

When Grief Turns to Anger

Sharon Brubaker & Erica Honore

Grief Specialists

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

Erica and Sharon, her sisters who began a grief journey in 2006, when Eric 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 brokenhearted 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](#)):

What happens when your grief turns into anger? Why is it okay for us to talk about anger and grief in the same sentence? And the other thing that I've realized is that a lot of people don't think that they're allowed to be angry. And so they resist the feeling of anger when they're grieving for fear that it would offend the other person it'll offend someone else in the room. And sometimes when we're working with the griever, Erica, and I say, this sounds like you're really mad. Who are you mad at? They're almost relieved to have us say that. Thank you. Yes, I'm really. And here's why.

Erica ([01:22](#)):

I think that goes with all of the misinformation that's out there about grief. You know, everyone only always talks about the sadness. You're so sad. You're so sad. You're depressed. You're sad. You're sad. You're sad. You're sad. No one talks about the, our ability and our need to be angry. Yeah. When you experience a grieving event, you've, it's normal to feel like you've been robbed. You've been robbed of the relationship of an opportunity. You know, whatever it is, it's natural. Anger is one of our core emotions that you would feel angry about it, and there's nothing wrong with it. It doesn't make you a bad person or mean that you didn't love whatever it was. It's, it's normal. We're human.

Sharon ([02:11](#)):

And I think that because it's one of the five stages and it's on there. Some people who do not understand the Kubler-Ross stages, which have nothing to do with grief of the griever, the actual griever think that at some point they're supposed to be at the anger or anger should naturally go in. And then there's others who don't know the stages and don't get this whole anger thing. I feel like it's more of a resisting at times.

Erica ([02:40](#)):

Yeah. Because it's not clear because the five stages are essentially the grievers guide that society has allowed to be put out there. People don't understand that it's, it's a human emotion that we can do it naturally. It doesn't have to be just because you read it in a book that you kept to go step one, step two, step three. Okay. Now my next step is going to be anger. It could be anger angry at the very first minute that you get whatever the news is, that's causing the traumatic event. It's just a natural reaction that we as humans, emote.

Sharon ([03:22](#)):

But anger doesn't always come. It doesn't come with every grieving experience because as you're sitting here talking, I'm trying to think of my personal grieving experiences that actually had to do with death. I'm talking about the ones that have to do with death. I didn't have anger with each one. Definitely would Donovan. I was mad that we had to do it again. I would add that we had to do this again, that the

universe set us up, that we had to experience this again, that I was back to planning another funeral. That part, but was I mad at him? No, I was mad at the situation and confused, but anger. Wasn't one of the things that I experienced, even through my grieving process with him.

Erica ([04:02](#)):

I was mad at him. Really mad at him. Mad at him. I didn't feel bad about being mad at him. I didn't feel as though I had to apologize. Well, and I was so mad at everything and everyone. So it was like, even if someone had said, well, you shouldn't, I probably would've, you know, chopped them in the throat. I just was mad again. Like, like what you said, mad that we had to have another child buried mad at the circumstances at which he died, because I had been advising him against buying a motorcycle, mad at the whole situation of how it unfolded. And he ended up getting on the motorcycle because he was angry. So he was driving recklessly and out of anger, mad at the whole thing that I wasn't here. I just so many, so many levels of anger. And also the anger was my saving grace, because I couldn't do any of the other emotions. I couldn't do the sadness. I couldn't do the extreme longing that I, you know, as a mother, you feel when you lose a child, the, just the acknowledging how much I was going to miss him in my life. Every minute I couldn't allow any of that. So what I could allow was anger and it was like tenfold. It just came in 10.

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

So I wanna, I'm trying to take you back to the very moment, right? So the funeral is over. You have this anger, did you know it was anger?

Erica ([05:36](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([05:37](#)):

You definitely knew it was anger.

Sharon ([05:38](#)):

Did you call it anger?

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

I mean, I don't know if we ever talked about it. I, in myself, I knew I was mad. I was mad. I was very mad at him. Very mad at him from, from the get go from when I found out and leading, I'm sorry, leading up to him, having the accident, we were kind of butting. So we were already in this place a conflict about his decisions that he was making that I didn't agree with. So I was already kind of living in this world of frustration with him. So the frustration just went to full blown anger once he died.

Sharon ([06:14](#)):

And were you mad at other people in the room? When I see my, that, were you mad at Louis? Were you mad at us?

Erica ([06:22](#)):

No. I knew where my anger was directed. It was all on them. It was all towards him. And I feel like, I feel like, you know, my, my journey on my faith, my faith journey has been very sporadic. You know, we

we've talked about, we were raised Catholic and Louis and I are non-practicing Catholics, but we've tried different churches just to see how they go. And I was, I was very mad at God, but I wasn't calling it out and I wasn't talking about it. But when I talked to God, I would let him know. I was very angry with him. So I was very angry with God because I'm having to experience this for a second time

Sharon ([07:05](#)):

With I think that what happens with the the grievors that are unwilling to share their anger right there, it's almost like they're embarrassed. They're embarrassed to say I will mad a Donovan. I like to say that out loud, didn't you almost feel like you would have been judged, like what's, How can I better your son that died?

