

Our Mother is Getting Married

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](#)):

Me and Erica, we have some exciting news. Our mother is getting married as a matter of fact, in two days, our father passed away eight years ago this November just before Thanksgiving and since then, our mother lived, continued to live in her house for one year, and then we sold the house and she moved in with me. So she's been with me for about seven years. And we never really talked about whether she would remarry or not. We never really talked about it. I, I don't know about you, but I just always assumed she would be an old lady and go sit in a rocking chair somewhere and we would take care of her.

Erica ([01:31](#)):

Oh, totally. I, I never ever thought this would be a reality. She just didn't seem interested. I mean, and I can only I mean, I could relate. She was with our dad what? Over 50 years, 54 years when he passed.

Sharon ([01:48](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([01:48](#)):

That is most of at the time was most of her lifetime. So, you know, Louis and I are going on 28 years, you know, you just kind of think, okay, I did that now. I'll just live, you know, live for me for once. You know, you kind of think that that's the end game. And this came out of nowhere, which was a pleasant surprise. I'm sure for her, but a big surprise for us as her children.

Sharon ([02:19](#)):

Okay. So there's so many aspects to unpack here. Prayerfully, we are doing okay. In the sense of we know the person we've known him, our entire lives. We know Lawrence who will soon be Mr. Father.

Erica ([02:39](#)):

Mr. Lawrence.

Sharon ([02:43](#)):

We've seen, you and I have seen this terrible, especially in a situation for us. So guys here, here, us out here, we're gonna have seven. He has seven children. My mom has five children. We've seen it turn really terrible where the kids are just not in a agreeance or there's one or two kids. It's not in a agreeance. And we actually have made it out to this point to the marriage. Okay. But there has been some true emotions that have shown up that has surprised both of us. Right?

Erica ([03:14](#)):

Definitely.

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

And, and I think for me, I'm gonna speak for me. I don't think this has been about daddy. I often wonder what he would want and I just honestly have to believe, I have to go back to the person that he was, our father was a loving man. In the sense of, if you came into his house, you were treated well, he wanted to make sure you ate or you had something to drink. And the thing that I loved about him is that he always wanted to know about you. What kind of work do you do? What do your parents do? And, and he always could relate to something that you were talking about. And so I have to believe in that sense and that he truly loved our mom, that he wouldn't want her to, to be alone.

Erica ([04:01](#)):

A thousand percent when he was transitioning, it was very clear. His main concern was whether or not our mother was gonna be taken care of.

Sharon ([04:11](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([04:11](#)):

And we, every day we went in to visit with him made sure to reassure him that she was going to be taken care of. So I definitely don't think it's, you know, we know he wouldn't want her to be alone or to be even lonely. Cuz even, you know, you have a family, you have your husband, you have your children, you have your grandchildren. She, although living with you could still feel lonely. You know, cuz she didn't have a friend base here. You guys had just moved to Texas. So she didn't necessarily have a friend base developed yet. So this is gonna give her an opportunity for companionship, for a friendship of her own, which when we, you know, first were made aware of this situation. Me personally, again, speaking for me when I was first made aware of the situation, I just thought it was so comical. One

because of their ages, you know, it's just, it's, you know, it's promising, you know that it's nice for people who are of significant age to know life doesn't have to stop for you. There still is an opportunity for you to have a special relationship into your, in your life. Doesn't have to lead to marriage, but something, but then when it turned more serious, I'm not gonna lie. I, I became mildly uncomfortable. I mean, we are absolutely encouraging her and supporting her, but a hundred percent, I am mildly uncomfortable at the thought of having a and I'm doing air quotes and now you can't see me. But a stepdad and step siblings like, Ugh, just, it just feels weird. It feels weird. It's not bad. It just feels weird. It's different.

Sharon (06:00):

A hundred percent. I agree with you a hundred percent. So our mom lived with us and as much as we Tony and I would include her in things it's still lonely.

Erica (06:13):

Yeah.

Sharon (06:14):

I don't think as kids we realize, because think about it. I came in here into the office every day and closed the door and Tony is a real, he loves to tink and dink. That's what he calls it. And he's out in the garage, he's out in the barn, he's out with the animals or he's running errands. So he wasn't really in the house. There were a long periods of time that she was by herself and you know, you and I both know, grievors can be the loneliest person in the world. Their hearts can be the loneliest person in the room, even if two or 300 people are there. And we, you and I both know our mother is a talker and she loves to talk.

Erica (06:53):

Mm-hmm with her heart.

