when we Mark that time, we changed every time we changed after Austin. Yeah. And then some of those changes we dropped off and we, um, continued them on after, um, after Donovan. And this is what I will definitely say. This was the point that I was trying to make there is that we picked up a strength. Like we never knew to get us through and that strength turned into compassion, which turned into love. And that's what we use as we go on. And we marched through this, uh, march, the trenches with our, with our loved ones. Right. Uh, resilience. We never thought we could have.

Erica ([17:39](#)):

Absolutely. And sadly, one thing we know for certain is we're going to experience more loss. Yeah. Because any, the one thing guaranteed in life is that there will be death. So, um, and we're going to change more. We're going to continue to change because as we experienced each loss, it'll bring a different set of circumstances that we will have to adjust and adapt to.

Sharon ([18:00](#)):

Yeah. So I think leaving here with this final note, grief changes you, it changes you immediately and it changes you forever in the now and forever. And those two things are okay, whatever they are just know that you're gonna, you're never will be the same person that you were. You never will. And that's okay. Um, don't beat yourself up, right. Don't fight against it, lean into it. And you can also guide that change. Hey, I don't like the way I am now. I need to fast. And that's something that you can go after

Erica ([18:34](#)):

And you will get as close as possible to get as close as you as close as you can. I feel like I am as close as I was for you. I'm not exactly the same. I'm different, but I I'm as close as I can get. And I'm okay with that.

Sharon ([18:53](#)):

Yeah. But Erica, that change doesn't always mean bad.

Erica ([18:56](#)):

No, absolutely not. No, no, no. But I think people are, they want that. They want to be who they were before. They're so scared that they're going to lose themselves. And that, that's the one thing that I want to point out. You won't lose yourself. You will get as close as you can to who you were. Um, it's just, like you said, some of the small stuff, you're not gonna make such a big stink about it and you're going to treasure the beautiful moments a little bit more.

Sharon ([19:22](#)):

Yeah. That's perfect. That's a perfect ending to the show. Thank you ladies.

Erica ([19:27](#)):

Bye friends. Thank you.

Speaker 2 ([19:32](#)):

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@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.