Erica ([07:32](#)):

Not with us. I think if, I think if Donovan had with me, but in a row at a dinner party, no, I mean, we were Louis and I were both very open with it. Like we would say it and it almost became a little comical because like, in our, in our friends group, anytime anybody shared something or, and we'd say Donovan's name, like all of us would be like. Like don't, we all kind of shared that anger and disappointment in him. And because he should be here, he should be living this Texas life. He should have, he would have been so handy in the snow apocalypse last week, like, Oh yeah. You know what I mean? It's like, he should be here. His Jordan's about to graduate high school. Donovan should be sitting in the stands as a proud brother that he was. So everyone has kind of shared in that. What I think the problem becomes is when people like they do feel ashamed about feeling anger, so they won't connect with it and they'll call it, everything, this, that, and the other. And then it takes a lot of teeth pulling with you. And I getting them, like, we recognize it's anger, but they're like, no, no, no. And then finally, maybe a year or two down the road, they admit that they're angry. And then they seem so shocked by it.

Sharon ([08:59](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Well, and it's hard to say I'm mad at, I'm really angry at my two year old that died of cancer. I'm really mad that I was robbed to having a typical child. It's hard to say that it's even hard to, I would imagine to say I'm really upset with my 21 year old who got on a motorcycle and you know, had an accident. Let me ask you a question about the anger. Did you allow the anger in and feel it a hundred percent? Do you think you were allowing it in or were you just stuck there?

Erica ([09:34](#)):

I think I was just, I was just stuck there. I knew I was angry. I wasn't talking about it, but at the times when I would break down and do the ugly cry, they were it was like angry sobs, if that makes any sense. And that's when I really would acknowledge that I was how mad I was in those moments when I was having the breakdown, because I, it wasn't like I used to have breakdown, ugly cry when Austin died, but it felt totally different. This was pure anger and like rage almost.

Sharon ([10:09](#)):

Yeah. The and that, that was a question I was going to ask you earlier. Did you have anger with Austin when Austin died? Did you experience it then? I just felt like when Austin died, it just wasn't fair. Yeah. I didn't feel mad at anyone. I just felt like it just wasn't fair. It sucked. And it was it was a total accident and it just, we were robbed, but it was like an unfairness, but when Donovan died, it was straight anger.

Sharon ([10:37](#)):

But, and here's my point of where I'm trying to get to with that with Donovan now that we look back cause you and I have grieved all that and we've worked it all out when someone else is not willing to say this is anger or I'm mad, or I'm upset. They also start blaming everybody else in the room. They become, they get this thing where they're blaming you. Should've done this and you should have been there. We see grieverers are like, why wasn't she there? I told her that this was going on. I told him that this was going on. Why didn't they help me? So instead of putting the anger where it really belongs and sometimes that's what the disease deceased person, they make it, everybody else in the room.

Erica ([11:16](#)):

Yeah. That breaks my heart. Cause you see that play out a lot on like drama, like TV, where they have an accident. Or there is a child loss in the parents turn on each other and blame each other. But that's the thing we're so fearful of placing the responsibility where it lies. And like you said, if you have a two-year-old that dies of cancer, you can't blame the child. They didn't ask to get the cancer. But in that same regard, the spouse didn't give them the cancer either. You know? So it's like, you gotta be mindful and take accountability it's to have the feeling, but don't go blaming everyone else in the room. Because if you think about it, it's like with Austin, when Austin died, people have said to me over and over, I can't believe you didn't hold those people that were there responsible. They were the adults. How would I do that? That in my heart hurts me. Yeah. Awesome. Was with the people who loved him most in the world. Yeah. Who he loved most in this world, any one of them would have traded places with him in a second. Why would I blame them? And the fact that I know that they were probably carrying blame of their own. I would never add to that. That, that makes me sad. Thinking about that. I would never do that. Yeah.

Sharon ([12:32](#)):

Yeah. Some of the research that I've seen on anger, how to deal with anger and grief is to cry it out. Write out an angry letter. Do exercising, stay busy, keep, keep moving. But none of them are saying, fricking call it anger And say who you are angry. Say who you're mad at because what happens if we didn't, if you didn't come To the point, which Erica, you didn't come to that lightly and say, I'm really mad at Donovan. The fault becomes everybody else's in the room and you're not willing to deal with the exact part of the anger. And you would have enshrined him and made him out to be the best 21 year old kid in the world that this thing, this terrible thing happened to him, which was true. They both can exist at the same time. A terrible thing did happen to him. He did get on his motorcycle. He did have an accident, but it was okay for you to say I'm mad. It's almost like when you said you were mad at him like that, the cork of the, as it was pushing, the pain down, got pulled out. You acknowledge it. We pull out that cork and then you can say, okay, it's a release that happens when you

Erica ([13:49](#)):

Absolutely. And that that's like one of the podcasts we recorded previously, you can't heal what you won't feel. Yeah. So if you're not calling it anger and acknowledging that it's anger, you can't go through that process to get to the other side and do the work on it. You, if you're saying I feel bad and I feel this and you're working on that, it's like, it's like scratching. If you've got a bug bite here, but you're itching over here. You're not going to get the relief that you need on that.

