

I Didn't Wanna Make You Feel Bad

Sharon ([00:03](#)):

Let's talk about how to make the conversation of grief, less awkward. Let's talk about how to talk about grief to one another friends. I can't even tell you how many times Eric and I have been working with grieverers and they tell us I haven't heard from my sister, my son died and my sister hasn't called me. I never hear from my mother. She never checks on me. My best friend still didn't call me. On my anniversary, my wedding anniversary, my husband just died three weeks ago. I didn't hear from my best friend on my husband's birthday. And I posted about it. I want you guys to know. They know, and they are very much aware.

Erica ([00:51](#)):

I think one of the biggest misunderstandings out there about grief and grieverers is especially when it comes to birthdays or special days, the supporting cast will say, oh, why didn't I reach out? Cause I didn't want to make you feel bad. Grieverers, feel bad all the time. So there's no way that you can make us feel bad. Our hearts are already broken and you may not. You may think that your absence is not that big of a deal, but it is because we noticed, you know, we know who didn't text us. We know who didn't call or reach out or even just send us, Hey, I'm thinking about you. And it's not that we are keeping score out of spite. We're keeping score because we need you. Our hearts need you. We need you in our space to give us comfort and not wanting to talk about the birthday. My son's ten-year-old birthday is hurtful to me because you're my friend. And you're supposed to be here for me.

Sharon ([01:59](#)):

100%. One of the other things that happens is that I think what happens to the people on the outside, looking in, they think that it's their job and their responsibility that I'm going to come to you. And I'm going to make, say this one paragraph, and it's going to fix you. It's my responsibility to take all your pain away. It's my responsibility. As your friend to make you feel better. It's my responsibility as your friend to make you laugh today. And I don't know how to do it. So, because I don't know how to do it. I just don't do anything at all. So let me start here by saying, it's not your responsibility to do anything other than be, be my friend be here. And it is absolutely okay with you to open the conversation with, Hey, how are you doing today? How's your grief today? That's all you need to say. And then the rest of it, you just need to listen. Yeah.

Erica ([03:02](#)):

Yeah. And, and they may not, they may not want to talk. So don't take it personal if they're not in the mood for talking, but just know that you're reaching out. It means a lot to them.

Sharon (03:16):

Yeah. Here's the other thing that I think Erica, you and I experienced through this COVID and the pandemic. A lot of people couldn't come around. Think about those people. Right. I'm fortunate. And I don't even, that's not the right word, but Donovan and Austin didn't die during COVID. And so you were able to have a lot of physical support, a lot of phone calls, a lot of mental support. We were able to hug each other and be with each other. There are a lot of people over this last two years that haven't gotten that. So can you imagine them that one, they didn't get to have the funeral. They want it, they haven't had the support, people coming to their house and showing up with food because it was unsafe. And yet the end, they're still not getting the support from friends and family that they so desperately need.

Erica (04:06):

Well, right. Cause it's like, you know, so you don't get to have the traditional funeral or celebration of life. So then months go by and then the outside person is going well, it's already been six months. I don't want to make them feel bad if I reach out now. Okay. They're not over it in six months, they're still grieving. So it's appropriate to reach out. But just to let them know that you're thinking of them, it means it's a big deal. You know, especially during COVID when things are all funky, everything is funky right now. And we need that support more than ever. So, Hey, I know I can't come over, but how about if you and I get on zoom and then no way you could see each other face to face or you could do FaceTime or anything. Like we have the technology, thankfully that we could still stay connected with one another. It's on, it's on us to make, to take the steps to make it happen.

Sharon (05:04):

The the other thing is that there's this moment where you have the, you, you originally you make contact with a friend and all the social pleasantries pass. How is the weather who's there? What did you for dinner? What are you working today? That part ends pretty quickly in a conversation. And then it gets into the grief. Don't freak out. Don't run away, go pass those pleasantries. He or she may absolutely break down and cry. Just be there. Don't feel like you have to do anything. It's okay. It's not your job to fix this.

Erica (05:47):

No, absolutely not. And, and just giving them that safe space to say what they to say off of that get off of their heart. And without you interrupting, offering unsolicited advice sharing what you did when your great aunt Becky died, you know, none of that stuff is helpful. Just listen, just listen. And then in the end, I don't even know what to say. I'm so sorry.

Sharon (06:16):

Yeah. So getting onto aunt Becky, you don't have to have experienced grief or I've had a grieving experience that affected you personally, to be able to talk to somebody about it, because really you're not, you're not going to be doing as much talking as you think you're going to be doing more listening. It's our job to set up a safe, safe space so that the griever

can just talk and share and even say the ugly because it is not because it is not uncommon for the griever to say these words, I just want to die right now. I don't want, I can't live life without Donovan being here. I will never be able to go on. I, how am I going to live? The griever has to be able to say those things without us, absolutely freaking out. So know that just because you've never experienced grief doesn't mean you can't be the support for someone who is grieving.

