

Surviving a Loved One's Suicide Part 1

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](#)):

Today, I'm feeling extra speechless. Normally I turned to my creative writing side to channel my thoughts and emotions out of my head and onto paper. But today I feel like I just keep running into a brick wall. I really have creative words or fun stories to tell you or not. You were supposed to be here. You were supposed to celebrate your 50th birthday with us. This is writing from our beautiful niece McKenna, and that's the beginning of her posts talking about her dad. I want to introduce you guys to McKenna Hendrickson and our family faced a tragedy last year, right at the beginning of COVID or Matt, we call him Uncle Matt, right? Took his life. And today is suicide awareness month. This month is suicide awareness month, and we are honored to have our beautiful niece with you guys to share her experience of what it's like to be a survivor.

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

Hi, thank you so much for having me on this podcast. And it's really amazing to be able to share my experience now being on the other side of this. And there's so many different things that I have learned being the daughter of a survivor or being a survivor on the other side of this. And it's really something that I never thought that I'd be a part of a group in a club. And I never thought I'd be part of the missing dad club or even part of the club that had anything to do with someone taking their own life. So, it's honestly been a huge struggle to get to where I am now, but I've learned a lot. And I feel like I now have a lot to offer to other people that are going through something similar.

Erica ([02:32](#)):

Welcome. And can I know that was, that was a lot, you know, we share it and I talk about how big our family is. And I think we don't do it justice when we talk about it. But our family as a whole is no stranger to tragedy. McKenna and Donovan were very, very close. And she was also close with Austin. She was just a little tiny thing when Austin passed. So, she's been, you know, on the front lines of a lot of grief and now this something completely

different that we had never faced as a family before. So outside of our, no stranger to grief, but definitely foreign to the concept of suicide. What was that like as just, you know, we'd never even talked about it as a family?

McKenna ([03:19](#)):

Yeah, it was honestly something that you heard happen, but it was something that was far off. It was something that would never happen to you until it does. Such as, you know, a drowning or someone getting in a motorcycle accident, you hear it on the news, but you're like, oh, well that won't happen to our family or that won't happen to me. So, it was something that I knew happened, but it was something that came from, it was like almost as if it was just like in the movies and you would see this person in like a dark room or a dark place. And then all of a sudden, they take their life and they're gone, or someone comes home and finds them or whatnot, but it was never part of the loving, happy family that did everything together. And for our family, it was, it's extraordinarily difficult because in our big loud family, I mean, my dad was there at every event. And was the same as you had seen him over the past 25 years of him being married to my mom, there was nothing outwardly different about him. He looked the same, he talked the same, he acted the same. It was just, it was all in his head. So, it wasn't like a physical illness where, you know, he was in the hospital and we're like, oh, let's pray for him. It's like, it was all in all in his mental capacity. So, he could be around other people and talk and laugh and have the same conversations. And you would have no idea. So, I think the hardest part was, is still for our family is seeing him and being like, I just saw uncle Matt. Like he seemed fine. And then him, all of a sudden, just being gone another day,

Sharon ([04:53](#)):

I think what the other part that's so hard McKenna is that you guys lived in extra ordinary life. Everything was extra. You know how all the young people are like, oh, you're so extra, but you guys were extra. Like it was what you portrayed. I just saw this thing this morning about how, what people portray on social media isn't really their life. But what you guys portrayed on social media was your life. You guys had traditions that were set up that were really important to your family. And so, I want you to share a little bit about that. Like you guys went to the river, it was, you went for holidays, you had a motor home and you guys traveled in this motor home, like literally around the world. And you, you did these things that you had nicknames for things and the nicknames of your family. I want to, let's dive into like who you guys were as a family, which was really set up by Uncle Matt.

