

I Miss Mothering You

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 committed to sharing their experiences of love, loss, and healing through this podcast. Now your Grief Specialists, Sharon and Erica.

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

The relationship between parents and children is among the most intense relationship there is out there. I cannot tell you that I have so many times girlfriends or even guy friends have said, I can't wait till they're 18. And they're out of my house. I know for a fact, sitting here are with you with a 40 year old, a two 30 year old and a 21 year old grandson that, that parenting and mothering doesn't end. There's still constant giving advice being there. I've said this so many times in the last few weeks is that when we raise our children, we're raising them to grow wings and fly. But once they take off from that flight, you're in that right now with Jordan going to college for the first year, once they take off in flight, then they get the traction going. Then they, they really start to soar it's our job to fly along near them and beside them. And they still come back for help and, and, and look for advice and questions. However, when you are grieving and you're going through the loss of that with that child, your child has died. You have lost that child through death, through Doug addiction through arguments sake. And they're just not talking to you anymore. Whatever the case may be. One of the main underlying grieving experiences that we can see parents share quite often is I miss the parenting aspect. I miss that. I'm not able to mother him anymore, that I'm not able to take a take care of him. And because our parenting child relationship center so much upon around doing for the children that after they've gone, that's a huge area that we miss Erica, the actual mothering and parenting of our children. And you know, more than I do on that.

Erica ([02:52](#)):

I absolutely have gone through this in two separate ways, one with losing the boys. And then definitely transitioning into an empty nester. And Jordan, it actually happened with me with Jordan when he got his driver's license. And you're the one who described it so accurately, you said it was a breakup and it really is. It feels like a breakup because you're not needed in the same way. They get this sense of autonomy about them. And they start planning their own social calendar and they start really planning a lot for themselves without needing you or your transportation or your money, cause he, he would get a little

part-time job. So, so I have experiences in two different ways and it is equally heartbreaking, both ways because you, you get, when you're, when you have littles, your life is basically wrapped around their every need and desire. And when that is no longer there, you just have all of this love, and all of this time and attention that you don't know what to do with.

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

I think also we get stuck in what was supposed to be what this is not supposed to be like. This, this is not the way this is supposed to be. He was supposed to still be here. She's supposed to still be here. I should still be mothering him. And, and then the, the thoughts that go around what was supposed to be can keep us from moving forward in our grief. We can get stuck right there.

Erica ([04:36](#)):

I think one of the biggest challenges is just the longing for more time, time is not on our side, whether we're raising our children to young adulthood and they're becoming, you know, they're Mo flying the coop or we lose them tragically, like what happened with with Austin and Donovan. And we just want that time back. We want those days when we were wiping noses and picking their school clothes, like you just have this unfulfilled void in your soul because time is not on our side anymore. And that time is gone.

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

It's almost comes out like this. You're not supposed to outlive your children.

Erica ([05:20](#)):

Never.

Sharon ([05:21](#)):

Right. It could also feel like a failure. You can feel like the, the loss of your child is in a way not being able to mother them or that you failed them in some way. So like sometimes it can come out that way.

Erica ([05:37](#)):

Yeah. Especially when you see your children who are living reach young in adulthood and they're just flailing in their decision making and their lifestyle choices. Absolutely. I don't know if men do this, but I know mothers that mother's guilt is real. And we automatically take it personal and say, what do I, what did I do wrong? Why? You know, we take it personal because our intention is not to, to raise, you know, kids that make poor decisions. Our intention is to raise healthy. Well-Adjusted young people that go out and contribute to society and become these bright lights in the world. But when we see them making poor choices and doing stupid things, it's like, who are you why did, why did I create this, this wasn't my intention. And this is going way far left and is a totally a different show. But just

like, like yesterday seeing another school shoot, I can only try to put myself in those parent shoes, especially in mother's shoes because no one sets out to raise the school shooter. No one,

Sharon ([06:47](#)):

No,

Erica ([06:49](#)):

So that's a different show, but it's just, it hurts my heart when I see this, cuz I automatically think of the mother.

Sharon ([06:57](#)):

Yeah. The other thing, so kind of on that same token, Erica, is that we have this dream and expectations of who we feel these children are gonna be, right. Not only that in most cases, we plan to bring them into the world. Right. I plan to have children. I plan to live with my husband happily ever after. And I plan this out and I foresee it as he's gonna be the Senator. He's gonna be the president. He's gonna be the best that he can be. And it's not uncommon after losing a child to feel the ultimate violation has happened to you.

