



Healing ... Starts with the Heart

AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ON GRIEF

SHARON AND ERICA
GRIEF SPECIALISTS

Silhouette of Erica's Son Donovan



"People in grief need
someone to walk with them
without judging them."

— Gail Sheehy

Thank you for your interest in Healing Starts with the Heart.

It is our honor to give this, griever's guide, to you as a personal gift.

If you have downloaded this guide your heart is probably broken. Either from a death or one of the other 45 plus known losses that can cause a grieving experience.

Do know that we are here for you and your family.

Even though we do not know you personally.

We do know what a broken heart feels like.

And we know that it does not feel good.

This guide is equipped with amazing tips designed to help you the griever understand the definition of grief.

Remember understanding the definition of grief is only the beginning of your work! Completing what is broken in your heart is your next step.

If you have any questions, we are available to help you. Understand it is never too soon to get help for a broken heart.

You can reach out to us at any time to set up a free mini session with either Sharon and or Erica over the phone, online or face-to-face.

We appreciate you taking the time to review our guide.

Sincerely,

Erica Honore, GS

Sharon Brubaker, GS

Grief Specialists

Certified Life Coaches

Webster's Definition of Grief

noun /grēf/

noun

1. Deep sorrow, especially that caused by someone's death. "She was overcome with grief"

synonyms:

- *Sorrow*
- *Misery*
- *Sadness*
- *Anguish*
- *Pain*
- *Distress*
- *Agony*
- *Torment*
- *Affliction*
- *Suffering*
- *Heartache*
- *Heartbreak*
- *Broken Heartedness*
- *Heaviness Of Heart*
- *Woe*
- *Desolation*
- *Despondency*
- *Dejection*
- *Despair*
- *Angst*
- *Mortification*

How your brain processes grief...

None of these worked

- **Be Strong**
- **Just Give it Time**
- **Grieve Alone**
- **Replace the Loss**

Sharon's Experience with Grief

I didn't know what grief was or how to deal with it.

So, I did what I had seen everyone in my family do whenever we had experienced a loss.

I became very strong.

I had to be strong for my family to help them get through this.

I even grieved alone.

The very sad thing is I expected my children and husband to do the same when we were around Erica and Louis.

Just give it time I told my children.

This pain will go away in time.

So, we waited and waited, and nothing changed.

~Sharon~

How your heart feels grief ...

How I felt

- **I'm sad**
- **I'm broken**
- **I can't stop crying**
- **I want to die**

Erica's Experience with Grief

The pain I felt after my losses occurred was so debilitating, I didn't think I could survive it.

I was so broken and sad.

I could not stop crying.

I didn't think there was anyone out there who could understand how bad I felt.

~Erica~

The true definition of grief...

What Grief is:

Grief is a normal part of our human experience here on earth.

Grief is the name of the process your heart goes through when it has been broken.

Broken hearts grieve.

We are grieverers.

We experience grief.

The grieving experience has a beginning, middle and an end.

You must go through grief.

Grief cannot be escaped.

Grief is natural.

Grief is a broken heart.

Grief is unique to you.

No one knows how you feel.

Grief hurts.

Grief is not intellectual.

Your grief can never be compared to anyone.

Grief is the price of your love.

Grief is not

Both Sharon and Erica agree that symptoms of grief will vary from person to person.

- *A mental illness.*
- *A pathological condition.*
- *Grief is not Linear.*
- *Grief is not 5 Stages.*
- *A problem to be solved.*
- *A sign of weakness.*
- *A task to be finished.*
- *A disease.*

Grief....

Grief has the ability to impact us physically, psychologically and spiritually. A grieving experience is typically associated with the loss due to death. However, you can grieve the loss of anything significant to you.

