

COVID Guilt

Sharon Brubaker and Erica Honore
Grief Specialist

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

Erica and Sharon, are sisters who began a grief journey in 2006, when Erica's ten-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 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](#)):

Hey, welcome back. This is going to be a great show and you know how I know it's going to be a great show because I have on my favorite sweater, my favorite, Holy lucky sweater,

Erica ([00:50](#)):

Is that one of the Conway's designs?

Sharon ([00:54](#)):

No, it's just like, I've just had it for so long and it's so comfortable. I love putting it on and I'm like, I want to wear this on the show. I wear it around the house all the time.

Erica ([01:03](#)):

In high fashion, because I understand, I think Kanye has a whole line that looks like it's been eaten by moms. So you are right, right in the, in the.

Sharon ([01:14](#)):

Oh my gosh Im in the hip now.

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

you're in the know.

Sharon ([01:17](#)):

I'm in the know. So I wore this, my lucky sweater because we have a very heavy topic. A very heavy topic today. So we know that there is COVID. We know that people are dying in mass numbers. And we also know that some people are left without their loved ones after the, their family members, friends and close associates die. But there's something that happens in between there. And it's called guilt and you and I are calling it COVID guilt. Right. And what we mean by that specifically is if you're the one, if you're the first one in the family that brought the COVID to the family, if you're the one that went to visit grandma, and now she has COVID. If you're the one that went to visit your parents and they got COVID and mom died, right. We're left with this heavy feeling of responsibility. And a lot of people call it guilt.

Erica ([02:25](#)):

Right. And, and that at the beginning of December Louis and I got COVID thankfully very mild cases, but we did that back and forth a little playfully. Cause we were, you know, in quarantine written nothing else to do. You gave it to me. No, you gave it to me. No, you gave it to me. He gave it to me. We now have proof, but we don't have the evidence, but I can only, I can't imagine if, if something would have

happened in one of us, you know, what the surviving person would have felt like if, if I were the surviving person, I would feel awful.

Sharon ([03:04](#)):

Well, yeah. And even if you never got the answer, if he gave it to me, what if you never got that answer? What happens to the family members that don't have the answer of who got it first? Right? Or how we got it, because we have heard you and I've had clients that are saying, I did everything. Right. I washed my hands. I wore my mask and we don't know how we got it, but yet we still got it. So what if the, how never got answered, but then someone dies. There are millions of people experiencing this right now, millions.

Erica ([03:33](#)):

The numbers yesterday. I believe we're at 2 million people worldwide that have died.

Sharon ([03:39](#)):

Wow. Yeah. 2 million people worldwide. And then you add in about each family member has about each family unit has about six people in it. So you can almost assume that, you know, that's 2 million times, six people that are grieving. You're talking about the people that have died. What happened? We're talking about the amount of people that are grieving right now.

Erica ([04:11](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So like, we're going to bring it back to what you said, the word guilt. Yeah. We're going to take that word off the table because you and I don't use it.

Sharon ([04:23](#)):

We don't use the word because we use it. As grievors, we use it like it's an umbrella that I can hide under. We'll be here under the grief umbrella. Right. We just did a show on how you have to feel the feelings and allow the feelings. Guilt is always the first one we go to and I don't know why, but we do because somehow it makes us feel better or it makes us feel like okay, I'm taking my responsibility. I feel guilty when I don't know what it is.

Erica ([04:52](#)):

I think it's something easy. It's like an easy fit, right? So like, you're like, you're comfortable. Holy sweater. It's a comfortable fit to get in because you're like, okay. I CA I just feel so guilty and you can stay in that. You can stay in that forever. You don't have to go anywhere else. If you put on the guilt sweater. Yeah. So guilty. I'm so cute, but I'm guilty. You know what I mean? So you can, that is like a place to dwell and you don't have to do any of the hard work. Cause you can just reside in that comfort, comfortable guilt.

