

Sexual Abuse

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 ([00:40](#)):

In a world with perpetrators and victims, sexual perpetrators, we sometimes don't clarify that experience as a grieving experience. We call it sexual abuse, but what the person that actually has gone through the sexual abuse is left with is their broken heart and their grief sadness, anger, frustration, sometimes. And a lot of times they are going through this alone because they haven't come out and talked about it. Are you or someone, you know, experiencing grief due to sexual abuse? That's what our topic is today.

Erica ([01:29](#)):

Yeah. This one is definitely heavy because a lot of our friends that we know that this has happened to them during their childhood. And it's something they've carried their entire life without speaking about it. The shame that's associated with it, the blinding, you know, you blame its self-blame. We, a lot of the times we blame ourselves. We rarely blamed the perpetrator. We feel as though we cause it in some manner. And these are things that we don't speak openly about because it's way too painful. It's way too heavy. And we don't think that we will be understood or, or be heard

Sharon ([02:13](#)):

When the incident first happens in our childhood, especially, and even as an adult, there's this loss of safety, this loss of security. That's what we're grieving. The loss of safety. You were supposed to protect me. You were my hero. This was not supposed to happen between you and me. It's a lot to safety, a loss of security. And in many instances, a loss of innocence it's been robbed. You've been robbed of your innocence.

Erica ([02:47](#)):

Yes. And a loss of trust. You then become suspect of everyone around you. You become suspect of their intentions. And when you become a parent, you then want to protect your

children like a mother lion on steroids. And you don't allow anyone in their space because you don't trust anyone. You then project that onto your children.

Sharon (03:13):

There's a huge sense of shame. Sometimes a huge sense of chain. There's a huge sense of shame of what happened, because it's embarrassing to talk about. And if your body responded to the abuse, there's a deeper sense of shame because I wasn't supposed to respond to this. And it happened

Erica (03:35):

Right. Then the embarrassment, the embarrassment that if you responded, or if you didn't fight or scream, you know, you feel as though you allowed it, and this is something you need to understand. This is something that was done to you. This is not something you asked for. You are 100% a victim in this. You did not cause our participate or your lack of fight sometimes is a will to survive.

Sharon (04:05):

The other thing that's emerging with us is that it's, we've created this more open space to talk about it, where we didn't have that before or go there. It was not a thing that we could talk about. It's almost like suicide. Those were kept in the closet. Don't open that closet because what's going to emerge on bear is going to be ugly. The truth is a lot of times that it's the griever whose left carrying the burden of the recovery and the healing,

Erica (04:37):

Because it's been a secret. Yeah. Cause like you said, we don't, there wasn't a space to talk about it. We knew in households, in certain communities that this is something that happened. I mean, look at the whole, the church thing. I mean, it was like, and it's on the victim to carry the secret. And that's so much on top of everything else. We've just laid out.

Sharon (05:01):

The other thing that I want all of our friends to understand, I cannot even begin to tell you how many times we're grieving with someone, and sexual abuse comes out. I want to say it's nine times out of 10. Yes. Some days I feel like it's 10 out of 10, especially for women. How many times I've experienced sexual abuse? You've experienced that. I'll talk about it openly here. How many times are we sitting with women? And that's what comes up. And sometimes it's this little quietness that comes out from when they were three years old, and they've never shared it with anyone.

Erica (05:43):

Yeah. That's, that's a long time to carry that. It's a long time to go without having your feelings validated. And without being told that there was nothing that that person did

wrong. Cause a lot of times they feel like they in the wrong and they have all of that in their heart. And it's so sad

Sharon (06:03):

Because we've never talked about it because we weren't allowed to talk about it. It goes on and on in this quiet place, it just keeps going down there because sometimes when it happens to us so very young, we didn't realize that it was abused. And so, we didn't sit here and say anything, right? We have an awakening, you know, when we're 12, 13 Pell isn't right. That or people that live in it over and over again. And they just think that that's their life and this is the way life is. And everybody's experiencing this. Everybody has happiness having this happen in their home with their grandpa.

Erica (06:38):

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And, and that's, that's another layer to it is when it's not someone outside of the home, but someone inside the home, when it's the grandpa, the dad, the brother, the cousin that also, I think, brings another, those people were supposed to love me. Yeah. And take care of me. And they heard.

Sharon (07:00):

Yeah. And they hurt me. The other thing that can happen is it a loss by death can trigger the sexual abuse coming to the surface. Right? So, you could be grieving the death of someone close to you that has died. And as we're doing the work, all of a sudden, sometimes the memories can flip forward of the abuse or what happens when the abuser dies. You think he's going to have this instant relief and you don't know because you know what they took with them, your ability to say you were a jerk, you did this to me, your, your ability to get justice was taken.