Grief is associated with a long list of emotional and physical symptoms. Including but not limited to:

- *Shock*
- *Numbness*
- *Sadness*
- *Despair*
- *Loneliness*
- *Isolation*
- *Yearning*
- *Anger*
- *Difficulty concentration*
- *Forgetfulness*
- *Irritability*
- *Increased or decreased appetite*
- *Increase in sexual urges*
- *Fatigue*
- *Sleeplessness*
- *Feeling of guilt*
- *Regret*
- *Depression*
- *Anxiety*
- *Crying*
- *Headaches*
- *Weakness*
- *Aches*
- *Pains*
- *Worry*
- *Frustration*
- *Detachment*
- *Isolation*
- *Questioning of your faith*
- *Asking yourself Why?*

Grief is not just experienced when a death occurs:

There are many experiences that can cause a grieving experience in your heart. Death and Divorce are just the most popular that everyone talks about.

This list includes some of the following:

Death

Divorce

Pet Lost

Marital Problems

Major Financial Changes

Residual childhood pain

Marital Separation'

Personal Injury

Loss of Health

Break-up of a Relationship

Ending a Drug or Alcohol Addiction

Being Fired from Work

Having trouble in school

Gaining a new family member

(birth or adoption)

Trouble with in-laws

Childhood hurts, pains and losses

Moving – leaving all your friends and family behind

Birth of a non-typical child

Miscarriage

Work – working more than 40 hours a week

Sexual difficulties sexual identifying or confusion

Change in school

Violation of the law jail term of a family member or yourself

Puberty

Bullying at work or school

Change in independence

Reconciliation with a mate

Feeling that life is just not happy

Child molestation, rape or loss of control of your body

Retirement

Change in weight

Serious health problems of a family member

Stress can be unresolved grief

Outstanding personal achievement

Menopause

Empty nest

End of a large project

Loss of faith

Unresolved grief from the past

Abortion

Bankruptcy or Foreclosure

Questions

1. Were you surprised to find out that grief is not just from death?
2. Are there any losses from the list that you have experienced?
3. Did the list bring up any emotions for you? List them here.

You may experience all or some of the following:

Loss of any of the following:

- *Trust*
- *Safety*
- *Control*
- *Faith*
- *Fertility*

Your emotions may be up and down ranging from unpredictable crying episodes to intense anger episodes.

- *Lack of focus.*
- *A zombie like state. (feeling as if in a fog)*
- *You may be overeating.*
- *You may have no appetite at all.*
- *You may feel like you cannot sleep.*
- *You may feel like all you want to do is sleep.*
- *Your emotions may be up and down ranging from unpredictable crying episodes to intense anger episodes.*
- *Intense anxiety.*
- *Telling and retelling the story of your loved one and their death.*

Everything you feel right now is normal!

After I was given the news that my boys had passed away, I was numb and in shock.

I often sat staring out at nothing all the while thinking how can this be my life?

How did this happen to me?

There wasn't anything anyone said to me in those moments that helped me or brought me comfort.

I was just sad and broken.

I felt like I was just gliding in and out of consciousness hardly registering what was going on around me.

Eventually the extreme numbness started to fade, and I became more and more aware of what was happening around me, but none of it really mattered.

All that mattered was that I was sad, I felt like I was going to die, and I didn't think the pain would ever go away.

I know now that everything I felt in those days and weeks following the tragic deaths of my boys was totally normal.

Grievors already know how to grieve because grieving is natural.

Unfortunately, we're not told this because we're not equipped to talk about grief.

As a society, we're not given the right words. Instead we're told very unhelpful things like "You need to be strong" and "They're in a better place." In my honest opinion, the best place for my boys is with me!

It's okay to feel everything your feeling right now in this moment.

It's okay to sit and stare off into space.

It's okay to cry uncontrollably for as long as you need.

It's okay to be angry and to want to yell.

It's okay to not want to get out of bed.

But after you do all of those things it's time to do some work to help you move beyond the pain.

"Just give it time," is not the advice you need right now.

Time alone will not heal your pain but taking a series of action steps within a period of time will help to mend your broken heart.

I'm speaking from experience and from my heart.

I would not be where I am today had I not made the correct choices that lead me to start picking up the pieces of my life and working my way back to a life that's worth living.