McKenna ([05:49](#)):

Yeah, for real. So, my dad's family he didn't really have as, as big of a family unit as we do. And so as soon as he met my they met each other and then 12 days later, they got engaged and were married for 25 years. So once he met my mom and saw how amazing she wasn't really grasped onto her family and her big extended family. And then my parents created this family unit together, the four of us, and we always grew up having fun. It was always a

Henderson house being fun. All the friends always wanted to be at our house. The parents were always cooking. My grandparents were always cooking. My mom was hosting. It was and still is the fun house to be at. So, for my dad, his most favorite thing was to come home to a house full of kids on a Friday or Saturday night and just hang out. And everybody always knew that our house was the house that they could come to, whether we were home or not home, like our house was just always open. And for our family, we always worked hard, but played harder. So, we knew Monday through Friday, mom and dad would be working. They started a business together and having a small business. It was very challenging for them working long days, long nights and working together and also having a marriage to work through together and four kids. So, they were constantly together. I mean, I could count on one hand how many times my parents weren't together. We were always together. As a family and my parents really focused on us working hard and playing harder. So during the Workdays, we would go to school, we would play sports and everybody was always at everything. And we just that's how my parents made it from the beginning was that everyone was at everything. And so you just kind of went, I went to my youngest sibling. Who's 10 years younger than me went to his baseball games. He came to my volleyball games. We went to the other siblings, baseball games and softball games. We just wanted to always be together. Cause it was always fun. And we always played games together and hung out in the motor home. We would drive cross country for hours, but it would be so fun because my parents always turned everything into a game or something fun or a dance off or in music or some sort of a game. There was always a game included with everything that we did. And our family has a lot of inside jokes, just the six of us. And some of them come from movies or just things we've done together or funny things other people have said. And just us six, having a conversation is half inside jokes because we spend so much time together that it's just so funny to us. And my dad was essential part of that unit. He was one of our, our drivers. He was always taking us places, always at every sporting event, any award ceremony. I mean, everyone always knew in our schools, we grew up in a smaller town. Everyone always knew in our town when the Hendrickson showed up, they showed up and they showed out the of us, if not the height of us with my grandparents were always together. And I mean, still, always together. So for us, our family on the outside was like, oh my gosh, there, you know, posting my dad dancing and doing something crazy or cooking something or we're playing some silly family game. I mean, my sister came up with the family Olympics. Like there's always these funny things that we're, we're doing together. And I posted what was raw and what happened in the moment. And everyone loved it because my family was unique that we liked being together. And we still very much so do. And my parents, we respected my parents so much to the point where we always tell them the truth. I mean, still to this day, I'm almost 24 years old and we always told them the truth. And we always gave them the utmost amount of respect. And if we made a mistake, we admit our mistakes to them and they did the same for us. And they respect us to where there was never this like scary tell mom and dad were going to get in trouble. My parents always said, if you tell the truth, you're not going to get in trouble. So we've always had this like family understanding of, if something comes along, let's talk about it, let's work it out and we'll get to a solution and we'll move on. And whether it's like

a disagreement or you got in trouble at school or whatever is going on, we're always very open and honest with each other, which I think makes it very easy for us to want to hang out because there's no like there's no secrets. We all just talk about everything. And that's another part of this is my dad was not closed off about what was going on. He was very open to our family. Even my younger siblings who are only 15 and 13, very much so understand what my dad was going through because he was very open and honest with them before.

Sharon (10:49):

So we get into that. Hold on, I'm going to cut you off right there. I want to go there, but before we go there, I want you to talk about just how close you and dad were friends.

McKenna (11:01):