Erica (07:43):

Yep. That's the yeah. To hold them accountable and call them out. They robbed you again, once of all your innocence and all those things. And now they robbed your, you are being able to hold them accountable. Absolutely. Which is a whole different type of pain because then you feel, you know, like you're never going to get the vindication you deserve

Sharon (08:06):

As a survivor of sexual assault, you may have so much grieving going on in your life, just around that incident, you know, from your childhood, or let's say a rape or even sexual abuse within your marriage. Right. You have so much grief going on. But it's gonna come out in other areas. It's going to come out in other areas of our life. It's going to show up. If we don't deal with it, it's going to show up in other areas.

Erica (08:34):

Yes. Absolutely. Grief always finds a way. It's either going to get you physically where you'll have some physical symptoms or it's going to impact your relationships where it can cause tension and friction in places that you'd never had it before.

Sharon ([08:49](#)):

Right? So, some of the things that we do to cope with this is one of the things we do for sure is we go to the bottle, and we use that bottle of wine to help us cope with the pain day in and day out. And we get to a point where we don't even realize that's what we're doing.

Erica ([09:06](#)):

Or you take it to the next step where you're extremely promiscuous and you just go out and you just give your body to anyone because you're already so used to it being abused. You then become the abuser of yourself by just giving your body away. So freely.

Sharon ([09:28](#)):

So, let's help our friends with one of the emotions, because grief is an emotional experience that happens to us in our heart. One of the most common its emotions that we can experience during, during grief of sexual assault is guilt. We Feel guilty. We feel guilty that we didn't say anything. We feel guilty for what they've done. We feel guilt and shame towards them for what they allow to happen. And I want to help you friends with this. The definition of guilt is with intent to deceive or do harm with intent to deceive or do harm. And you, the victim doesn't own the guilt. Guess who owns the guilt, the that did it.

Erica ([10:14](#)):

Absolutely. 100%. The blame is on them. And any other, if this happened in your childhood, any other adult that knew about it and allow that to continue, those people deserve the guilt, not you, you were not responsible for what happened.

Sharon ([10:30](#)):

We use guilt as an umbrella of emotion. So, I just feel so guilty because we don't know what other emotions to say. We're not comfortable saying other emotions. We say other, we feel other emotions. And we think that they are guilt, right? So, we feel sadness, shame, isolation, loneliness, and we all want it. We want to stuff it all under the guilt. If you didn't intend to harm someone or to deceive someone, you don't own the guilt, understand that you can own the shame, the anger, the sadness, the loneliness, the isolation, those are yours, anxiety. Those are all yours. We'll give you those, but guilt. Probably not.

Erica ([11:13](#)):

No, definitely not. And that's why they use it in the, in the court of law. When people are on trial for murder, you know, they intended to inflict harm. That's why it is used in that manner. And not in the grief world. We don't use the guilt word.

Sharon ([11:29](#)):

Yeah. One of the first steps of emerging is one talking about it, honestly, with your therapist or your grief specialist is saying, you got to say the thing that happened. Here's the other thing you have to tell the truth about it doesn't mean you have to say every single aspect of it. You can just say something inappropriate happen here by saying something inappropriate happened here. Let's let us know and let you know that you were acknowledging that it was something you don't have to share every aspect of the story to get healed from it. Exactly. You have to share every time they came into your own, you don't have to share every time they forced themselves upon you.

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

I think that's what holds a lot of people back is because they say, I don't want to relive it. And that's something Sharon and I absolutely do not is ask you to go down every single, ugly, gory detail. We don't need to know. We just need you to acknowledge this bad inappropriate thing happened. And that's enough for us. And it shouldn't be enough for most therapists

Sharon ([12:31](#)):

That you know what that's really deep. And so, I want to stay there for a second, but our program can be very much can be content-free. I don't need to know every detail. You're more than welcome to share what you need to share. Because sometimes as grievors, we need to say the ugly out loud. We need someone else to acknowledge that this happened someone else to acknowledge that this happened, but you can grieve 100% and you and I never know the story.

Erica ([12:58](#)):

Right. We have that one client that she kept saying what did she say? The most terrible, unimaginable, unimaginable thing. I never knew what it was, but it was the most terrible unimaginable thing. And that's how we address it and went through it. And we never to this day don't know what that terrible and imaginable thing was.

Sharon ([13:22](#)):

So, the first thing you're going to have been some self-compassion. Sharing your story with other people is self-care it letting people know it absolutely happened. And I'll be damned if somebody pushes back against you and say that it didn't happen, or you were dressed inappropriately, you know what, push back and say no way this happened. I'm telling you that it happened.

