

A Brother's Grief

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

Erica and Sharon are sisters who began a Grief Journey in 2006, when Erica's 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 can 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 Shannon are coitted to sharing their experiences of love, loss, and healing through this podcast. Now your Grief Specialists, Sharon and Erica.

Erica ([00:41](#)):

All right, welcome everyone to healing starts with the heart, the podcast. This is Erica and I know you're normally not used to hearing me start with the intro, but for once in her lifetime, Sharon took a day off and she is outta the office. So I'm in control today, which we don't know when this will happen again. So I'm going to enjoy this. Today I have a very special guest, my son, Jordan Jones. We've talked about him a lot. So you guys have heard from me a lot about him, but this time I thought it was a good idea for you guys to hear from him what his experience has been like grieving and how it's changed for him over the years. So, Jordan, why don't you go ahead and introduce yourself and give us a little bit of your story.

Jordan ([01:32](#)):

What's up. Y'all my name's Jordan Jones. I am let's see, I am a freshman student at Midwestern state university. I am studying criminal justice and I really don't know how else to describe myself at the moment.

Erica ([01:54](#)):

So give us a little bit of your, I mean, everybody knows our story. Everyone who listens to the podcast knows our story, and I've shared a lot about your perspective, but this is the first time they're hearing it directly from you. So give us, like, from your version, like how things played out for you?

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

Well, I mean, let's see, go back those years. I mean the worst day. I mean, would've to be the day I found out, when we woke up in that hotel room and you and dad got a call and you know, all, all were screaming and like just cootion. And at first, I feel bad to admit it, but at first I thought that I got a, you guys got a bad call about granny. So then I started worrying about granny and then you guys came in and then you guys told me the news and

it just, it took my breath away. Like I couldn't, I did, I couldn't stand. I couldn't think it's just, I was stuck in that moment. It, it was it was really weird. I mean, of course, you know, I had already, you know, acknowledged that I lost Austin. And just the fact that I was, you know, had to come to terms that not only did I lose another brother, but I truly lost my best friend and it, it, it hurt. It really hurt.

Erica ([03:37](#)):

Yeah. Do you re so that was about Donovan when, when Donovan passed away. But do you remember anything about Austin passing away? Do you remember anything about that time? Cause you were so tiny. You were three years old?

Jordan ([03:49](#)):

No, no, not at all. That's, that's probably the biggest grief I would say I have about Austin is the fact that I don't have as much memories as I have with him than I do with Donovan, because I was so young. I mean, really, I can only really think of one memory of me in Austin when, you know, we were up to shenanigans and on top of grandfather's car, covering it with snails, getting in trouble. But what I can really remember is us at the San Jose House. And you showed me a website that somebody put up for Austin and there was a voice thing.

Jordan ([04:34](#)):

For him and had his voice on there. And I remember I just kept playing it back and playing it back and playing it back. But that was the only recollection I have in.

Erica ([04:44](#)):

Yeah. So then I'm gonna move forward, going back to Donovan, you were 12 years old when Donovan passed away, how has, and you're gonna be 19 this month. So how has the grief changed for you over the years?

Jordan ([05:03](#)):

It's it ha I I've noticed myself that it has changed. But what I will say about grief is that no matter what happens, it does get better. Your situation will get better as like, if you get the, if you get the right help, if you're around the right people, it will get better. But I mean, I think that maturing and, you know, without having my best friend to guide me, you know, he's older than me, so he's supposed to tell me what to do. I mean, having to take those steps on my own. I mean, it just, it, it kind of made me like wake up kind of.

Erica ([05:51](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So you you've kind of trial and error learned some things. Yeah. And then to, you know, make our lives even more complete. We added Kayla into the mix. So you went from having two brothers to no brothers, and then you got a sister. What was that like?

Jordan (06:09):

That, that was really, really strange. I mean, obviously we had Kayla out back in California and having her around was really fun because Donovan was already outta the house doing his own thing. And I was pretty much by myself, you know, besides going to school. And when Kayla came around, we were always hanging out either going to 7/11 watching movies or doing who's know what, but when she finally officially came into my lives, it was, it was kind, it was really nice at the time because, I mean, I felt my lowest right there. And I mean, of course it didn't fill, it didn't fill the hole in my heart that I was feeling, but it was, it was really good to have her there.

Erica (06:56):

-H, so you were, you were saying that, you know, grief does get better if you get the right help. So I know as you know, parenting, while grieving, I say this all the time parenting while grieving is one of the hardest things to do, because not only was I worried about my broken heart and how I was gonna get through each day, I then had you and Kayla, depending on me to, and me trying to get you through your day. So I know there's a lot of times I failed and stumbled, cuz that, that was a very, very hard grieving experience. After losing Donovan, what would, how did, how did I help you and what are the, what are the ways that you felt supported by me during that time?