Erica ([07:17](#)):

I mean, this is so true. Do you have to be, had you have to experience an armed robbery to have empathy and be able to be present for, you know, if your friend was a victim of a robbery, no, you just are present for that person because they've experienced something traumatic and you love them. So you're there for them. It's the same thing with grief. You don't have to know personally what it feels like to show up and be present for someone.

Sharon ([07:45](#)):

One of the things we hear people say quite often as well, I don't know how to talk about grief. So I just pretend like it doesn't exist. And we, while you're pretending like it doesn't exist, your friend is dying on the other end of the line. Right? Right. So just know that your, your ultimate job is to just listen and hold the space for them. One of the things that I, we find so truthful about this experiences that you never know how bad it is until you it's your turn. And so, because you and I are member of the grieving club, we meet people all the time and they say this to us all the time. I didn't know how bad this really felt. And then it, that causes you to start thinking about other times where you had situations and I'll share one for me. I vividly remember a girlfriend having a miscarriage and me saying to her, you're still young. You can have other children. And I will never forget the look on her face and my head and head. And I was young when I said this, but it was the stupidest thing. It was true because I got pregnant easy. I got bright, easy. You can get pregnant easy. And when I think about this, saying that comment to her, how it musta turned the knife in her heart. Oh, it must have killed her to hear me say that. But now being in the grievers club and knowing what that felt like, it just kills me.

Erica ([09:23](#)):

I also want to turn the tables for a second and talk about other people in the grievers club sometimes because we do know what it feels like in our hearts are still broken from our experience. We haven't taken that healing journey yet. We also will avoid other grievers because it triggers us. It triggers and turns a knife for us about our loss. So we also, as members of the grievers club need to remember that we still need to show up for other people because people showed up for us, even though it's triggering us we need to write about it, journal about it, call, call someone and talk about it. But you should not let that stop you from showing up and being there for your friend or your family member.

Sharon ([10:12](#)):

One of the worst. Yes. I agree with you. One of the worst things that we could do is know that someone is having a grieving experience, show up for them and not mention it at all. Right. We have to acknowledge that something bad has happened in this person's life. Even if you simply say, how's your heart today, you have to acknowledge that something has happened. The worst thing that we could do is really just not even acknowledge it.

Erica ([10:41](#)):

Well, yeah. And that goes to everything that goes to the birthdays, the anniversaries, the death anniversaries, the wedding anniversaries, any of the special days, you don't get a pass just because you were there with the person through the funeral, you still need to show up for them because those special days are still hard for them. So you not even send a text. Hey, thinking about you. I noticed your dad's birthday today. Thinking about you. I know your the anniversary of your husband's death is coming up. You still need to show up. You still need to let that person know they still have a support system.

Sharon ([11:18](#)):

The other thing I want to say is stay with the awkwardness. If your friend starts to fall apart and snot starts running down her nose and she is bawling, crying, don't change the subject. Don't touch her or him. Don't offer them Kleenex, just sit there and let them get it out. They can, if they do that to you, you are really, really in the circle and you are really trusted by that person. Don't try to fix the, even if the awkwardness is silence and they're just staring off, sit in the awkwardness, it's okay. It won't last very long and it will end.

Erica ([12:05](#)):

And when that part ends and you visit with them again, or you see them again and they make a joke or you see them laughing, don't assume that they're over their grief, just because they're, you know what I mean? I think that's another miss understanding about grievers. We have to eventually get back to living our life. Right? We got to go back to work. We have to go to grocery store again. We have to go do all the things. So if you see us out and we are smiling and we are engaging in conversation and it seems like we're more like ourselves. Don't just assume, oh, she's done grieving. I saw her yesterday. She was smiling and laughing and she looks great. Yes, she's over that. Okay. No. So, you know, still know our hearts are still broken. We still feel bad, but it is possible to function in society.

Sharon ([13:04](#)):

I saw this amazing blog a couple of weeks ago where the lady was talking about grief, splining, that terminology, because it's like, it's where you go. And you make these you make these intellectual comments that are so stupid. It's like grief splining. Well, it'll be over soon. Just keep busy. You know, don't try to push it away. The truth is it's jacked up, backed up. Don't try to push it away. Don't try to grease plane. Don't try to explain to them what the grief is or how they should feel. It really is the worst.

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

Absolutely. Because every day is different for a griever. Even when you think you kind of have a little rhythm and you're like, okay, you get the S got the swing of things that next day we'll pull the rug out from under you. And it feels like you're starting from ground zero, because that could be the day the death certificate comes in or the ashes come, or someone who didn't just found out the news calls and they're devastated. It really takes you back to square one at any given moment. So we don't know what it's going to look like. You just, just be open for the people and allow them for whatever shows up.

