

Compound Grief

Sharon Brubaker & Erica Honore

Grief Specialists

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

Erica and Sharon, are sisters who began their grief journey in 2006, when Erica's 10 year old son, Austin drowned. 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](#)):

Oh, there we go. Okay. So when it comes to compounded grief and coping abilities, they, we expect them to go hand in hand. But most of the times they don't go hand in hand because we don't even know what compounded grief is. It's a term that we don't use. Right.

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

I actually thought you made it up. So yes, you're correct. It's a term we really don't use. And a lot of people don't think about grief in that way. I don't think.

Sharon ([01:10](#)):

Well, and you know, you said that you said jokingly, I thought you made it up. But the truth is that the medical industry wants to put all these labels on the different type of grief. Right? So we have compounded grief. We have anticipatory grief. We have complicated grief grief that goes past six months. We have the stages of grief. Why the hell don't we just call it grief people.

Erica ([01:34](#)):

Exactly.

Sharon ([01:35](#)):

Just say, it's the experience that your heart is going through. Why can't we just say that?

Erica ([01:41](#)):

And it's sad because we have met the people though that have loss after loss, after loss. It's not just the one, like even us people meeting us. We don't have just the one we have Austin. We have our dad, we have Donovan. We have countless other family members. Yes. So unfortunately there are people who experienced some really close together. Yeah. And you're drowning in grief.

Sharon ([02:14](#)):

Yes. So this came about, because I went to a funeral on Tuesday and as I was sitting there, the tears began to roll down my face. So it was a close family member, but not just for the loss of him before looking at his family right. In the one year of the pandemic, they have lost three people and none of them were due to COVID in one year, three, very close family members. So when you, I just sat there and my heart was hurting for them because it's compounded, let's add other stuff in there. That's not even a death. Right? So loss of job, the anxiety that goes along with the loss that you've already experienced, right? Divorce, relationship, breakup, all of that is coming in between and weave in it's way in between.

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

Right. That's why it's, it's like you can't function. How can you, how are you expected to perform your normal, just life duties? When you have all of this heavy weight on your heart and your soul, it just seems unreal.

Sharon ([03:30](#)):

Well, and then you get into the, you can very easily become that person that wants to talk about it all the time, but okay, Erica, let's talk about this. What happens when you don't have that safe place to go and talk about it all the time. So for example, you've had this compound of grief and loss and grief and loss, who wants to be your friend, right? Or that there's wild there that want to just sit and listen to that.

Erica ([03:55](#)):

And with our family and their heavy religious beliefs, they just want you to pray about it.

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

Yeah.

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

You know, just, you just got to pray on it, just give it to God.

Sharon ([04:07](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And a lot of times that's not where your heart is.

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

No.

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

You can be like, I don't want to pray right now. I don't want to pray about it. And that's okay. Wherever you are, because we constantly have to be telling our truth. So the term compounded grief is exactly that it's when all of the grief over our lifetime gets compressed together and causes, it causes us to go on a downward spiral, causes us to get stuck in that spot. You and I were talking about this earlier, how many times do we have a client that comes to us and says, I have to grieve this. And they come to us with that one relationship that they just know it happened to you and I.

Erica ([04:49](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([04:49](#)):

I have to grieve this. We're so clear on what it is. If you could just help me fix this one part in my life. But as you and I get deeper into doing the work, guess what we get into that bag. And all of a sudden I have to grieve this and I have to grieve this. And I have to, because we're not taught how to grieve the process, how to go through the process of grieving and dealing with all of those things so that they don't become compounded.

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

And we know in general, grief is cumulative and it's cumulatively negative. So when you have your losses from your childhood experience, through your adult life, all of that is already balled up into one big ball of hurt in your heart. But when you have those back to back losses, you cannot even make heads or tail of, for me personally, I don't think I would know which you just know you're hurting. You're just hurting and you're broken and you want it to stop. So you actually do need someone like us to help guide you, to sort them out. You have to start pulling them apart. So you could tell which one is the one that is so heavy on your heart. It's stopping you from living your life. And then once we could resolve that one, then you get a little bit of relief and you can start going after the other ones, but you got to start pulling those apart and sorting them out.