Erica ([07:37](#)):

Oh, a thousand percent. You know, every, we've been very vocal about Austin and his struggles Austin. At the time they diagnosed it as Asperger's now, it's just all under the autism spectrum, but he required so much of my time with school meetings, with parent teacher struggles, even when he was young, before we had a, a diagnosis, he just was different. And he needed more of my patients. I was his translator cuz he spoke his own language. He had food sensitivities and there would be days where he would be totally fine and function completely typical. And then that next day let that boy suck that line up. And it was a full on world war II tantrum. And I just was always on my toes because Austin always needed some sort of special required my special time or required my time in a special way that suited him. I used to say we were all, it was Austin's world. We were all here to do his bidding. And when he was taken at 10 years old, I didn't know what to do with myself. I had so much time. I had so much nonconfrontational non-conflict time. I just felt like I was like out in space, just floating cuz I didn't know what to do with myself. No one required me to make them a special meal. I didn't have to separate the trucks because he would get disturbed. If you mixed the truck with the pickup trucks, you know, it was just like, oh yeah, I didn't have to spend as much of my time giving serious attention to detail to make sure he wasn't getting set off. You don't know what to do with yourself when something like that happens.

Sharon ([09:30](#)):

I think the other thing that happens Erica and I would like you to shed more light on this is immediately after the loss, especially the loss of a child that the mothering of is he okay?

Where is he? The questions we ask ourself? Is he being taken care of? What if he's cold? What if he's hungry? What if I can't, you know, I'm talking in the physical body. We re you really go through that. This is my child that I was supposed to take care of. And now he's gone and the not knowing, where is he? Where is she?

Erica ([10:06](#)):

I think for me personally I one, I didn't allow my, my brain to, I just couldn't. I just, I, I think I knew IMO my limits and I could not let myself go there. But in the, in the moments when he was missing before they had before they had brought the divers in to fight him. I absolutely went through that because it was getting dark and I was almost in a full panic of it's gonna be dark. I didn't want him to not be found and it be dark. Then my rain was totally right there. Is he gonna be cold? Is he gonna be okay? Is he hungry? Like my brain was in that mode, in the, in the searching moments for him. But once he was found, I automatically had to lean on my faith and know that he was in a better place immediately.

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

I hear you loud and clear, but I know that there are a lot and we've worked with a lot of parents that even are very faithful and they still question that they still totally question that or that, because it becomes our thing that we hang onto also in our grief. Right? I wanna add to that, to that comment that we're talking right now, that situation of feeling like they're not okay. And it was my job to take care of. 'em. One of the things that come up quite often is that parents will say that they feel guilty. I feel guilty. I failed. I should have taken care of them this, this is my responsibility. This falls on me. Yeah. And the guilt. And it appears as a common response that we see quite all often in the parent child relationship.

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

Absolutely. I and, and you know, there were people, people on that trip who expected me to blame. Yeah. They were thinking I was going to blame the adults there, but it I've said it before. And I will say it again. Austin was with the people who loved him most in this world. They would've traded places with him in a heartbeat. There's not one person who would not have given their own lives to see him take another breath. And I absolutely, in no way held anyone responsible, I saw it as a true accident. And I just had to leave it at that. My heart was breaking for the people who were there. For the ones that had to agonize over the hours in which they couldn't find him for Louis for his own father who had to be there the moment they pulled him out of that water, I will never know what that was like for him. So thankfully my character is not designed that way, but you and I know, and we worked with a lot of grievers and we've worked with a lot of parents. Who've lost children, their broken heart need an answer and they need a person to be responsible. Therefore they do blame and they do Harbor their guilt, their own shame and their own guilt. And it's sad. It really is sad. And it is another layer. We talk about our grief layers. It is another layer to the grief. Lewis and I have never had a conversation about guilt or blame. I think that we knew it was an area for us personally, that we just needed to avoid because we are very

emotional people and I just never wanted anything to come out and be misunderstood. So we've never had that conversation, but I know in other people they can't help. They can't help having that conversation.

Sharon (13:49):

Yeah. And some people live in the guilt. They, they, they really have a, and one of our jobs is to, to take them from that guilt and into their heart and see what other emotions are there that are really showing up. One of the common responses to losing a child is the feeling of just being powerless. In addition to feeling guilty, they all, they often have the sense that they're just powerless and in attributes to them feeling a lot of times with I couldn't protect them or the, the decision was taken from me. I didn't have a chance to save them. It's my job to save them. And just feeling like you're powerless against the loss, we're powerless against the grief. We're powerless against the fear are just down. Right?