Sharon (06:54):

I think that one of the things that has been the biggest difference for us, and I think that has helped us is to hear the uptick in her voice to hear the, I it's like a new energy. It's almost like she's been revived in a sense. And just talking to her and the youthfulness that has come back from her, just having her own person. I was talking to Keith on the phone, Keith being and our older brother. And he said, you know, everybody deserves their own person. Everybody deserves if they want it deserves to have their own person.

Erica (07:34):

So true, without a doubt, she is downright giddy. Like that's the only way, way you can explain it. And when you hear that in her voice, I mean, obviously we do not begrudge for this at all. And we just wanna continue to encourage and support her in her new endeavors of pursuing her new life. But for some like Sharon, we know firsthand, that is not always

the case. There is drama and conflict and strife, and this could really, really go south very fast and become a massive grieving event. Thankfully for us it has not become that.

Sharon (08:14):

And the thing that I, I, I think because you and I do the grief work, we've been able to go into deep conversations with her things that we've never, would've talked about before, intimate conversations. And it, it is truly an array of emotions. It's thinking about dad, what would he want? How are the other siblings feeling? And we really have laughed our butt off a lot with this made jokes. I mean truly finding out that I'm not the oldest sister anymore has been devastating to me. You guys don't understand what this is doing to me and you just joke it off. Like it's nothing.

Erica (08:50):

I, I haven't, we haven't confirmed yet, but I think I'm still the youngest. Now I'm the youngest of 12.

Sharon (09:01):

Okay. Get this guys. We're gonna be a family of 52 when he has 17 grandchildren. My mom has eight and a couple great grand, three great grandchildren and some more on the way and is gonna be just totally crazy. Okay, I wanna talk about this because this is one of the things that came up was how quick it happened. It happened so quickly. I know. And you, and I both know, I tend to see this more men than with women, but when we're older and our spouse of many years passes away, we see a lot of men wanting to fill that void.

Erica (09:39):

But yeah, this is gonna sound totally inappropriate, but I know Lewis for a fact, he's gonna be scoping out the scene at my funeral, cuz he cannot be alone. I think a lot of men it's common. They need a caretaker. They want the one, they want the companionship, they wanna have conversation. They want, they want a team member, you know? And, and I think for women it's the same, but I see women who go longer periods of time without, you know, insert person here. I, I, I tend to see it more with men that they just need that, that instant replacement and it's, you know, it's, it's just very, very common. So it's not it doesn't mean that they didn't love their former spouse. Yes. It doesn't mean that their relationship wasn't real. Yeah. It just means that they are used to that person.

Sharon (10:33):

Well, and it's like a placeholder too.

Erica (10:36):

Yeah.

Sharon (10:36):

Somebody in the room that has blood, blood and energy, we're working with a gentleman, we worked with a gentleman and in two weeks after his wife died, he was already up wife of 50 years already up on a dating website. And he truly is just so lonely. He needs another body in the room and it's not about the sex and it's not about having a companion. That's there for the, for the forever. It's about having a warm body in the bed next to him. Right. And what are the men? Really men and women. When we go that fast, what are we really trying to avoid? We're trying to stay away from the pain. We cannot go that deep into the pain. A few years ago, I spoke at a senior center on grief and it was the strangest experience to me. I stood up at the mic. I started to talk and about three to five minutes into my talk, they all turned to each other and just started talking because griever senior griever totally buy into time hills.

Erica (11:47):

Yes.

Sharon (11:47):

And this is life and this is the way it has to be and replace the loss is okay for them.

Erica (11:53):

Yeah. That is true. And you know, you mentioned something about, you know, how fast things have moved and you gotta think at that age, you really don't have time to do long engagements or long court ships. I guess for that age group would be the proper phrase. So you gotta get things kind of going a long because time's not on their side.

Sharon (12:15):

Yeah. Yeah. So, yeah. So we've had cousins and an old neighbor call and say, I think this is going too fast. She's 80 and he's 88, right? That's right. Time is not gonna be on their side. And what I, I think a lot of people don't realize in a situation like this is that it's more about companionship and that's the, the void that was filled in her life that having somebody of your own to talk to when you don't have that, even if the person you're currently with you is a less than loved one or you don't like him, or you wanna punch him in the face, just having that. That's your person.

Erica (13:01):

Yeah.

Sharon (13:01):

With your person, what happens when you don't have our person? And honestly, Erica, for me, I believe this to be true, but it may not be true. I believe that Tony Brubaker is the only person for me. I believe that if Tony were to die tomorrow, then I'm going to, I'm gonna be

okay with my children and my grandchildren. But you know what you ever heard the phrase never say never.

Erica ([13:27](#)):

Right?