Yeah. My dad and I were definitely friends. We watched videos after he passed away of when I was younger, we were actually at Donovan's birthday party and it was at a firehouse. And my dad was following me around with the video camera and he's calling me by my first and middle name. He calls me McKenna, Ray, McKenna, Ray. And he's just so enamored and so in love with me. And I watched these videos from the day that I was born until I was about six years old. And he's just still like, and I can hear it. I can hear him still saying my name the same way he did the day I was born until I was 23 years old, like McKenna, McKenna. Like he was just so obsessed with having kids for one, but for me being his first daughter. So we were definitely friends. We definitely created this friendship, especially as I got older of like, we wanted to hang out together, like when people are like, oh, I want to go hang out with my friends. I'm like, yeah. But can my parents come to, like, I want my parents because I'm like, oh, we're going to go to the bar. Okay. Can my parents come? Ad everyone's like, oh my God. Yes. Like, of course, like we want your parents to come. They're so fun. And so like, my parents are everyone's parents. And so it was, it was like, it was a friend. It was like, we could talk about anything. And my dad would always, you know, answer it and talk to me and I could call him and ask him for advice on anything. And I knew he would be there. And as busy as my dad was with work and life, I knew he would always be there for me. He would drop whatever he was doing to be there. And I know people say that, you know, as a cliché sometimes, but know that this man is very serious. Like he would drop everything to be there for me. And he has done it plenty of times where I've called him to like, dad, I actually like, I really need you here. And that's all he needed to hear. And that was it. The rest of his day was over. He's like, okay, wherever you need me, I'm there. So people say these things, you know, when someone passes away, like, oh, he was always there for me. He was so generous. He was so kind. And he really was like, he really was that guy that would do anything for everyone. I wanted everyone around him to be happy and taken care of whatever that looked like, whatever that meant. Whether that was a meal or whether that was given him a little extra cash or a present, like whatever that meant he wanted to be that person. So at one point you said that he was not closed off. Yeah. I close off to sharing. So what was that like? He was very, very open. He was just

would sit us down at these random times and would just be like, I really don't. I really don't feel good. I don't feel like myself would kind of be the way that he would describe it. And the earliest time that he started talking about his thoughts and feelings was actually a year before Donovan passed away. And I know it's so crazy in our family. We kind of like have these milestones of like who passed away and how long before that. So I guess I could say the year it was 2014, but I just very specifically remember it being a year before Donovan passed away. So I was, I was in, I was in high school. I was a junior in high school and it was like, oh, like, where are those people now? Like, okay. Like my dad like has a mental illness. Like what does this mean? Like, it was something that I had heard of, but I hadn't experienced firsthand. And the crazy thing is, is I probably had experienced it with so many people in my life, but no one had ever talked to me about it. No one had ever shared with me like, oh, I take medicine every day and it makes me feel better. Or, oh, like I've had this experience, this tragic experience. And now I've gone to the doctor, but it's fine. Now for us as kids, it was always like, scary. Like, oh, well now like you're broken or something's wrong with you. And it won't ever be fixed. Like, and you never wanted to tell any of your friends that like, oh, my dad has some mental illness because you don't, I never wanted my friends or family, but my family is different because my family is the type of people that were no judgment zone. Everybody's got a little something going on. So I was never really nervous about my family, but it was like my friends. I didn't want my friends think of my dad as anything different. I didn't want them to think he was like scary or different or put them in another category. I'm like, he's the same guy. He just was diagnosed with a mental illness. But he's the same dad that you just had ribs and mashed potatoes and Mac and cheese with last week. And you were dancing around and hanging out and jumping in the pool and having a good time. Like, he's that same crazy cool fun dad. And has probably had this mental illness for a long time. Did you guys call it

Sharon (16:00):

The mental illness? Did you call it a mental illness before? Are you calling it into that now? Just curious.

McKenna (16:07):

I think we just said, like, we didn't say mental illness. That was never

Sharon (16:14):

Right now. Is that huge that you're now calling it a mental illness? Are you like?

McKenna (16:21):

I think just mental illness is just a different, like just how society wants to label it as oh, mental illness. Cause I didn't encompass everything people would say out of his mouth. He would say, I don't feel good or I don't feel like myself would be like,

Sharon (16:41):

You're saying that and letting people know

McKenna (16:43):

Yeah. So my mom would use, oh, like depression or dad's depressed. She would use that word, but we never really like around the house. We never really used like mental illness until after he passed away. Because, and I'll get into this later. But because sometimes when people ask me how he passed away, it's awkward. You're, you're like at the carwash or at the gas station. And you're like and so it just depends on the situation I'm in, but sometimes mental illness is the answer. And that's just like, figure it out on your own. Like yeah.