Jordan (07:42):

I mean, as much as I hate to express my feelings and talk, you were always there. You always, you know, asked me like how I felt about things and made me go into detail to actually get my feelings out. Instead of having me compress come down and then turning out worse and you know, me actually telling you, but yeah, just really just being there and actually trying to get to the root of the problem.

Erica (08:16):

And there was an important time where we actually got outside counseling because I felt like I, we were in a situation where I couldn't be the one to help you because you definitely did not like to open up as much as we did talk. You still stuffed a lot of things. What was that like for you? Was that helpful?

Jordan (08:38):

I mean in a way because, I mean, I, I guess it was just an outlet for me to really get everything I needed out. But I, I still feel, as if I was still like holding back, not really searching, like what was really wrong, but that was a me problem, but counseling did help.

Erica (09:09):

And what have you learned about grief just from your personal experience? What, what personally have you learned about grief?

Jordan ([09:29](#)):

What I have personally learned about grief is to surround yourself around the people you love. No matter how sad, angry, or confused you feel at the moment, the best place to be. Even if you feel alone, be with at least one person that couldn't hurt you. But just being with people, being around people made it a hundred times easier.

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

-H. Sharon and I have done a couple shows about like young people. Who've experienced grief early on whether they lost a parent or a sibling or a grandparent and the family kind of doesn't really move past the pain. So it's almost like these kids were like raised in grief into, you know, so it's like their first really heavy emotions were grief. Do you feel cuz Austin died when you were three Donovan died when you were 12 and then grandfather passed in between, I think you were 10 when grandfather passed away, do you feel like you were raised in grief?

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

No. I mean, of course there was a lot of, of bad passings in our family and a lot of influential ones too. But no, I don't believe that I was raised in grief. I just believe that there is a different plan and things happen, but I think, I mean, grief is a, a way of life. I mean, it'd be a blessing if you could go a whole lifetime without experiencing grief, but it is what it is.

Erica ([11:10](#)):

Yeah. And if you had to speak to parents, there's a lot of, we work with a lot of different parents and they don't know what to do with their kids, how to help them. What would be a few things that you would suggest that they do in order to help their kids to feel supported?

Jordan ([11:31](#)):

Well, if it were a case like me and you have a child who doesn't really feel comfortable expressing his feelings, I would say the best thing is patience. I have not like give him weak sore months at a time, but like ask him how he feels. If he doesn't fill out to it, then try a different approach. Maybe sometime later that day, or maybe even try to like get out of him while, while you two are doing activities or when his mind's not, you know, on lockdown. Try to ease him towards you, expressing how he feels. And it'll be more easier for them. But if you have a child and they're easier to express, I mean, that's in, in the writing, but I would say that patience in patience is key.

Erica ([12:29](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And I've, I've been told by, by several people in our, in our country who have experienced loss, that you are very helpful. You, you know, reach out to the people who have lost a loved one. You're very expressive. Is do you feel for them? Is it because you feel, you know, what that feels like, that you wanna be there for them? Like what guides you to like take that first step in that initiative?

Jordan ([12:59](#)):

That firsthand experience, like, of course from what I've learned from you is that I firsthand do not know how they feel. I don't know what a type of grief they're experiencing, but I felt grief. So I try my best to, to help them anyway that I can. But it's just that, that feeling that like I've gotten I've, I've felt what they have felt. So I know that I wouldn't want anybody to feel that way. I wouldn't even want my worst enemies to feel that way. So if I could help any way, I, I will.

Erica ([13:34](#)):

-H and I, and it's been definitely, they, they appreciate it. Cuz I know, like I said, it's been people in the country who have experienced personal loss and you try to be very supportive for them. Do you think you would be able to have that if we didn't have our experiences, do you think that that would just be part of your personality?

Jordan ([13:53](#)):

Yeah. I tend to really to check on my friends if they're, if they feel low. I mean, I, I personally, I like to check up on people. If I haven't talked to somebody in a while, I'll be like, oh dang, haven't talked to them. So I reach out to them, see how they're doing. And I, I just try to be there for everybody.

Erica ([14:17](#)):

Which is very sweet. It's very sweet. And I wanna, so, you know, having the situation, Donovan was 12. When Austin died, you were 12 when Donovan died. And Donovan and I were, you know, we were pretty tight. Do you feel like I compare you to, do you feel compared to your brothers? Do I do do that to you?

