

Sex and Grief

Sharon Brubaker & Erica Honore
Grief Specialists

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 brokenhearted find recovery. In 2015 tragedy struck the family once again, when Eric, his 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):

Great topic we have today. Ladies, it is all I want to do is have sex. I've just experienced the loss of a loved one. And this overwhelming urge to have sex has come upon me. And I don't know what to do with it. I honestly don't know why it's here. It's all I can think about. It's taking over all of my thoughts on a daily basis.

Erica (01:03):

Yeah, it seems as though if you had to think about it, I would never put grief and sex together. Let's just seems like two completely foreign things, but it's actually more common than the average person might think there's nothing perverted about it. There's nothing. There's nothing criminal about it. It just, it happens. It's a real thing. And it happens.

Sharon (01:34):

I feel like there's a joke in here somewhere that I should be doing no seriously, like this is just a joke, but the truth is it is a complete, fully normal response to the loss of a loved one, this overwhelming urge to want to have sex. And the reason being is because we are human beings that love to connect physically and emotionally, and often we, we intermingle that with sex right away. We feel that that's all we can think about because part of it, Erica is we want part of it is grief sucks and we want the pain to go away. And so we feel as if, if I connect with someone emotionally or physically, that it will feel better and it'll get the suck out of the right.

Erica (02:26):

Right. Think about the society we're raised in, when you're little high school, you have a breakup, what does that really tell you the best way to get over? You know someone is to get someone new. They, they encourage this thought process, right? On some level, plenty of fish in the sea. Yeah. There's plenty of don't, don't cry over that one. You can get another boyfriend, go get another one, you know? So that feeling is there to have someone else to connect. Like you said, to connect, have the physical contact with someone. And then because we are such a pleasure seeking drone as humans, we're constantly on this, this search for pleasure. I mean, what's more pleasurable than the orgasm, right? I mean, it's like, it's like, it's like a no brainer, right?

Sharon (03:20):

So it's two things. So let's be clear on this. So we have this urge to have the sudden urge to have sex, but that's different than using the sex as a distraction from the pain. So there's two things that can be going on here. One is we have this urge to feel close or feel loved because the pain is so overwhelming. Right. But the other is I'm going to use sex as a distraction pornography sleeping around, having affairs and doing everything I can to be on the chase of the sex to avoid the pain that they almost sound like the

same, but they're, they're, they're really two different things. We use one as a, as an avoiding technique. And one is this overwhelming urge that we're surprised when it shows up.

Erica ([04:12](#)):

Right. And again, both are totally normal, I think. Right. I think if I wasn't in this grief profession and I was doing that, I would feel, I would like there was something wrong with me. Like already grief makes you feel crazy, but then you add in something like this and you're like, Oh my there's something seriously wrong. This is totally normal. Ladies. If you take nothing away from the show, take away that it's normal. There is nothing wrong with you.

Sharon ([04:43](#)):

Yes. There's nothing wrong with you. For sure. One of the losses when you experienced the loss of a spouse, one of the things that you grieve is the loss of intimacy. Yeah. The loss of connection, the loss of your lover and your friend. Right? So surprisingly, we have clients that will go out and have sex immediately because they have this overwhelming urge and that what they really want is to be with their loved one. Right. But at that point it's like, anyone will do, I just need to do this. I need to feel this. And then they come back with this and what you and I are left to deal with this, this overwhelming guilt of what they've just done.

Erica ([05:30](#)):

And there's no age limit on that. You, you would think that we were talking about, you know, young, we're talking about 65 70. Yeah. Are. I mean, cause you have to think about that. You've had someone lying next to you for a minimum of 40 years, 40 plus years. Of course you want that again? And it doesn't matter where it comes from. You just don't want to feel, put your over there and fill up cold sheet.

Sharon ([05:59](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So one of the questions we get asked often is when is it too soon for me to have sex? Can I start having sex? Can I start dating? I'm calling it sex, but it's can I date? And sometime, and the dating is taken out of it. We go right to the sex when we are having this urge. I mean, we literally go right to the sex. How do you answer that question?

Erica ([06:25](#)):

I do a little, we have, you have to have more conversation. You have to have more conversation and get asked questions about, so you answer their questions with questions. Yeah. But that, it's important for us to determine as the specialist, is this just something to avoid feeling the grief? Yeah. Or is this something that's going to re replace that physical intimacy? Like you said.