Sharon ([14:20](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Here's the other thing we have met clients, men, women, and children that have stayed in anger for years and never did anything about it. They never took care of it. They never allowed it. They

never felt it. They never processed it all the way through to the end. They never processed it all the way through the end. And it changes their life. Yeah. It changes the way you look at the world, it changes your praise, your present moment. It changes the way you are living your Life

Erica ([14:53](#)):

Right. Yes. Because if you Harbor that and you're letting it out a little bit, but in the wrong way, you know what I mean? You're snapping at people. You're making people want to avoid you because you're so miserable. It's like that saying hurt. People, hurt people. Yeah. You become that person and you don't mean it, but you don't know. You're so full of pain. You just want, you know, misery loves company. You want to project that onto other people make them miserable. So then you are all in this realm of confusion and, and terrible emotions. You have to do something to give yourself the relief that you need to mend your heart, to take that cork out and then be able to unite with the ones you love around you.

Sharon ([15:42](#)):

And you need to be careful of who you take the cork out with because not everyone would have understood you saying I'm really mad at Donovan. Not everybody would have understood that. Actually it could have turned into something really bad towards you. You know what I mean? Like people going, what? I don't get it. I don't understand it. You know what I mean? Because they're not expecting us to say that. Right. Not expecting as us to say I'm really mad and I'm really at Donovan.

Erica ([16:11](#)):

And that that's actually the word that I use was. I use it all the time because Mad didn't And I had to use that word. And when I use the word, it definitely let the steam out. And it, it would, it was like, it's like when you get that right puzzle piece together, it fit. And it felt right. And then I knew that's what I had to address.

Sharon ([16:37](#)):

But Erica, sometimes we don't want to be at the person who's died or we don't want to express our anger towards the person that's died out of fear that it's disrespectful to them. Well, they're dead. It would be disrespectful to them or the fear of being judged by others. That we're going to go here, but we have to tell the truth. Always. I know we're telling the truth and she took drugs and have had an overdose. Some of that responsibility lays on her, not everyone else in the room. I mean, we have to give her the responsibility that she owns. If he went on the motorcycle and got in an accident and killed himself, we have to give him the responsibility that he owns. Right. It's one, we're not giving them the responsibility of the parts that they played, that we we can get stuck in that anger.

Erica ([17:32](#)):

Yeah. And like you said, if we don't give them the responsibility and we make them the angel in the scenario, then we're putting, we're misplacing all the responsibility and the feelings that we're having. And they, you know, we never want to touch that because that was my baby. And you know, he didn't mean it. And, and I know he didn't, I know for there is not an ounce of me that does not think that Donovan totally regrets. When he first got to heaven, I feel like he was like, Oh crap. I messed up so much trouble. My mom is really going to be pissed. I believe that would my whole soul, Oh. And I can just see our dad setting.

Sharon ([18:19](#)):

They're like, you didn't done it now. Now come on, get over here. Let's go finish this gumbo and Austin going, Hey, let me give you the tour. Okay. Here's the joggy area.

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

Exactly. Oh my God. All of that played out in my head. I know that regrets, that choice. I know that he would do anything in his power to be here. He could. Yeah. And that's when I knew the responsibility was on me to heal. Yeah. Because he didn't do it on purpose. He did. I know. He absolutely thought he was, you know, Mr. Evil Knievel. I know I'm dating myself. But he wasn't, he was a young immature almost 21 year old adorable, amazing child. And he just made a mistake. And that, that is what it is. Yeah. But it took a lot of work to get to that point.

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

It took a lot of work. Okay. So here's what I want. I want to leave you guys with, if the anger is not taken care of, because sometimes we get asked how long could this anger last, if it is not taken care of and you don't go after it specifically in a specific way, it will last a lifetime.

Erica ([19:41](#)):

Yeah. And it will attack you physically. Yeah. You will start to have health problems, anger that, that feeling, if you're carrying it around, it's going to attack you physically. You have to do something to get that out, to save not only your heart, but your body.

Sharon ([20:00](#)):

And the very first step is call it out for what it is. It's anger. And I'm mad at you. Don't have to say it out loud to everybody in the room at the cocktail party, but you've got to tell it to yourself, got to tell the truth to yourself.

Erica ([20:15](#)):

And it's okay. It's okay to be angry. It doesn't make you a bad parent spouse, sister, child. It's okay to be angry. It's normal. And you're not doing anything wrong. You're not saying anything wrong. You're speaking your truth. And that's okay.

Sharon ([20:31](#)):

Yeah. Thank you, friends.

Erica ([20:33](#)):

Bye friends. Thank you.

Erica ([20:38](#)):

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 at 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 Grievors 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.