Erica (17:17):

The hesitancy in answering the question when people do ask, is it because you feel that they'll judge or is it,

McKenna (17:26):

It's definitely like a judgment thing or then there's a follow-up question. But if I say, oh, he had cancer. Oh, I'm so sorry and wrong. And, and not that like, anyone that dies from cancer is no less than someone who dies from taking their life. But it's like, I don't want to answer your follow-up questions because people, the weirdest things people will ask, well, how or what, or, and I'm like, I do know, answer these questions with you. Right.

Sharon (18:00):

You think people have the right ask?

McKenna (18:03):

I mean, anybody can say whatever they want. But when you're on the other side or when you've experienced death in any way, you know that the last thing you want is someone to ask you a question about what happened, ask you a question about the actual act of whatever happened, because you know that you will tell that person on your own, you will have that conversation with that person on your own. When you feel like it's the time or your relationship is that close to where you want to have that conversation with them.

Sharon (18:40):

Right! The things you said earlier, and this is way back in and I wrote it, I wrote it down and I think it was so it's so huge. And it's so important for us to get across is that nobody talks about it. Nobody talks about it. And I think it ties into your like saying there's a difference between saying, oh, dad's suffering with his depression, death suffering with his mental illness. Like one of them seems to carry more weight. Am I wrong, Erica? It seems like one is like, yeah, maybe we need to pay more attention. I don't know. But the other that's one question. And the other thing is the fact that nobody talks about it. Like we never talk about

it. That's why it's so important for us to be doing these shows. But what, what's your thought on that, Erica?

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

I don't know. I think, I think they're both kind of the same weight. I don't see one over the other

Sharon ([19:28](#)):

Depression is like, okay, I could go to the doctor, and I can get medication for that. Right. And that's kinda like where we put it, like, oh, I can go to the doctor and get medication for that. But mental illness could be so many things on the list.

Erica ([19:39](#)):

I see what you're saying because it's, it's so vague. Like it's not pinpointed. I see.

Sharon ([19:45](#)):

Yeah. Not good or bad. I don't know. I'm just talking out loud.

Erica ([19:48](#)):

True. And because these in general, the whole mental health issue, and then more specifically depression is just really being talked about now, you know, we haven't really had those basic conversations either. So that's why it's maybe feels a little uncomfortable with getting specific or going into detail because it's like no one sits around and talks about that. Which the fact that you guys as a family could do that, I think is awesome. Because a lot of times in families and what I'm seeing for like counseling commercials that are out now, it's all about getting the wrong messages from your family members. Like, oh, you just need to change your diet. You don't sleep enough. You know, everything is an excuse. Why you're feeling that way instead of, oh, I'm sorry. You feel that way here. Let's find you help, you know, that should be what it is. It shouldn't be downplayed or minimize. It should be really accepted. Oh my, okay. Let's go find the answer, you know.

McKenna ([20:47](#)):

Yeah. And I think in our family, that's what we did. And so, we've always looked to my mom. She's definitely the matriarch of our family. And that was her answer was I'm so sorry. You're feeling that way. Let's go find you help. And when I say we did everything to help this man, I mean, everything, he went to multiple doctors, and they were helpful and we tried all different kinds of medicines and everything that we could to try to help. And I think that's one of the things that people, sometimes question is like, well, was this like a preventable situation? Like, did you try to help? Like, did you intervene? And I think the hardest part from, with us having it just in our unit of nobody knowing besides really the six of us is like what everyone else was like, oh, this seemed sudden to them. But it wasn't seven. It was years in the making. It was, it was about five years in the making. And when