~Erica~

When is it time to begin healing?

When my heart was broken from the loss of my nephew Austin, I could not imagine ever feeling better.

I remember thinking will this pain ever go away.

I would often go into the shower and just cry because I did not want my children to see me in tears.

I thought that I would be in this pain for the rest of my life.

Now looking back at that time in my life I remember some of the things that were told to me by close friends and family.

It breaks my heart to think of the large amount of misinformation out in the world.

For the most part loved ones around you want you to feel better.

They want you to feel better right away.

So, inevitably they will say things like, "Keep Busy" you will feel better in time.

I did take this advice at first. Unfortunately, I never felt better.

There was just this pain and sadness.

My doctor told me while on a visit that it would take time before I start to feel better.

I trusted him. And then I waited, and waited, but this pain did not go away or start to ease up. I now know that the above statements are some of the lies of grief or misinformation that we hear from family and friends when they are trying to help.

I was able to complete my relationship with Austin 8 months after his death.

The good news is that we do not have to wait to start the steps to healing from a loss.

Grief healing can begin almost immediately.

That doesn't mean griever's will be happy the loss occurred, or they don't care about the loss.

It's simply means they can immediately act.

Griever's want to talk about what happened and they want to talk about both the good and bad aspects of the relationship.

Almost every relationship ends with things we wish were different.

Those thoughts are the beginning on the road to healing.

If you're still wondering if it's too soon to begin to heal, answer these two questions:

If you fell and gashed your leg and blood was pouring out, would you immediately seek medical attention?

The obvious answer is yes.

If circumstances and events conspired to break your heart, would you seek attention immediately, or would you allow yourself to bleed to death emotionally?

Pick one!

We can give you the tools you need to address your grief, so you don't spend the rest of your life waiting to feel better.

~Sharon~

What is healing?

Healing means although you will be forever changed by the event that has caused you to grieve you are still able to experience joy.

You have allowed yourself to work through your grief and you are now feeling human again and genuinely wanting to enjoy a future in spite of not having your loved one to enjoy it with.

Healing means you can sit and tell stories about your loved one and instead of those memories causing you pain they bring a smile to your face and make your heart full.

True healing means you have learned how to talk about grief and loss and how to communicate to those around you exactly what you need in order to feel supported.

Just because you're experiencing the peace and serenity that healing can bring there will still be times that you will get sad.

Anniversaries and birthdays will be bittersweet, and it's okay to be sad.

Healing is not easy and at times you may feel as though it is not possible but keep working and don't give up!

You're so brave for wanting this and for acknowledging that you still deserve to live a life without this pain.

True healing is ME!!!!!! I am not here to feed you a song and dance about how amazing your life can be.

I am living my best life.

I have taken these steps, I have done this work and I am a better wife, a better mother and a better person because of it.

~Erica~

Questions

4. What challenges are you struggling with at the moment?
5. Have you ever had a grief experience before?
6. Is this or other losses having an effect on other areas of your life?

Questions

7. What effects is this having on your body?

8. Where will you be in five years from now if you change nothing at all?

9. Do you have the support you need to help you in your healing process?

Grieving while parenting.

Telling your truth about your own grief will help to reassure your child that he or she is not alone and that it is acceptable to feel all types of emotions in response to loss.

- *Be willing to let them see you sad*
- *Be willing to talk about the loss*
- *Be open to discussing the hard parts, honestly*
- *Be willing to maintain a genuine, warm, and supportive conversation*
- *Be willing to discuss grief as it changes and shifts in the days, weeks and years to come*

Hiding your own grief and not allowing the expression of emotions like sadness and anger will do more harm than good. Denying your child, the ability to express themselves freely can lead to:

• *Your Child Feeling Isolated- imagine how confusing it would be to think he or she is the only one expressing such pain and how isolating it would be to think the emotions they feel so strongly are unacceptable.*

• *It is beneficial for children to learn how to tolerate and cope with their emotions, as opposed to learning how to avoid them. Avoiding not only prohibits a person from fully engaging with the world, but it can contribute to psychological disorders like anxiety, depression and PTSD.*

• *Your child learning that emotions and memories should be feared. When a child feels that certain emotions and emotional expressions are unacceptable or should be avoided, the message they receive is that these emotions are bad.*

How to talk to your children about grief.