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

I mean, yeah, but it is. It's not a bad thing. I mean, there's been two other versions of me and I mean, I do things that they did good or bad, but yeah, of course I, I feel like that would raise some, some similarities.

Erica ([14:59](#)):

Tell me one of your favorite stories about Donovan.

Jordan ([15:03](#)):

Oh my God. Oh my God. There's so many let's see. It would, it would probably, h. It would probably have to be the story about him and nanny at the beach.

Erica ([15:23](#)):

And what happened? I don't know if I know this story

Jordan ([15:25](#)):

When they were at the beach and she was telling them to put on sunscreen and obviously Donovan had to come back with the Don would come back and it didn't work out too well.

Erica ([15:39](#)):

Well, you have to explain it for our listeners. I don't know what you're talking

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

About. So, so Donovan, my brother and my aunt were at the beach and she was telling him that he needed to put on sunscreen and my brother's favorite comeback was you need to do something. If you came at him saying that you needed to do something, he'd come back and be like, you need to do something. So she's like, Don, you need to put on sunscreen. And he goes, well, you need to put on sunscreen. And then, oh my God, I can't remember what she says

Erica ([16:07](#)):

After that. Yeah, no. He said your mom needs to put on sunscreen. Oh yeah.

Jordan ([16:10](#)):

Yeah. Your mom needs to put on sunscreen and oh my God. She said did she say her mom had cancer?

Erica ([16:17](#)):

Yeah.

Jordan ([16:18](#)):

Oh my God.

Erica ([16:21](#)):

Yeah. He, his Donovan's comebacks were like you're, you know you're he said, Peggy told him you better put on sunscreen or else you're gonna get skin cancer. He said, your mom is gonna get sick. And she says, my mom does have cancer. You little jerk. And then OK. Uncle Keith almost ring his neck. It was, yeah. <Laugh> it was a typical Donovan. Donovan was the president of the pretty coittee and always putting his foot in his mouth. But that was a classic Donovan moment. Yeah. Yeah. I think that just it's so funny. I had a memory

pop up today on Facebook and it was, I had taken you out Donovan and I, I used to take Donovan out on dates all the time. Me and him. And I had taken you out and I had made a post about it to Donovan saying how similar you two were. Cuz I asked you, I lee get on my phone. I asked you, tell me three things that you loved about yourself. And you said it was like, I can't believe how Donovan, like you sounded, you said I'm sexy. What did you say? I'm sexy. I get all the ladies. Hold on. Oh, I'm sexy. I'm funny, and I'm charismatic. That's what you said. And then I said, you can't even spell charismatic. It was so funny. But that was one of the things that I, I tried to make a point to get quality time with each one of you, especially, you know, during your teen years. And so this is me and you on one of the dates and I was telling him in the post how proud he would be of you and who you were be turning, you know. The one thing I know to be true is that he would be so mad that you're gonna, you would be taller than him.

Jordan (18:06):

Oh yeah. Yeah. He be the little brother now. He's so angry, kinda angry.

Erica (18:14):

He would not wanna be looking up to you.

Jordan (18:16):

Oh yeah. And then to think that back then he used to use me as a chick magnet. Now he couldn't bring me around all the chicks.

Erica (18:23):

I know. Cause you might try make it'd be so competition.

Jordan (18:29):

Yeah.

Erica (18:32):

So has the intensity that like, you know, it's like when Donvan first passed, we were in shock and then we were numb and then we were angry and we were all these emotions has the intensity that you miss him. Has that changed over time? Cuz now we're in 2022. We're going into this seventh year of his passing. Has it decreased or is it still a lot for you?

Jordan (18:58):

It differs, I mean on a regular basis, I would say that it has, it has gone way down than before, but there's still sometimes where I'll just be sitting in a room and I'll get that feeling like, oh, I wanna call my brother. And then you just hit you like the real life hits you and you just like, dang, I can't do that anymore. But at those times, yes, that it hurts just like back then. But I mean, I just gotta buckle up and keep pushing.

Erica ([19:35](#)):

So what do you do now? What do you do when those things hit you? Where do you go? Where do you, where do you put that emotion?

Jordan ([19:46](#)):

I would have to say, I mean, whenever I really get low and I really miss my brothers, I just reminisce. I go look at pictures or memories that pop up and try to relive those good, good old days. We were back and younger. But yeah, those that's really.

Erica ([20:09](#)):

So you don't, you don't like find someone to talk to like someone close or like, like a friend you don't like confide in people cuz you you're very different in that regard. Like I'm very expressive. Donovan was very expressive. Dad is very expressive. Kayla's kind of, you know, she's coming around but you you're a stuffer.