Sharon ([06:55](#)):

I agree with you a hundred percent. We ask the questions because sometimes when they hear themselves say it out loud, they find the answer, they find the answer for themselves. Here's the other thing there's no right or wrong answer. There's no time limit. I'm not going to write you a prescription that says you are free to go and have sex. It could happen on the day that your, how you find out your husband die. There's no right or wrong answer to this. There's a what's right for you.

Erica ([07:24](#)):

Exactly. Right. Grief, individual. We say that all the time. So you, you have to make the choice of what's right for you. It doesn't matter what your cousin or your coworker or your best friend did. It just matters. What to you.

Sharon ([07:39](#)):

How do you know if you're using sex to avoid feeling the pain?

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

For me personally, I always try to put myself in someone else's shoes too. If I were going to be doing that. I think, I think if, you know, there's always that like, I'm going to go have sex. Like almost a rip off the band-aid. Yeah. I'm just going to do it because I'm going to take that off the table. Then I don't want to have to focus on it. You know, that that's your thing. Cause you, then you're done with it. You put it to rest. Right. But if you do it once and then you're constantly, then you're now you're on Tinder and you're seeking out people more and more people to have sex with. I think you're, you're most likely trying to.

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

If you're filling in the blank with pornography, that you're blink time with pornography, it's probably an issue. If you're going to a one 800 call me, babe, you're probably filling in. You don't want to feel the pain. If you're stuck on Tinder all day long and just swiping through you, probably not wanting to feel the pain, if it constantly consumes you and you don't think about the loss, you're probably not wanting to feel the pain. One of the other aspects that we see is the client male and female that become over sexualized in their talk, in their dress, in their appearance, in the comments that they make. It's totally out of character for them. Like this isn't the normal way that they were. But now you see the, the cleavage line drop and we see a lot of they're okay with the sex jokes and the sexual posting. We see that a lot with clients that wasn't their normal emo.

Erica ([09:19](#)):

Right, right. It's very easy to get caught up into a avoiding behavior. For me it was wine, but for some people it's sex and that it makes sense because you get to touch, you get to hold, you get to, you know, do all the things that that you're longing for. And also you get to lose yourself in another world for a while. Like you said, if you're in, during engaging in porn and all these other behaviors, you're, you're definitely not thinking about the sadness.

Sharon ([09:58](#)):

What happens when we don't want to have the sex? Because our spouses died for fear that we will be betraying them. And that, and this happens with the young young couples. I mean, years later, they still haven't gotten into a relationship for fear that they'll be betraying the the other person or that it's almost like having an affair.

Erica ([10:25](#)):

Well, and, and for sure, I would say to that person, you're not, you're not ready. Yeah. Because if that's the feeling that's coming up, if you feel like you're cheating on your deceased spouse, you're not ready. Yeah. You're forcing it. You're trying to do it too soon. And like I said, there's an element where people just want to rip the bandaid off and they just want to, I just need to have sex with someone else so I can get up, get that out of the way. And I won't have to worry about it. Yeah. People, some people are wired that way.

Sharon ([10:57](#)):

I worked with a young man years ago and he had found out that his father died and he explained to me that this overwhelming, or this was almost almost 14 years ago, his overwhelming urge was to have sex. And so he pulled out his little black book and started calling everybody in the book, like literally an hour after he found out his dad died until he was able to find a girl who would come hang out with them and he hooked up and he was, it, it, it blew his mind. And I, it almost took me a back the first time I heard that because it was like, wow, that was your first thought. But that's what told me this is normal. Right. It's normal. But here's the deal. My friends, you have to answer this one question. Why, why am I doing this right now? Slow down for a second and see if you can answer that question. It's what, you know, whatever answer may be for yourself. Answer that question because it will help you with some of the feelings that you're trying to avoid.

Erica ([12:01](#)):

I think that that's extremely important to really get in touch with what's underneath that need. Yeah. And a lot of times when you do that, when you get to the layer, that's underneath the need, the need is no longer there. Yeah.

Sharon ([12:16](#)):

So we touched on this in our last show. So I'm going to bring it up here. Again, it is not uncommon for the spouse and our partners to have a separate sexual need at a time of grieving, grieving the loss of a trial, grieving the loss of a parent or grieving the loss of a job, whatever the grief may be. It's not uncommon for the couples to have a separate urge or needs that they need to be met. And it can cause a problem in your relationship.

Erica ([12:51](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Well, and also when the desire, when you're grieving and then the desire for sex or they're in both, and then you start, then one month turns into six months, turns into a year and then, you know, that's another thing of no sex. Another thing it's like, yeah, that's a problem. Because as we all know, and especially now marriage, there has to be some level of intimacy. You don't want to turn into roommates.