Always

- *Go first. As the adult, you are the leader and you need to set the tone and the pace for the conversation.*
- *Tell the truth about how you are feeling. Telling the truth about your own grief and about how you feel will establish trust and make your child feel safe with opening up about his or her own feelings.*
- *Recognize that grief is emotional, not intellectual and that sad or scared feelings are normal.*
- *Listen with your heart, not your head. Allow all emotions to be expressed without judgment, criticism, or analysis.*
- *Remember that each child is unique and has a unique relationship to the loss. It's okay for siblings to not share the same emotions or express themselves in the same manner.*
- *Be patient. Don't force your child to talk. Give your child time. Make sure to plant healthy ideas about talking about feelings.*

How to talk to your children about grief.

Never

- *Never say "Don't Feel Scared." Fear is a common and normal response.*
- *Never say "Don't Feel Sad." Sadness is a healthy and normal reaction. Sadness and fear, the two most common feelings attached to loss of any kind, are essential to being human.*
- *Never ask your children how they are feeling. Like adults, fearful of being judged, they will automatically say, "I'm Fine," even though they are not.*
- *Never act strong for your children. They will interpret your "non-feeling" as something they are supposed to copy.*
- *Never compare their lives or situations to others in the world. Comparison always minimizes feelings.*
- *Never make promises that you cannot keep. Instead of saying "Everything's going to be okay," say, "We'll do everything we can to be safe."*
- *Never forget that your children are very smart. Treat them and their feelings with respect and dignity as you would like to be treated by others.*

Make your love one a part of everyday family life.

Your loved one has died, but that doesn't mean that they aren't still an important part of you and your family. Continue to find ways to talk about your loved one and to make them a part of your life.

When Austin died, it was very important to Erica that we keep his memory alive for three-year-old Jordan. She encouraged everyone to tell stories about him regularly and she made it a tradition to continue to celebrate his birthday every year. They still do this to this day.

Remember that special days, hard days, milestones, and holidays may be especially difficult for your child, so it's important to have a plan for those days. Involve your children with developing the plan so that it will be meaningful for them as well.

Take space when you need it.

Trust your gut when considering how much emotion is too much for your child to witness from you. Although we encourage you to grieve openly, we do recognize that there is a point when this can lead to the child feeling responsible for the emotional well-being of the parent.

Important:

Parenting while grieving follows the same guidelines as applying an oxygen mask when on an airplane. You have to put the mask on yourself first, before you put the mask on your child. In order to encourage your child to heal you must go after what is broken in your heart as well.

Your child will learn how to handle their grief by watching you.

This type of learning can happen at any time in a person's life, but it is most common in childhood as kids learn to navigate the world by paying attention to the behavior of their peers and trusted adults

You may instinctively feel as though you should protect your child from negative emotions by masking your grief or by minimizing reminders of loved ones no longer here. However, this benefits no one. Think about it. After a child has experienced the death of someone they love, or even a beloved pet it is impossible to protect them from difficult emotions. Instead, it's important that parents show their children that while the emotions of grief can be extremely painful, they are acceptable, normal, and not to be feared.

Statistics on Death

**Mortality experience in 2017 NCHS reports can be downloaded from:
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/index.htm>**

In 2017, a total of 2,813,503 resident deaths were registered in the United States, yielding a crude death rate of 863.8 per 100,000 population.

The age-adjusted death rate, which accounts for the aging of the population, was 731.9 deaths per 100,000 U.S. standard population.

Life expectancy at birth was 78.6 years.