Erica (14:40):

Yeah. And, and the hits continue to keep on coming because every year that goes by is another milestone that you're missing out on. Yeah. You know, just depending on what age your child was taking from you every year that, that you go on, without them, you are constantly reminded of what you were robbed of and it contributes to your powerlessness. And I gotta say, even with, even with like our children that are still living, this happens when there's substance abuse that comes in. Yeah. The powerlessness is, is overwhelming. And even during my transition now with Jordan at 18, going into young adulthood, even Kayla 23, they making their own decisions. And I struggle with my powerlessness. So I feel like it goes across the board from children, lost to children, still living.

Sharon (15:40):

I agree with you. I agree with you. I think what happens in the grief for the parents is I, I think I know that we are not prepared to deal with the, the triggers and the waves of grief that come upon us. Right? So one of the triggers might be seeing the backpack empty or for you getting an invitation of one of Donovan's friends weddings, or knowing that they were supposed to graduate this year from high school were not here for the ways of trigger that that come upon us. And we're not even understanding that this will continue to happen for a while. And this loss of hope. It can create this loss of hope, loss of hope for the future. And I feel like we see a lot of times the fear starts to come in. I can't leave the house. I can't go here. I can't go there. What if the grief comes up, this fear, this, this loss of hope of the dreams and expectations for our child's future, but it can be replaced with fear. Am I making sense there?

Erica (16:48):

No, absolutely. A thousand percent, you know I've had all of those triggers. I have to call you when Austin's age group friends were graduating high school and I was buying a bunch of graduation cards and the realization came in that I wasn't gonna see Austin graduate

from high school. And at this point what we did the work when he was. So this was around, you know? Yeah. He was 18. He would've been 18. I, I was, and I was surprised by it because, I didn't know because it was our first, you know, our first time that the waves can, could still come even after you had done your work. And that's the, one of the most important are things that we keep telling people though, you still have to continue to work, do work, even though you do feel freer and lighter from your pain, there are things that will continue to trigger you. And then after Donovan died that time I spent in the bathroom crying at one of his peers, weddings, because I wasn't prepared for that wave. And also truth be told, you know, our niece, Kelsey just got engaged. And in our family, we have cousin pairs and Kelsey was Donovan's pair. I was honestly expecting that there would be a wave of sadness and of grief, but because I have done a lot of work and I have prepared myself for that, it didn't come with the engagement, but I know that I will have to do some more work before the wedding because I don't wanna sit there ugly, crying as she's walking down the aisle, you know, because it's gonna, we can prepare ourselves for these events, friends. So just know that, and I will do my necessary work before her wedding so that I can lighten myself of that. Like you said, the loss of the hopes and the dreams that, you know, Kelsey and Donovan are supposed to be in each other weddings, and they're supposed to have children together and they're supposed to raise their children together, just like we raised our children together. You know, so yeah, so that is bringing up emotions. So I know that there is work there to be done. But it is something that initially you are right. We can feel powerless against, but once you learn a tool set, like the one that we have learned, you can go after that pain and you don't have to feel powerless anymore. You can take control and you can plan ahead.

Sharon ([19:25](#)):

Oh yeah. I definitely, and, and knowing that you want, you've done the work, you can pretty much handle any grieving situation that comes up with that loss. One of the things we have to remember, and you and I talk about this all the time is that the pain is emotional. The pain is our in our heart. The pain is all of the emotions that come up and the being incomplete in that relationship. That's one of the areas where we'd go take a deep dive into what incompleteness is, but grief can cause you to really question your sanity. Like we have so many grievers that think they're losing their mind, they're going crazy. Or the overwhelming feeling of just wanting to die and go be with their child. And the thing that happens is when we say that out loud is when the release comes.

Erica ([20:23](#)):

Yeah. You, you absolutely. You, that's absolutely what you feel and there's no way around it. And you do feel crazy because every day the grief shows up different. Yeah. Just when you think you have a handle on it. Yeah. The next day is something totally different because like we just shared there's triggers. Yeah. And unfortunately you can't put yourself in a bubble as much as you try, even if you stay off of social media and say, okay, I'm not gonna look at any social media, cuz I don't wanna see their friends going on and living their lives.

Then a freaking movie comes on and it's, it's like when you buy the red car and every time, every time you go out all, you see a red cars when you're grieving, even when you're not looking for it. Every you see grief everywhere. Yeah. I see the freaking Bravo Housewives. Those HEAs are grieving. I mean, I see it everywhere. It seems funny, but I see it everywhere. And it's because we're in the grief business. When you are broken and your heart is longing for your loved one, there are triggers and you do feel absolutely crazy because it's like how I'm watching a housewife reality show. Why am I crying about this? But it's because it shows up when it shows up and you do feel like you're losing your mind.