Sharon ([06:13](#)):

And I want to say this. And I think this is really important. A lot of times we want to look at sorting them out, intellectually in our brain because they come to us, intellectually, intellectually, they know calling for help is the right thing to do. Getting on the phone is the right thing to do. And here's the one that I need the help with. But the truth is the one that you need the most help with is the one that's pulling at your heart the most. And that one could have been, could have been an experience that happened you in kindergarten and elementary school. It could have been the one where your dad walked out the door, never to be seen again. Right? And here you are now grieving the death of your mom, but you have this experience that changed the trajectory of your life forever. So we don't know what that is. And so just what we even tell our clients. Don't tell me, look at your list and tell me what you need to grieve. I want you to look at your list and then I want you to put your hand over your heart. And I want you to feel each one of those experiences. When we call them heartstrings, Erica, you can build a heartstring being pulled when you feel it at your heart and it's being pulled. That's the one, there it is. You feel that tug, that's the one you need to work at.

Erica ([07:33](#)):

How many times have we had the experience when we've been working with clients and they don't even put the one pulling on their heartstrings on the list. It doesn't even make it on there. Like I see you didn't even put your dad on this list. What, you know, how's your, Oh, he walked out and I never talked to him, you know, from when I was five, that's kind of big. You want to talk about that?

Sharon ([07:56](#)):

I need to talk about that. Yeah. So it's other, like I noticed your dad's not even on the list. Oh yeah. Well, I hate him. I was five. And you're like, okay, let's not worry about that. Yeah. Jokingly, because we innocently live our lives, knowing that we have this relationship that is not in good standing and it's just, okay, we stepped in and we go on my friends. That's a loss, that's a huge loss. It's a huge loss.

Erica ([08:29](#)):

And it's because we want to intellectualize things and it's sorted out in our brain. We don't want to deal with the heavy stuff we don't want. That seems like so much work to have to relive that, Oh, I'm over it. That happened when I was five I'm, you know, I'm 50 now I'm over that. You have no idea how much that still affects every single day of your life, you know, until you sit down and we start pointing it out for them, how much they're affected by that and how much they're carrying that with them everyday and into all of their current relationships, their kids, their significant other, their friendships it's present every day.

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

Absolutely. Absolutely. And you know, a lot of our clients are functioning at a, at their full capacity and they're doing okay. And so what we're trying to say is like, Hey, we're not going to go in here and find anything. We're not looking to find anything, but if it's there and you do the work as, as we line it up, it will jump off the page. It is just so amazing how it actually comes to that, especially for young women. Right? So think about this. We, as young women, we need our dads. We need our dads to guide us. We need our dads to be in our line. That's not a life without your dad in it.

Erica ([09:47](#)):

Right.

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

That is a grieving experience. One of the things that I want to share, because we started on this show, talking about all the different types of griefs that there are and how we want to label all the griefs. One of the things that I have been getting instructed from my business coaches to drop the word grief, you needed to drop the word, grief. People. Aren't comfortable with the word grief. You know, let's see, let's stick with loss. Let's stick with broken heart, right? You'll get more people in. And I feel that it's our mission. Erica is to change. Why have a mission? And that is to change the world with their response to grief. That's my mission. That's what I'm going after. My goal is to help people grieve, understand that it's not an ugly word. It's not a dirty word. It is grief. And it comes in all these different forms. There's almost like a grief wheel, right? And he all these different forms. And one of those forms is complicated or compound compounded grief. Yes. But when we get the label and we stick it on us, then we start to live that way. But let's take out the label and just go it's grief.

Erica ([10:58](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([10:59](#)):

It hurts.

Erica ([11:01](#)):

I absolutely agree. We need to change. And the way people think about grief and we need to normalize talking about grief because Sharon, everyone is gonna have a grieving experience. Everyone, whether you want it or not, it's gonna happen. And it's gonna come. Like you said, in different forms, it's not always gonna be a death. It might be an illness that your family has been diagnosed with recently. And then you have to deal with that. It might be your child has a mental health diagnosis that you have to deal with. And you're trying to support them through that. It could be that you have an autistic child and non-typical job. There's so many forms and ways grief can show up for us. But the way that we try to resist talking about it, it's not doing anyone, any service. We got to get out of the mindset that we only have to talk about positive things on social media. We got to talk about real things, real life. This is what's happening in our real lives every day.

