

Anticipatory 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 brokenhearted 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](#)):

Anticipatory grief. What is anticipatory grief? Anticipatory grief is the grief or the feeling of anticipating the pain and the brokenness that's going on. When you know, there's an impending death coming.

Erica ([00:58](#)):

Right.

Sharon ([00:59](#)):

Anticipatory grief is I would say, trying to living in the grief prior to the loss.

Erica ([01:07](#)):

Yeah. So you have a terminal illness and you are, and you know that it's going to come to an end and you are preparing yourself. So you feel as though you're already grieving until the person is then the person passes away and then you're really grieving.

Sharon ([01:30](#)):

Right.

Erica ([01:30](#)):

So it goes from anticipatory grief to real grief.

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

So our father died in 2014 of bone cancer. And he was sick for seven years. We dealt with it for seven years, ups and downs over seven years. And at the end, I remember driving in the car, trying to imagine what I was going to feel like after he was gone. I remember being in the car and going, I was like, like literally put down in my heart, like, okay, what is this going to feel like? Because think about it at that moment, Erica, you and I were like, there's five of us. So the five of us and our mom, we're doing everything we could to make him comfortable doing it so that we each had shifts. We took shifts. And just so you know, I figured out you need at least six kids to have around the clock care.

Erica ([02:30](#)):

Now it totally makes sense why people had so many kids back in the day because they come in handy later on.

Sharon ([02:35](#)):

So we're like each had our shifts, we were covering our shifts. We were doing what we needed to do. We're doing the grocery shopping. We're doing the talking to the doctors, we're doing all that. Right. And I'd be in the car and I'd be like, okay, what is it going to feel like, okay, when he dies, I'm going to, it's going to come over me and I'm going to feel this way. And as hard as I tried, I couldn't get to that feeling of what it actually felt like afterwards it was a grieving experience. I was grieving losses. Every time our dad dropped to his new normal when he couldn't walk anymore. And we rolled that out for a few weeks. Right. And then he stopped talking, he dropped to a new normal, and we rolled that out for a few weeks. I never got to the feeling that I had, not even after the day he died, but after the funeral was done and two or three weeks later, man, I got hit with a ton of bricks. I never could get there. So you think you can kind of imagine it, but that's not possible.

Erica ([03:38](#)):

And, and our dad dying was after Austin. So we had already had a traumatic grieving experience. So you think it's going to feel like that because that's in my head, I'm like, okay, this is going to be like, when we lost Austin, it's going to be, but it's totally different because he's not a child. He's our dad. He was our recipe guru and our grocery store sales person. And he was, you know, the best grandfather cause the, you know, all the grandkids just love to be. So he was so many things and a person that had been with us our entire lives. So yeah, you're trying to, for me, I was like, okay, we, we we've done this before. We've, we've wrapped our brains around this and we've made it through the Austin grief. We're gonna do our dad and it's going to be similar. And just like you, that thing whacked me upside the head when he was gone. And it was a totally different feeling. It's totally, and I don't know why my brain was like, Oh, it's going to be similar. You know what? You, you guys are going to do the same stuff. Like we are gonna do the same totally different.

Sharon ([04:51](#)):

Okay. You just stole my example.

Erica ([04:54](#)):

What? I'm sorry. I was speaking from my personal experience.

Sharon ([05:01](#)):

Because I had this example and then you keep going on it. Okay. Yeah, you're right. It's true. But, okay. So I want to use that example and go one step further. I thought that we've been through this before when Donovan died.

Erica ([05:15](#)):

So did I.

Sharon ([05:16](#)):

I thought we'd been through this before. I know how to do this. I thought the same thing.

Erica ([05:22](#)):

I said it out loud.

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

Yeah, you do.

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

I said it to Jordan. I'm like, we did this already. We can do it. I was so stupid.

Sharon ([05:32](#)):

That was dumb. Not for you. It's a dumb thought that we had.

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

Well that's our brains. That's our brains taking over. Those are our thoughts.