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

Yeah. Yeah. I, I really do ton of stuff. A lot of stuff in, but I mean I don't, I don't, I mean, it wouldn't be my first choice. No.

Erica ([20:46](#)):

Do you think you don't because you don't think people will understand what you're going through or are you, why don't, why, why do you choose to kind of hold things in?

Jordan ([20:57](#)):

I guess, I guess yeah. In a way like I, I guess kind of feel like as if nobody does feel like nobody truly under stands, how I feel like I don't even know how I felt at the time, but if I really do feel low then yeah, I, I would reach out to somebody.

Erica ([21:20](#)):

-h. You know, and it's, it's hard because as much work as we've done and as much as we've grown through our grief, sometimes I feel like I, I get in the mindset that, you know, we, we like, I it's like, I feel like I wanna have this deal with God. Like, okay, we've our max, our plate is full. We can't take anymore. We're not gonna go through any hard situations. But unfortunately, you know, I, we don't get to control that. So there still have been other challenging situations that we have experienced. And Sharon and I actually did a podcast cuz you lost your youth pastor that you were very, very close to. Yes. And for me as a mom watching you go through that and experience another loss was very, very hard because I knew that you were hurting and every time you come home, you make it a point to go visit we with Jesse. What was that like?

Jordan ([22:16](#)):

Man. I mean, when I was in middle school somebody had introduced me to a church in our hometown and didn't think really anything of it, but the more I went, the pastor that was there, his name was Jesse Fair. He, the way he just spoke, it just, it just like cut right through you. And it just like, it hit me differently. It just felt, it made me feel welcome. Like whenever I went there, he always said the right thing. And he was, he was a first adult. I never felt nervous to confront or to talk to. Like, it was just always comfortable. Like I had known him for years and but I will say I did lack. The past couple years I stopped going cuz I was either working or, or in sports. But I still try to make an effort to go see him. But he got diagnosed with cancer and was on a, he was, he was battling, he was battling for a while. And when he passed, I found the sad thing was I found out over Facebook, somebody had posted it on the, the newspaper for how that he had passed away. And it was right before track practice and I just broke down. I was on the bus stop by myself cause I was waiting for my teaates to get on. But before they got on, I just broke down. I, it was it just so weird. I thought that he was gonna get past it. He was gonna keep fighting and then just like one day he was gone.

Erica ([24:05](#)):

-H. When that happened. Did that bring up all of your stuff about Donovan and grandfather? Like did it bring up all your other grief or were you able to recognize that Jesse's grief was, was just Jesse's?

Jordan ([24:20](#)):

Yeah, of course it did bring up the other grief. It just, it didn't up like the same I guess well how do you put that? I dunno what I was gonna say, but it wasn't the same as how I felt when I lost my real family members, but it still carried a similar feeling. It was, was still that grief that you feel like when you lose somebody and you know, you just gotta really like sit down and really acknowledge it at first. But I mean, as soon as I found out, I mean it just, it was bad.

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

Yeah. All right. Well we gonna wrap it up. So I want you to gie any final thoughts. You have any final thoughts on grief, any final thoughts on helping young people with grief? Just anything you can touch on.

Jordan ([25:20](#)):

My final words for the listeners I would say that grief does happen and grief sucks first off, but in times of grief, the worst thing to do is be alone. Eh, you don't have to be surrounded by family members. You don't have to be surrounded by friends. It could be people that you just met. It could be people that you work with. It can be people online, just anybody, as long as you feel comfortable to express your feelings and do not stuff 'em down because that will hurt 10 times worse. But on the side note for parents and kids

experiencing in grief I would say patience is key and don't force your kid to try to tell you what is wrong instead, have your kid want to tell you what is wrong?

Erica ([26:28](#)):

That's great. Thank you. I think that's gonna be a big help because I think as parents, all we wanna do is make it right. We don't wanna see our children hurt. You know, we feel like, you know, we're the grownups, it's hard for us to take it, but we definitely wanna see you guys take it. And I think that that is gonna be very helpful for a lot of our parents listening to just be patient and wait until the time is right. And then hopefully their son or daughter will open up and express themselves the way that they need to. So thank you so much for that. And thank you for being willing to let me interview you today. I appreciate it. Enjoy the rest of your college day, sir. Go do your homework. Go study. All right, son. Thank you. Love you. All right.

Jordan ([27:12](#)):

You're welcome. Love you too.

Erica ([27:14](#)):

Bye.

Erica ([27:15](#)):

bye.