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

What happens though, when we decide not to deal with that, that loss, and we just go onto the next one, right? Is that the worst case scenario? Like what if you didn't deal with Donovan's loss? Where would you be right now? You can imagine.

Erica ([12:18](#)):

I don't think I would have, I don't like if I would have stayed in the state, I was in like, after, when I was like all angry,

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

Angry state, I thought of it. I think eventually it would have subsided that anger would have probably subsided. That's where we get the time heals. Right. Eventually the anger would have subsided, but you would have had this whole.

Erica ([12:39](#)):

You know who I would've been, I think, I think I would have been like, I would have been normal in, in one moment. Right. And then semi normal ish, normal ish. I would be normal ish. And then out of nowhere, I'd be sobbing, Susan, like, you know, like one little trigger, any little thing, and then I'd be crying because Donovan would never do that. Or I would never get to do that. Like as situations in life would present themselves, like you would be telling me about what your, one of your grandkids and then all of a sudden I'd be, I'd never have grandkids. That's what I would be because that's what happens when you don't go after the pain, anything will trigger it. And it just shows up for you. So I would either be sobbing Susan or mad and angry Erica out of nowhere. So I think that's, that's what happens when you don't deal with your grief, you can't control your emotions and any little trigger you're just flying off in 5 million different directions.

Sharon ([13:41](#)):

That made me so sad right now. You saying that made me so sad because there's so many people out there that are listening to the show right now and that's them.

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

Yeah.

Sharon ([13:50](#)):

And you know, the other thing is eventually you have to hide the griefs so bad that you only get to share it when you're in your car, you only get to experience it when you're in your car alone or you're in the in the shower.

Erica ([14:03](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([14:04](#)):

You get.

Erica ([14:04](#)):

Because people don't want to hear about it.

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

So the dark, right, you get pushed into the shadows, you're afraid to become something that's pushed into the shadows. And it only gets experienced in the shadows. Think about that. Gosh, that may be so sad. There are millions of people out here like that today.

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

Well, it is sad for us specifically because we know what it feels to be on the other side to have gone through the fire and the trenches and to make it out and to laugh a real laugh again. And to be able to tell stories about Sharon and our dad and Donovan and Austin and laugh hysterically at how silly they were and how great they were without having the pain and the, and the sorrow with it. And there are a lot of people that don't have that. Like it is possible. If you hear anything from the show, you don't have to just survive anymore. You can really live.

Sharon ([15:02](#)):

Yeah. You don't have to suffer alone to be in the shadows. We're here to say that you don't have to be in the shadows. That doesn't have to be your path. We're here for you. We see you. We are too. Or we were you.

Erica ([15:18](#)):

We were, we absolutely were you. We were broken. And we were sad and I was angry. We were all the things. And, and we got to a point, like Sharon said, I couldn't live. I don't think I could live. I don't think I could have lived like that anymore.

Sharon ([15:35](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Erica ([15:37](#)):

It's not something you can sustain.

Sharon ([15:40](#)):

Okay. Now I'm just, I'm just stuck in the sadness. So I have to share it. Could you imagine being that person and then the pandemic?

Erica ([15:48](#)):

No.

Sharon ([15:48](#)):

Yeah. I mean, imagine if you were way back when too, with Donovan and you were so angry and then now trying to go through a pandemic, I mean, that added to it. That's the compound we're talking about.

Erica ([15:58](#)):

Well I think when that's, those are the people that you see that become those social media warriors, and they go picking fights on social media with people because they don't know what to do with their

pain and misery loves company. So, Oh, you believe this. Well, how about that? You know, and that's, that's what the pandemic has driven people to, to the point where it looks like social media is just an ugly place now because there's no connection. There's no fun. It's all just fighting. And you know, no, that's not what it is, it's this. And no, I don't believe that it's that.

Sharon ([16:36](#)):

A comparison. Cause we're all, we're all broken in the point. Okay. Here's the deal sisters. If you're out there and you've heard this podcast and you're, you've taken your grief into the shelves, we want to hear your story. We are great listeners. Reach out. You have the connection in the show notes, where to find us. We would love to meet you in person and just have a conversation.

Erica ([17:03](#)):

Thank you for joining us again bye friends. Hi friends, Erica Andre 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 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 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 group at hope, heal and recover. Thank you so much for being with us. Have a great day friends.