Sharon ([21:47](#)):

I think one of the other things that happens day in and day out that we, as, as grieving parents, don't talk a lot about is the yearning, the yearning to have five more minutes, the yearning to just see them one more time, the yearning to just talk to them again, the yearning to just make sure that they're okay. And that yearning just stays there. And no matter where you go, it's just there and it's just under the surface. And I think we have to become honest with ourselves and say it out loud that this, the things that we are thinking in our brain you know, I wanna go be with him. I go to the cemetery every day. I lay on the ground at the cemetery, whatever that is. We need to say that, share it and be open with it.

Erica ([22:39](#)):

There's this is such a weird thought that occurred to me the other day. You know, we're running that a special group that has parents have all lost boys, which is really ironic for us. And they're fresh, they're new losses. They're all under a year. And when we were doing the meeting this week, one of the things that struck me was, you know, they just held their boys all within this last year, you know? Eight months, six months ago, they got to fill their warm bodies. And I haven't held Austin in 16 years. I haven't had a conversation with Donovan in six years. And even though, you know, it's like, I've done a lot of work, but that longing to have them. And like you said, to have that one last conversation that doesn't go away.

Sharon ([23:38](#)):

Yeah. The missing them, it hangs on and, and the intensity of missing them can go down over time. But I don't know. I think sometimes when we're left with that missing them, it's just so, so devastating. So hard that it's the part that just lingers on. You made me lose my train of thought.

Erica ([24:06](#)):

It absolutely does decrease over time. So it is not so overwhelming. And so it's almost like it's choking you in the beginning, but it does become more manageable, but it just struck me in that meeting that like, cuz the, their losses are so fresh that like, gosh, they got to just really talk to their kids recently. And I it's been so long for me. So it just, it was weird. It was a weird realization for me that and I think it was because it was, we have multiple parents

in that group. So it just, not that it was breaking me down or anything. It just was a weird realization that I had made. And I do miss the boys, but it definitely is not like what it was in the beginning.

Sharon ([24:56](#)):

So I I'm gonna leave you with this, but you know, how we get the memories of our photos, you know? Yeah. So the other day I got memories of photos, which was the Thanksgiving dinner we shared on the day that daddy died, which were cause bunch of cousins were at the house. It was Aiden's birthday celebration. We celebrated his birthday and all that. And I was just looking through the pictures and really, you know, coming up with joy in my heart that when that was a cool Thanksgiving, we had, even though our dad had just died, we got to be with a lot of cousins. We hadn't seen in a long time and all of that. And in one of the pictures, Donovan pops up and I was like, oh my gosh, the thought, the thought that we were there celebrating. And literally did we know in just a few months later we were gonna lose him.

Erica ([25:45](#)):

Yeah. Well it was two years, but I felt like a few years. It felt like it felt like five minutes, you know? It's like, like we said, there's never enough time and same similar, not, not same similar. This week I came into my where my office is, which is in my kitchen, but no one needs to know that. And on my Lewis had left two pieces of mail that Donovan had received. And I haven't gotten mail for Donovan in a very long time and there are two checks and I was like, oh my, what is this? So I open it up and it's the funniest thing. I laughed my butt off. I guess he joined some class action settlement and it doesn't even what it's for which Donovan has been dead for six years. So, I mean, they did, there were no rush to get this done but he got two checks in the whopping amount of 91 cents each and so it just made me laugh because in true Donovan form, I'm sure when he joined this settlement in his little naive brain, he thought he was typical pretty committee for Donovan. And he got these two 91 cent checks and he is rolling in the money that boy,.

Sharon ([27:05](#)):

He got paid out. That's all I need to know. I think we need to leave it right there. I, I love that you got those checks and Matt, you lifted 'em and it gave you a laugh. See that, that just proves our point that it's not always down sometimes it's up.

Erica ([27:18](#)):

Absolutely. Cause I like the last time I got mail for him was right around the one year mark of him dying and we all know, and I've shared openly. I was really, really struggling. And when we got this, it was like a magazine, a gaming magazine. I broke down crying. But when I saw these checks here, we are six years later, I've done a lot of work. I've we've had a lot of conversations and I just cracked up laughing because this is pretty committee written all over it. Sovan. I hope you spent this 90 ones wisely.

Sharon ([27:51](#)):

Yes. Right. Thank you so much.

Erica ([27:56](#)):

Bye Friends.