Sharon ([13:25](#)):

Well, the other thing is that if the problem was already there right before the loss, the problem is still going to be there after the loss, because I've had the loss, doesn't make the problem go away. And because he's over, his urges are different than mine or her urges are different than mine doesn't mean it goes away because of the loss. All it does is put a spotlight on it.

Erica ([13:47](#)):

Yeah. Definitely gives it a good, you get a good excuse now because the issue was there before, but now you have, Oh, it's grief. Yeah. You get to blame it on the grief.

Sharon ([13:59](#)):

Yeah. I think what happens with the, and I'm, I can only imagine what I'm going to throw this out there. I think what happens with this overwhelming urge is this overwhelming urge to feel, love it, feel okay. To

feel like I can live through this to feel like please make this, make me forget about this pain for five minutes. You know what I mean? Or 10 minutes, whatever it is, but to just distract also.

Erica ([14:29](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And it's something so like, like with wine, that's not something I could hide. Well, hiding it. I knew that that was a bigger problem. So I wouldn't, but sex is something you could totally hide. No one would ever really know. Right. You know what I'm saying? It's an avoidant behavior you can engage in and no one you is any wiser, so you can totally fake fake, you know, like you're, you're, you're so well adjusted and you're handling your grief so well, but you have this deep, dark secret. And that's another thing if you're doing it completely in secret and you're not telling anyone that's a problem.

Sharon ([15:08](#)):

Yeah. That's a problem. Definitely a problem. That's why talking it out loud really helps. It really helps for you to get down to, you have to love yourself through this and allow them room for, whatever's going to show up for you. Whatever is going to show up for you right now, at this moment. Right. If that means that this is how I'm going to cope with it and my partner. Absolutely Okay. Then put it on its own shelf and keep it separate from your grief healing.

Erica ([15:41](#)):

Right, right.

Sharon ([15:44](#)):

Allowed that that your needs might be different and allow that allow the space to this is how I need to be right here right now, because there's no right or wrong.

Erica ([15:57](#)):

No, no. And I I'm, I'm mostly, I think that aspect is like in the couple realm, I'm thinking about the, the widows and the widower widowers out there that I'm thinking that the feeling in addition to the longing for the loss of their spouse or significant other fear yeah. Fear that they're trying to mask and run from.

Sharon ([16:24](#)):

Yeah. One, I think also is that some of the dark deep urges that we never experienced in the sex can also come up at this time, going into areas, sexual experiences that we've never experienced before. But now we decide we're going to go in and try them or do them almost to punish ourselves or punish our spouses and be okay with it sometimes. And we need to be okay with this. Sometimes the sex act comes out just by for a fear, not a fear, but just for a punishment towards them style.

Erica ([17:02](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Look what I'm doing. You left. I'm going to do yes, exactly.

Sharon ([17:09](#)):

That's why, that's why you have to answer the why. Yeah. Why am I doing this? Whatever your answer is to that. Why be okay with that? Be okay with that. But sometimes it'll help you not to act in a way that you're going to feel bad about later. It will help you not to act if you're having a problem in doing this in

secret funds. One that you can share that with right. Sex and grief go together. There's no need for us to avoid the situation. It goes together. It's something that needs to be talked about. We talked about.

Erica ([17:47](#)):

I think, yeah. I think this is an extremely important topic to put out there because people don't normally wouldn't, like I said, wouldn't put grief and sex together ever, but this is real. We've learned a lot on our going into our 15th year of doing this work. And one of the things is that this is very common.

Sharon ([18:09](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's a common conversation that we have often. So examine your heart and see where you're at and be open to talking about it and listening to others that are there. And I said it earlier, and I'm going to say it again, love yourself, love yourself through this, love yourself and allow yourself the space to know that you're exactly where you're supposed to be right now at this point in the healing.

Erica ([18:37](#)):

Right. And if you're receiving this message and it's, it's going straight to your heart, there's some work there that needs to be done. So stop dragging your feet, pick up the phone, call us, email us. Cause you, you w you want to feel good about your decisions. You know what I'm saying? You want to feel whole. And if you're just trying to mask, you know, your sadness or your fear or your loneliness, you got to do some work.

Sharon ([19:10](#)):

Absolutely. Thank you. Friends.

Erica ([19:14](#)):

Bye friends.

Speaker 2 ([19:16](#)):

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 face book group at hope, heal and recover. Thank you so much for being with us. Have a great day friends.