Sharon ([05:41](#)):

Right.

Erica ([05:42](#)):

So it's like, yeah. We're grief specialists. I just got re-certified I got this. Huh?

Sharon ([05:53](#)):

Yeah, it does. It does take it take on a different toll. So I, I tried to imagine, so I would think that the anticipatory grief is more of the, this is to me, this was my experience. It was the anticipatory grief was more of the experiences I was having in the moment dropping into the new levels. Me being with Sharon at her bedside. And I'm telling you Sharon's diagnosis to the 10. She died. It was so quick that the new normal is just kept coming so fast. The other thing that I think happens is with an example, like Sharon, from the diet, from the diagnosis to the day she left me was two months. Right. And everything is happening so fast. You're trying to figure out, I gotta get a hospital bed. I got to get home care. I got to get this. I got to get that. You don't slow down long enough. Sometimes I think to feel the people.

Erica ([06:44](#)):

Right. Well, and you were trying to be such a bridge for her kids and prepare them that you absolutely there's no time to slow down because every minute was consumed by something.

Sharon ([06:58](#)):

Right.

Erica ([06:58](#)):

And that's what happens when you have a family member, a loved one friend, whoever that has a terminal illness. And it gets to those and times it's every day and every minute, like you said, you're trying to make the shift. You're doing the schedule to make sure that they're comfortable to make sure they have someone with them and available to meet their needs whenever they need something. And then you're there, there isn't any time to process.

Sharon ([07:25](#)):

Right.

Erica ([07:25](#)):

Any type of pain.

Sharon ([07:26](#)):

Right? So here's the deal. Anticipatory grief doesn't always happen.

Erica ([07:30](#)):

Right.

Sharon ([07:31](#)):

Number one, it doesn't always happen. Sometimes we're so busy. We don't allow it in. We stay so intellectual. So in our head, we, we very rarely have times to go to our heart and then there's, sometimes it does come in, right? It also, it just prefer a group doesn't mean that our after grief is going to be the same as the, before grief, it changes, grief changes, grief ebbs, and flows. Grief has up and down grief with feels like a nice step clear through your heart. And then some days you feel nothing.

Erica ([08:07](#)):

Right. Well, and I think that the difference is when you're anticipating it, you still have your person they're still here. You still touch them. You can still talk to them. You know, grief, as we say is the result of undelivered communication. So you could be in the room telling, telling our dad how much we loved him and how much, you know, we had him. He was receiving that when he's gone, it's a game changer.

Sharon ([08:37](#)):

So it is grief as also conflicting. Yeah. Just going back to what you were sharing. We had this most amazing moment with our dad three days before he died. It was, it was actually the last days, the last day that he taught, we had this most amazing experience with them, all of us. And then he went sort of down, dropped down into the coma part. And I remember praying for God to just take him.

Erica ([09:05](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([09:05](#)):

I didn't want him to be in pain. I actually prayed for God to please let his suffering end, let his suffering end. Don't, I didn't want to see him like that. But then when he was gone, I even thought to myself, what an idiot, you prayed for this to happen? What were you thinking? You know? So it conflicted. It like it rips you apart. It just rips me apart. I also remember having an amazing moment like that with Sharon, this absolute amazing moment in the hospital room, sitting in the dark with her. And I said, Hey, are you scared? And she said, no, she was so calm. It was beautiful. Yeah. When she was gone, you know, I try to pull on that strength, but I couldn't.

Erica ([09:55](#)):

Yeah. I know, gosh, who'd have thought this would get emotional. I think. And I think that's the thing. I think people, I think the concept of anticipatory grief is intellectual. I think whoever clone this phrase was in their head and it, and it's a place you go in your head because you're just like trying, like you said, you're trying to imagine it. You're trying to like force yourself. Okay. When he's gone, I know it's going to

be hard, but I've done this before and you're talking yourself through this thing, but you have no idea what it's going to feel like until they're actually gone.