The 15 leading causes of death in 2017 were:

1. Diseases of heart. (heart disease)
2. Malignant neoplasms. (cancer)
3. Accidents. (unintentional injuries)
4. Chronic lower. respiratory diseases
5. Cerebrovascular diseases. (stroke)
6. Alzheimer disease.
7. Diabetes mellitus. (diabetes)
8. Influenza and pneumonia.
9. Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis.
(kidney disease)
10. Intentional self-harm. (suicide)
11. Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis.
12. Septicemia.
13. Essential hypertension and hypertensive renal
disease. (hypertension)
14. Parkinson disease.
15. Pneumonitis due to solids and liquids.

In 2017, the infant mortality rate was 5.79 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

The 10 leading causes of infant death were:

1. Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities. (congenital malformations)
2. Disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight, not elsewhere classified. (low birth weight)
3. Newborn affected by maternal complications of pregnancy. (maternal complications)
4. Sudden infant death syndrome. (SIDS)
5. Accidents. (unintentional injuries)
6. Newborn affected by complications of placenta, cord and membranes. (cord and placental complications)
7. Bacterial sepsis of newborn.
8. Diseases of the circulatory system.
9. Respiratory distress of newborn.
10. Neonatal hemorrhage.

The decrease in life expectancy at birth for the total population in 2017 was mainly due to increases in mortality from unintentional injuries, suicide, diabetes, Alzheimer disease, and Influenza and pneumonia, with unintentional injuries making the largest contribution. The difference in life expectancy between the non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black populations decreased by 0.1 year, from 3.7 years in 2016 to 3.6 years in 2017.

Among external cause-of-injury deaths, unintentional poisoning has been the leading mechanism of injury mortality since 2011. The difference in the infant mortality rate of 5.79 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2017 from 5.87 in 2016 was not statistically significant.

The 10 leading causes of infant death in 2017 remained the same as in 2016, although 4 causes changed ranks.

The age-adjusted death rate increased 0.4% in 2017.

Meet the Sisters Erica and Sharon

HEALING STARTS WITH THE HEART

Our Coaching Philosophy

We work with women who have suffered a loss of their loved ones, women with pain trapped in their hearts, women who are ready to work and improve the quality of their lives. By hitting the reset button on their heart, they can heal, grow, and transform their lives.

We are Erica and Sharon, and we are Sisters and Life Coaches, specializing in dealing with grief and heartbreaks. For the past 14 years, we have facilitated an educational program on grief and loss. This program, combined with our personal experience and expertise, helps women to move on from their pain.

There are many types of losses one can experience over a lifetime. At Healing Starts with the Heart, we work women experiencing loss of any kind. Our specialty is helping women heal from the grief caused by death. We teach women everywhere that death and divorce are not the only grieving experiences in life. Our educational program offers the probability of a richer and more rewarding life.

After the tragic death of Erica's 10-year-old son, Austin, our hearts were broken. We felt like a knife had been inserted into our hearts. Nevertheless, we were lucky enough to find an amazing educational program to teach us what grief was and how to navigate through it. Once we worked through our own relationships with Austin, we knew that we wanted to guide others along their personal journey through grief. We are truly dedicated to helping anyone who suffers from a broken heart find peace again.

Use the following link to have access to our online presence:

<https://linktr.ee/SharonandErica>

Private Facebook Group

Facebook Page

Instagram

Youtube

Website

Podcasts

Blog

Thank you for taking the time out of your day to meet us. We do know that it was not easy for you to come to reach out for help. We know that you may feel vulnerable and scared to admit to yourself where you are really stuck in your grief process. We also know that the tools we teach can change everything for you. Without these tools our life would be so different right now. We would not be living. We both cause ourselves a great deal of unnecessary suffering. We are on a mission to make sure no griever has to endure any unnecessary prolonged suffering. Grieving is hard all by itself. There is an entire world available to you that makes handling grief challenges less overwhelming. You don't have to heal. But why would you not want to feel better? We would be honored to be your grief coaches.

Let's Continue to Share Our Grief ~

Sharon and Erica