Erica ([13:44](#)):

Well also I want it. Where are you going to bring in another point? Cause I wanted to introduce something that we also get pushed that were people pushed back on the

concept of forgiveness. Yeah. Because it's part of it. Yeah. And the forgiveness is for us, my friends. I want you to hear that. I'm going to say it again. The forgiveness is for us, the griever, the victim of the inappropriate action it's for us, it doesn't have a thing to do with the person who, for us, it is only for us. If you forgive that person, it does not mean you can. Don't what they did or their behavior. What's you're saying is I forgive so that my heart no longer carries this pain in this fender, this resentment, I'm freeing myself. Screw you. You going to deal with you wherever. This is about me so that I can move on, and I can live a pain-free life

Sharon ([14:43](#)):

Until we get to that point. We're literally harming herself. Yes, we are staying stuck. And we are harming themselves until we get to the, where we're willing to let go of what has happened. Here's the other thing you don't have to say the word I forgive. You can acknowledge that they did it just acknowledging it will help. And those are all things that we talk about in our program. But I agree with you. Forgiveness is a big part of moving on for yourself.

Erica ([15:09](#)):

Yes.

Sharon ([15:10](#)):

Unfortunately. So many people become stuck.

Erica ([15:14](#)):

Well because they think forgiving is saying that it was okay and that's not it at all. Or that forgiving means now I got to go invite him to family dinner. Oh no, you do not. You don't ever have to speak or look at that person ever again in life. If you choose not to forgiveness just means, you're saying, I'm letting go of this pain for me, this resentment, this shame, all of it for me. And I will never even acknowledge your existence again in life. That is okay.

Sharon ([15:46](#)):

Here's a deal. You can get stuck in the anger and be mad at them. But that's where you're going to be a stuck in the anger and mad at them. And you, Erica is going to find a way that anger is going to find a way out and you're going to use it against other people. You got to heal the brokenness in your heart, my friends in your heart, no matter what the incident was, or the situation was because you will continually be triggered over and over and over again, doing the work on your heart. It's your job. It's your job. No one else can do it for you, Eric. And I cannot do it for you. We can show you the way, but we can't do the work. And it may take multiple sessions to get to the bottom of it. But you will emerge free, free from the pain and the isolation and the depression that you have held on to.

Erica ([16:42](#)):

Absolutely. And you know, when you hold onto that, anchor it, tears your body down. It really tears your body down. So, letting go of that anger, you're going to be gifting yourself your body, some rejuvenation, because you won't be holding on to that and letting it eat up, eat your body up.

Sharon ([17:03](#)):

So, here's the thing that we want you guys to understand more than anything is that there is hope after sexual trauma recovery from your broken heart is possible, but you got to go through the tunnel of pain and do the work. You gotta reach out. You gotta be willing. First of all, you have to acknowledge for yourself that it even happened and that it is formulate it, this pain and this incidence of what happened has formulated the person that you are today and that this pain constantly living over you is stopping you from living, living the fulfilled life that you should be living

Erica ([17:41](#)):

A thousand percent. That that's where it all starts. You have to start there, set that as your beginning point and will go through the process and it will have a beginning, middle and end. Once you open the door, it's not going to go on forever. I promise you

Sharon ([17:58](#)):

Friends going through the tunnel of pain is the worst thing possible. But having someone guide you through that is so freeing Eric, and I know the path, we know the path we, we live down. There we go through it quite often. We know how to get to the other side. And we know what has happened to you is probably embarrassing, shameful, and hurtful. And we're here for you. We're willing, you got to do your self-care. You gotta make the first step towards us. And if it's not us, get to a therapist, get to somebody who will hear you and hear you out.

Erica ([18:35](#)):

And the alternative not going through the tunnel. It's not living. It's not living. You're just finding a way to survive, and surviving is not living.

Sharon ([18:46](#)):

No, absolutely not. Whatever has happened to you. We are so sorry. We're so sorry. Our hearts are absolutely broken, but we're here for you and we're amazing listeners. And the first place to start is to get in touch with us. That's the first place to start and we'll be here for you. Thank you, friends

Erica ([19:08](#)):

Bye friends.

Sharon ([19:10](#)):

Erica, so many friends don't know where to meet us at or where to find out more about us or what they need to do next. Let's give them a tip.

Erica ([19:21](#)):

The easiest way to find us is to click on the link and you will have access to all of our places, our podcasts, our Facebook, private group, our webpage and our email.

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

Yeah, exactly. That's simple. And our free blog friends click the link tree in the link below, and you'll find everything you need to know about us there. Thank you for allowing us and for this minute.

Erica ([19:50](#)):

Thank you so much. Thanks for listening to our podcast.