my mom first told us me or my dad, my mom and dad sat us down, my brother and I, because we were older at the time, my younger siblings didn't really get too involved until they were older, and they would overhear conversations. Then they got involved. But my dad sat us down when he got home from the mental facility, and he talked to us about it. He very clearly said, I'm on this medicine. This is what I'm going to be doing. This is how I feel. And I'm w he was willing to accept any help that we were going to give him. And my junior year of high school he was home for about a month or so, and just was like adjusting to the medication. Cause it was a lot on his body. So, to see my dad just like come home from school and see, my dad lying in bed was like the weirdest thing ever because everyone who knows him knows he goes a mile a minute. Like my mom and I joke around, like, he could never really finish a task because he had so many things going on and you know, this add, he, he probably was undiagnosed, but like, it was so weird coming home and just seeing him like chilling because he never would do that. Not even on like a lazy Sunday afternoon. So you knew something was wrong. And that's the physical part where I really saw it because it wasn't like it was written all over him. Like, oh, I have depression. Like I am depressed. But when I saw him just like lying in bed that time, it was like, oh, he's like not going to work. He's not really doing anything. He has no desire to do anything. And that was the hardest part was as a family, all those fun things, going to the river, going dirt, bike riding. They didn't seem fun to him anymore. So we had to carry that way of like, come on dad, like, it's going to be fun. And when you have to turn and tell your person and your superhero, Hey, it's going to be fun when you're so used to him telling you that and him holding, holding the line for you now you're holding it for him. That's when it changed for me when I was like, well, I got to hold him up now. Like he needs me just like, I need him. That's kind of where that friendship comes in is like, we were equal to each other and we held him up and we kept going and kept doing things. And that's why it wasn't like a drastic change for anyone around us, because we kept going to the river. We kept going by grinding. We kept going to family events to the school, to everything we like didn't stop. He didn't stop. And at times he didn't feel good and we knew that, but he would push through or just take breaks, do whatever he needed. But we did find that help for him and go to various doctors and do different things. But during the time that he was home and he was adjusting to the medication, we, I remember one day was we went to lunch, my brother my brother and I, and my dad and my dad just broke it all down. Like it was no, there was no secrets. And he looks like, ask me questions, like, ask me about it. Like, I want to talk about it. Like ask me anything. So it was open from the moment he got home until the moment he passed away. So we had

Sharon ([24:44](#)):

What I hear you saying. I'm sorry. Sweet girl. What I hear you saying is that you guys had love, you had family, you had together, you had fun, but he was still in pain.

McKenna ([24:58](#)):

And that's the thing that I want to highlight for other people is you never know who's going through something. It could be the family that you think is having the most fun that people that you want to be. And we, at times I get a message, oh, I wish I was in your family. Oh, I want to be part of your family. Oh, I love your dad. I love your mom, which is so great. And so fantastic. But you, you never realized who it is. You know, you think it's the people that aren't really involved or don't do anything, the quiet people or whatnot, or keep to themselves. But the people that can be struggling the most is the people that you see all the time. And some that you're like, wow, that would never be them. And as much as it was such a tragedy for us, it was so extremely difficult. Seeing every single person we knew walk through our front door because each person felt that same weight of, I wish I knew, I can't believe it. I was just talking to him. He seemed so happy. He had it all. I mean, the business, the kids, the fun, all the things in the world, he had it all. He had access to everything he wanted to have and you know, it still wasn't enough. And I think that's something that's so hard to see as, you know, everyone wants to be at someone else and everyone always wants to beat us and be him and all the uncles as we sat down and like, I was wanting to be uncle Matt, you know, he was the greatest dad. I wanted to be like uncle Matt. And as much as he totally is the greatest dad, it was a key was really, really suffering. And it really shows us like he wanted everyone else to be okay. And it shows us in him is he didn't want to burden anybody else by telling or making them feel like they had to take care of him or do something for him. McKenna,

Sharon ([26:48](#)):

We changed this conversation. How do we change the conversation in the world? What do you think from your personal experience? Is that, what do we need to be saying? What, what, what needs to change?