Sharon ([05:25](#)):

Right. But if you get there, then it also means if you get there and you decide to stay there, it also means you're the one that needs to be punished. Right? You're the bad person. You're the one who did everything. When in actuality, we know for a fact that the definition of guilt is with intent to deceive or do harm with intent to deceive or do harm. So let me walk you through this. Erica comes into my office and she says, I gave my mother COVID and my mother died. I feel so guilty. I would simply say to Erica,

my friend, did you intend to deceive or harm your mom by unknowingly giving her COVID? Did you intend to deceive or harm your mom by not knowing that you have COVID and you went over to see, to see her? No, I would have never given her COVID on purpose. I would have never purposely gone out and given her COVID I would have never gone there. If I knew that she would have gotten sick, my intention was to go take out her trash and cook a few meals for her. That was all that I did. Then guilt is not what you own. It's another emotion. Let us see if we can figure out what other emotions you might own that might be broken in your heart. And it is going to be something like I'm sad. I missed her. I can't believe this happened to us. I'm broken. I need help. I'm grieving. It's something else other than guilt. But yet we grab onto that guilt and we wear it like a shield.

Erica ([06:59](#)):

Like what I said. It's it's the easiest fit. Guilt is the easiest fit. And that's why you and I work very hard to get people, to take the guilt word out of their vocabulary and to change it out. So you don't feel guilty because you didn't intend to do this to your mom. So what do you regret? I feel bad. Like you said, I feel sad. I'm angry that I did stay home or call my other sister who hasn't been going anywhere to do it. You know, those things. We want to get them to connect to the right word. So then we can heal on the correct path. Guilt. Unless you went there intentionally the cough, your mother's face to make sure she got COVID it's not the right fit for you. You got to whip that shield off.

Sharon ([07:46](#)):

Yeah. So we have to consider what the, what your guilt is all about. Right? So when we go there, what is your guilt all about? Let's look at what other things and why you feel you need to be punished and where this shield of guilt and many times what happens Erica, is that we wear the shield of guilt because we want to control the grief. If I stay in this shield of grief, I mean of, of guilt. And I can control how this is going to go. I don't have to also allow the other ugly emotions that I'm feeling right now.

Erica ([08:23](#)):

That's what I'm saying. It's so easy to put the guilt sweater on because yeah, you don't have, you're not forced and no one will force you because it's almost like you. Oh, I just, you know, and you, you, you feel it. You really do feel it. And that you're supporting cast the people in your life, your spouse, your children are not going to say, mom, you got to start doing some work because you know, you can't be like this. We need you. We need you to do something else. They're not going to do that. When you have the guilt face on and you are just walking around, you know, they're not going to push you to let something else in. They're not going to challenge you. They're going to let you dwell in that because they don't know what to do.

Sharon ([09:07](#)):

Right. So we have to examine our thoughts about the guilt also, because often our guilty thoughts where the rational or irrational, they start to consume us. Someone who's stuck in guilt, get all consumed with the things they could have done better. The things that they wished they had done different, or the, the thing that they wished they had done more of, they get all consumed with that. It is a powerful healing process to go through this and examine it. But it also is a slippery, slippery slope that you can go down that rabbit hole and be stuck forever.

Erica ([09:48](#)):

Yeah, it is because you could sit there and they'll like you said, they go over every scenario and then they might turn on some of their supporting gas members. Well, Sharon, why did you let me go over there? Why didn't you tell me to send Bob instead? You know what I mean? And they lash out and they start to blame others because they're so consumed by that guilt.

Sharon ([10:12](#)):

I also feel like when someone gets stuck down the rabbit hole of guilt, their thoughts become irrational. Like really, like they really go to the worst case scenarios like that. It would have been something that they really would have done, right? Like, Oh, maybe I knew on Tuesday because my back was hurting. I knew I should've known that it was COVID, but you didn't go visit mom until Monday. And then they get stuck on Backache of Tuesday. It becomes so irrational that, that they automatically would've known. It's COVID, it's just, and I'm using that as an example and I'm making it up. But we go to these total irrational thoughts because we are looking for the evidence to make the guilt. Correct. We have to find the evidence. I need all the evidence that I can so that you and you, and you all agree with me that it was my fault.

Erica ([11:04](#)):

Well, it's like it's like, they want a personal conviction. You know, they want Rick themselves because they're using guilt, which we said is the intent to do harm, which is why people are found guilty in the court of law. That's what they want. They want their peers, everyone to find them guilty to convict them. I did this wrong. I did this. Victim you know, because they want to be punished. They feel so bad. They want all the blame. But like we said, in the previous show, guilt, a grief is not a problem to be solved. They're trying to make it a problem that they can. Yeah, exactly.