Sharon ([10:32](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([10:34](#)):

You have no idea. When you can't pick up the phone and say, dad, I need to make potato salad for 50 people. How many potatoes do I need? And he could tell you exactly how many potatoes, how many onions, how much mayonnaise and where to get it all at the best prices. You have no idea what that's going to feel like.

Sharon ([10:53](#)):

Oh my God. The best example. Well, you have no idea what your heart is going to feel like.

Erica ([11:00](#)):

Right.

Sharon ([11:00](#)):

Because I agree with you before, prior to that, we're all in our head. You have no idea what your heart is going to feel. And it feels like the worst case ever

Erica ([11:09](#)):

It does because it's like, you know, the, the person you can attribute your quiriness to, and you're the one, you know, we'll get your sense of humor. And the one, you know, he's missing, he's missing. And there's like things that are still happening. Lauren had another baby and you know, Brittany moved to Texas and, and she's a chicken mom and you know, all of these things that he would love and he's not here to witness.

Sharon ([11:38](#)):

Okay, Erica let's shift a little bit.

Erica ([11:40](#)):

Okay.

Sharon ([11:41](#)):

It's that same thing happens when you hate the person.

Erica ([11:44](#)):

Yeah. You think it won't but it does.

Sharon ([11:47](#)):

Or you get a divorce or they move away or you move away. This same experience happens grief in your heart. When you don't love them, when they are less than love when they are not important in your life, when they have brought you nothing but pain in English.

Erica ([12:09](#)):

Right. Because the feeling is, you were never there for me. You never did anything for me. You didn't contribute to my life.

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

Right.

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

And now you're just gone. So you're really not here for me.

Sharon ([12:20](#)):

Right.

Erica ([12:20](#)):

Even if we wanted to reconcile now I can't because you're not here.

Sharon ([12:25](#)):

Yeah.

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

So yeah, because it's the feelings of abandonment of rejection. All of that is heightened.

Sharon ([12:37](#)):

Yes. Yeah. And I think that we don't get the same count. We don't give it the same energy thinking that well, I hated them anyway. So it doesn't matter. The part is though that part where you're hating them is absolutely in your heart.

Erica ([12:54](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([12:54](#)):

It's there it's pain. That's left in your heart. So I don't want you to think we only have these these with great relationships. We have complicated relationships as well. We have these experiences and these feelings and these emotions that show up with complicated relationships as well.

Erica ([13:14](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([13:14](#)):

For sure.

Erica ([13:14](#)):

Like your grief is definitely like an onion. It has so many layers.

Sharon ([13:19](#)):

Yes.

Erica ([13:20](#)):

And you have to go through and, and tackle each one so that you could really free your heart and just, just get rid of all that negativity and the sadness and the pain. It's not, it's normal. Grief is so normal and the pain is normal and, and all the experiences are normal, but it's, it sucks. It sucks. And you want to get to living. You want to get to wanting to go out and meet up with your friends again and not feel like you're going to be the Debbie downer in the bunch. Cause you have all this heaviness in your heart.

Sharon ([13:54](#)):

Right. You do want to get to living. But what happens is we see so many people that are just like trying to push through, trying to push through. And I say this all the time, wherever you go, there you are. And wherever you are, you have your broken heart with you. And if it's five years, because there is no set amount of time to grieving. So whether it's five years, 10 years or 20 years, it's there with you.

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

Yeah.

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

It's there with you. Okay, sisters, thank you so much for allowing us to share our dad with you and bring up such great memories. We really enjoy this time. Well, this was a good podcast.

Erica ([14:31](#)):

It really is.

Sharon ([14:33](#)):

If you really are looking for someone to talk to Erica and I are great listeners, we'd love you to share your dad's with us.

Erica ([14:40](#)):

We love dad's stories. As you can tell, please reach out to us. We're here for you. Thank you for joining us friends. Bye.

Sharon ([14:49](#)):

Bye.

Erica ([14:51](#)):

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.