Sharon ([14:25](#)):

I remember an arrogant. I you'll have to remind me of this. How long did change show up after Austin died? I felt like it was like a year.

Erica ([14:34](#)):

Shane our brother, our pseudo brother? Yeah. Oh yeah. Well, he routinely would stop by, cause we lived on the same street on his way home from work. But yeah, after Austin died, it was like, he said he stopped by almost every day. And actually he's the one that really encouraged me because when Lewis was really, really struggling with his grief, but not talking to me about it. And we were in a very, very difficult place with our relationship. He is the one he said, he said, I promise you, you just got to wait this out and it will change, you know, just kinda stop fighting it and just kind of waited out, you know? And he really talked me through it and I did. And that's what I did. I waited it out and it seemed like that was more of what Lewis needed instead of me kind of challenging him on, I don't see any crying, you know, just expecting our grief to be similar when it was unique and individual didn't know that at the time. And when I gave him the space, when I gave Lewis the space to grieve the way he needed to grieve, it made all the difference in our relationship.

Sharon ([15:44](#)):

So, and I asked you that question to say, this, offer something practical to the griever. If you can't say something, then be okay with just showing up. Just randomly showing up. Yeah. Be okay with cooking, cleaning, looking after their children, taking the trash out, offer something practical. If you just can't be there and you don't know how to say something instead of offending them and saying something wrong, offer something practical.

Erica ([16:13](#)):

Yeah, because that does go a long way too, because we're barely functioning. You know, you, you can barely focus on, oh my God, I got a few of my children dinner. So if you offer, Hey, I'm going to drop off dinner for you and the kids tonight. I mean, that means so much to grievers. You guys just don't know.

Sharon ([16:31](#)):

The other thing is when you have a griever coming back to work after a loss, be the safe place for them at work, go up to them and let them know you can come to my office any time. Hey, I'm here for you. If you need to talk, Hey, I know that coming back to work is going to be really hard, but I want you to know I'm here for you being a work colleague in that sense, I think is huge.

Erica ([16:57](#)):

Yeah, that, that takes me back to right when I was going back to work after Austin died, I think I had been off for about a month and I was talking to one of my coworkers. Who's also a really good friend of mine. And I said, I don't think I can handle having everyone coming up to me and asking me, you know, I just knew it was going to be hard. So I communicated that to her. And she communicated that to my supervisor who then sent out a company-wide email, letting me letting them know, just to give me a little bit of space in that beginning. And it meant the world to me. I did have people, you know, of course greeting me and talking to me, but specifically asking me the questions that might've been challenging for me to answer while I was at work. They didn't do that. So that was a big, big help for me.

Sharon ([17:50](#)):

I want you guys to know you don't have to be an expert on grief. You're not expected to be an expert in grief. You're expected to be a friend you're expected to be a heart with ears. You're expected to be a listener. You're expected to do something so simple, that's it? That's all we're looking for. And I also want you to know that not all grief is bad and broken. Sometimes you'll go to the griever's house and they're absolutely laughing and making jokes in between the tears. And that is okay too. It's not going to be all so humdrum and sad. Well, definitely wasn't for us. I mean, there were moments where we were absolutely cracking up and it's seems weird to say that, but that's how it is. Grief is up and down. We were laughing about Donovan at moments and crying.

Erica ([18:43](#)):

Oh yeah. You know, and we did another podcast. Is it okay to joke about grief in that one is important to listen to, but on the flip side of that, grief is not funny. It's not okay for people to make fun of someone who is grieving no matter what they're grieving. So we need to clarify that there is a difference, but we absolutely were. I mean, there was a situation, Sharon, it was just, it was just the two of us in the garage when our uncle did something that was so hilarious. And when he walked away, I mean, we were laughing, teat, crying tears from laughter because it was so ridiculous what he had done. And, you know, in that moment, like in, in those moments are so priceless when you're grieving, because there are things that can turn out to be funny and comical and embrace those when they come, because they're a nice little respite from the melancholy and that

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

Yeah. To all of our friends that are actively grieving right now, I wish that I had a magic wand or that it was our superpower to wave this one and take all this pain from you. And unfortunately that's not our superpower, our superpower is being listeners, being a heart, being here for you and showing you that the only way out of it is through this and walking alongside you as you complete your own broken heart.

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

Absolutely. And knowing that we already feel bad. Your heart is already broken. So if we don't have the super power to wave the magic wand, but we have the super power to normalize people, being able to talk about grief so that when your support circle shows up, we can try and get them to minimize the stupid stuff that comes out of your mouth or this, you know, or being coming across as insensitive. So we will do that as best we can to get you the support that you need. Thank you, my friends.

Erica ([20:58](#)):

Bye friends. Thank you.