Sharon ([11:42](#)):

Sometimes though, I also believe that when we have the when we go through the guilt and the irrational thoughts, it can be part of our process. It can be part of a healing process because what happens is we keep coming up empty, especially when no one can jump on the evidence, train and help us to find the evidence. So it's almost like for some people, they got to go through every scenario to say that this is totally irrational. This couldn't have happened this way. This could have happened that way. This can happen. And then they're left with, when we take guilt off the table, you're left with grief and brokenness and sadness and anger and pain.

Erica ([12:26](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It's it's so it's so sad that this pandemic is so many lives are being lost and it really is directed at families. Cause they're saying, don't go outside of your bubble. You know, your bubble is who's in your, under your roof right now. Don't go outside of that bubble. Don't do this. Don't do that. Like, there's such a clear list, but as humans, we're all, we all have that little piece where we're think we're immortal and we'll say, Oh, well, I'll be fine. I'll be fine. I'll be fine. And then next thing you know, you test positive or you don't test positive, but you've gone outside of your bubble and you've done the meal prep for mom and taking her trash out. And then she gets gravely ill. I mean, it's so it's so sad that this is even happening in our world right now. I mean that just in and of itself, the thought that we are in a global pandemic is so unbelievable. And the fact that family members are dying and we're where we're dying off at the rate that we're dying off. So, I mean, I'm sorry. I just had to bring that into view for a while. Like, it's so unreal, but this is, this is what's happening. We, people are innocently, not

purposefully, but innocently passing the virus from one family member to the next. And ultimately some of those family members are, are not going to recover.

Sharon ([14:01](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I agree with you. I agree. It's mind blowing. Isn't it it's mind blowing that we're here right now. And people have not worked outside of the home or not gone anywhere and have literally stayed home for one year. And I it's turned and touched everyone's lives because even right now I called our sister. I didn't even tell you this. I'm going to say this online. I call our sister because I noticed that our mother is limping. And one of the things is, is that she's sitting a lot. This is starting to affect even people that aren't touched with with COVID they're starting to be affected by. So now I gotta figure out, okay, I got to get her up moving. Cause this, her knee is starting to bother her. And we talked about bringing, you know, getting somebody to help us with stretches me, going out and walking with her, like doing whatever I can to help her along with this. And this is a direct result of the covid that, and that's just such a little tip of the iceberg. But it is affecting every one of us. What I think that when we're in the guilt, there's something to be learned for ourself. We have something we need to figure out and learn for ourself and that guilt. And most times, Erica, we come up with a list of regrets. A list of things we wish we had done better. We come up with all of the little idiosyncrasies to the relationship. And sometimes what we find in there is that the work we have to do is what is so hard because we have to make this huge apology or forgiveness allow some forgiveness in for ourselves so that we can heal. And the thought of going there sometimes it's so overwhelming.

Erica ([15:54](#)):

Yeah. We did a show in the past on regret. And one of the things I've always said is regret and grief go together like peanut butter and jelly. It's just the two just go. And, and you're absolutely right. It's looking at the relationship in its entirety and assigning the correct apology and the forgiveness to who it needs to go to for the healing to really happen.

Sharon ([16:21](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. I honestly, I can't imagine what it must feel like. I can't to say that I went to my mom's and I gave her COVID. Yeah. I can't imagine. I can't imagine. I can't imagine what that must feel like for anyone that's out there grieving. Honestly. I think I want to end it here with this part is you have to consider what mom would tell you. What would mom say to you? If you got a chance to have one more conversation with her, if you got a chance to apologize for what happened? If you got a chance to tell her, I made a big mistake and I'm so sorry. What would mom tell you?

Erica ([17:05](#)):

Absolutely. Mom would say you don't have to apologize. You didn't on purpose using your fault. Yeah. That's the most important. This isn't your fault.

Sharon ([17:18](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Perfect. I think we should end it right there. Absolutely. I hope this helps a lot of hearts out there. Stay safe. Everyone wear your mask, wash your hands, wash your hands. And hopefully we will be on the tail end of this very soon.

Sharon ([17:41](#)):

And know that this will end. It will end. Yeah, but we're going to go through some pain, but it's going to end.

Erica ([17:48](#)):

That's it.

Sharon ([17:50](#)):

Thank you, friends.

Erica ([17:51](#)):

Bye friends

Erica ([17:55](#)):

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 podcasts. We hope you enjoyed this episode. We want to let you know for more information you can go to our 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 Facebook book group at hope, heal and recover. Thank you so much for being with us. Have a great day friends.