Sharon ([13:27](#)):

You just don't know. You just don't know. And I think for us as kids, you know, we are, we are blessed sense that we were able to look at it openly, laugh about it. Talk about it, talk with our mother about it. But what happens when the kid, just the child just can't see that, or they're struggling through their own grief and they're still actively in their grief or they're bringing this brings up a lot of their past. It can be hard for a child to accept this.

Erica ([13:55](#)):

Oh, absolutely I think this I think if we didn't know Lawrence, this would be a different conversation.

Sharon ([14:03](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([14:04](#)):

We would not be as supportive and encourage.

Sharon ([14:06](#)):

Oh yeah.

Erica ([14:07](#)):

It helps so much that we do know him and we have a relationship with him and we know that he's a good man and he has a good background. But there's a lot of situations where people, you know, meet strangers, you know? So then it's a different conversation. But yes, going back to the point of the children, when they are still actively grieving, then they can't find the place of acceptance in their heart because they have so much of their pain that they are inserting in place of being able to have an open-minded approach about their mom or their dad seeking companionship.

Sharon ([14:44](#)):

So I think the biggest bit of advice that we can give to anyone that may be going through this or go through it in the future is to just keep talking, be open with the parents, talk to them, tell 'em the things that you're not comfortable with. Let them know the parts that you can't handle. If going to Thanksgiving, dinner is not something that you can handle with the new family. Be okay with that and let them know, Hey, I can't do this just yet. Right.

Even if it seems like it's moving fast. I one of the ladies that we've dealt with is that, and it was really hard for her to think about her dad dating so quickly. But on the other hand, she's like, you know what, there's moments where at least he's with somebody and in my own grief, I get a reprieve.

Erica ([15:31](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([15:31](#)):

I get to, I know he's taken care of. I know he has somebody to talk to and if, if he didn't have that, it would be me all the time. So try to find that common ground that works for you. But the most important thing I think is to be honest and share your emotions.

Erica ([15:49](#)):

Yeah. And I, I think the goal, if, if you, if it's bringing up some reservations or some grief feelings for you try to get to a place of neutral. And that's one of my most favorite things about the program that we teach is that we can help people get to a place of neutral where, and what that means is don't have to love it. You don't have to hate it, but you are just okay. In your own skin. Yeah. And it doesn't cause you any undue, emotional feelings about it that overflow into other areas of your life. So it, you don't have to have conflict with your parent. You don't have to have conflict with your siblings, just get to a place where you can just continue to live and you don't have a, it doesn't affect you one way or the other.

Sharon ([16:40](#)):

I, I agree with that. I, I agree with you with that so much. What you don't wanna do is leave here with, with regret. I didn't attend the marriage. I don't back this. I don't wanna have anything to do with it. If you are not leaning into it, for whatever reason, there's some grief work there to be done. There's some grief work, some action steps that you need to take to go towards that. If it's just absolutely out there and that's something you need to look at, am I telling you to go to the marriage and the wedding and support it? No only you can make that decision if that's right for you. But if you are feeling that strongly about it, there's some other underlying issues in there that you need to take a look at.

Erica ([17:23](#)):

Absolutely. That is the best advice we can give. Because again, just circling back, no one needs to be alone.

Sharon ([17:31](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([17:31](#)):

If they need the opportunity for companionship or even just a special type of friendship, encourage it because we don't want our elders leaving this earth feeling lonely and unwanted.

Sharon ([17:44](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So by the time you guys have read this, the secret will be out. Our parents are eloping. Our parents, our mother is eloping tomorrow, December 3rd. And we we have done everything we can to get her ready. We are sending flowers to the room. We've rented a beautiful hotel suite and they are gonna be staying there. They're gonna be doing the marriage thing. So by the time you guys hear this, Erica will have a stepfather.

Erica ([18:21](#)):

One last thing, you know, it's so easy for you and I cuz we're in Texas and they're in Arizona. Yeah. In February. We're actually gonna see it live.

Sharon ([18:29](#)):

Oh yeah. Yeah. We're going more reception.

Erica ([18:33](#)):

That definitely brings up weird feelings for me. Like in person. I think it's been great. We've only seen pictures. We've, you know, talked to our mom, but I, I, I, like I said, mild uncomfortability, nothing negative, but it's just such, it's just weird. It's just so weird, so, so.

Sharon ([18:51](#)):

I have space on my couch back here. Yeah. I have space on my couch. You can come in and I'll help you through that.

Erica ([18:57](#)):

Yeah, I have from now until February to work on it.

Sharon ([18:59](#)):

Yeah, exactly. Okay. Friends look into your heart and see what your feelings are, see what emotions you're having and let's let's talk about 'em. Absolutely. Bye friends. Bye.