McKenna ([27:00](#)):

I think the biggest thing that needs to change is just the reaction from other people. When you tell them that you are suffering with a mental illness and whatever that is, I think the reaction you get is something that people are very scared of. They're scared of like, well, what are other people going to say? Or what are they going to think of me? And just to be like, you're okay. You're loved. I love you the same way I did two seconds ago before you told me this as I do now. And you're no, I don't view you any differently because I think people are scared that people view them differently. When they say that they have some sort of mental illness, like, oh, something's wrong with you? Like, I'm the same person. And you've known me this whole time. I've had this mental illness. I just never told you. And I think also the other thing that Brett, that I bring to light here is that it happens to guys too. It happens to, you know, strong, big guys who seem like they got it all going on. It happens to dads too. And something I said during his funeral was, you know, dads are supposed to be around forever. Right? Like dads, you just think of them as like your ultimate hero. And like, they have it all. And that's who you go to. And like, that is it. So, it's really hard when you see a male, especially, but a dad like someone, who's your rock break down and be

like, I need you like looking to you for help. And you're like, well, I don't even know what to do. Like I'm 17 years old. I don't even know anything. And they're looking to you for help on their entire life. And I'm like, oh, okay. So I think to change the conversation, we just need to be more open and more honest and more accepting of when people say like, Hey, this is what I have going on because I guarantee you, there's a lot of people around you that you meet on a daily basis or that you, you are very close to even, and you don't know, you know, what they might be going through or what mental illness they might be fighting. And it's, it's the ones that you're like, oh, well, no, they, they got it together. They're totally fine. Just like my dad, like Uncle Matt. You're like, okay, well, if I'm going to the list of people who I think my uncle Matt was like at the bottom, like if he was like all the way at the bottom, you're like, no, that guy is fine. Like, he's a solid, but like, he's good. Like what could be wrong with him? Like, he's fine.

Erica ([29:25](#)):

And touch on this really quick. The fact that you guys, as a family, the six of you guys made the choice to keep, you know, his struggle and his journey within the family, the weight of once he made the decision, everyone outside coming to you guys looking for answers, like that's gotta be such a challenging position because you know, you guys knew what was happening and knew what he had been going through. But everyone else was like, this was like, like you said, the least suspected person. If everyone put their top five together, Uncle Matt wouldn't have been on anybody's list, but we all come to you guys and we're like, you know, what was going on? And then you guys explained about the struggle with the depression and his journey, but then it was like, you guys kept having to explain. I felt so bad on the outside, looking in everybody who walked through the door, like you said, and there was like, and it was in COVID. So, we didn't have our normal 5,000 people show up at one time. So, in that regard, at least you had a little bit of a break, but everyone walking in wanted answers from you guys, the family who's now broken, who is just, you know, mine's just not where it should be. What was that like having to be the person or the people to deliver like, well, this is what was happening. This is what he was going through telling his truth without him here. What was that?

McKenna ([30:53](#)):

Yeah, I think that this is, this is something that I talk about a lot and I still talk about it and it's been over a year and a half and I still talk about it all the time. This is something for our family that honestly felt so liberating in the sense of like, well now you all know, and now you all can understand in some of the things that we may have did or said in the past now may make sense. And it was liberating to the sense that then people started opening up about their own struggles and they then felt comfortable with our family and sharing with other people and opening up and maybe getting help. And people just felt in that space. And in that moment, like, okay, well now I can share what I'm going through. Or now I don't feel as I guess, embarrassed or feel like I should hide Ron going through, like, if that's what he was going through. And people were just so accepting and so loving. And of course, you

know, anyone's going to be after a tragic death like that, but people were just so open and it was like, well, why weren't you like this? The, the, the time where we would have actually told you on like a random Tuesday night, like, I wish that's, I wish I didn't have to come to this for you to be, for us to have this conversation, but it was so hard to have the conversation over and over and over again. And it still is. And I still haven't stopped telling the story, but it was liberating in the sense of, we had held onto this secret for so long that I could finally say what was going on. And it made his life make more sense to those on the outside or not make sense, but it made his actions make sense. And it honestly just felt like we were holding this in and we, everything was out in the open, all of our posting and stuff, but it was that one thing. And we always just like held it in our family, held it in and like, if it would come up in conversation, we just kind of knew how to feel that. So it was honestly nice to just be able to sit down and talk to people. And the other thing is, is I would never expose my dad or speak of things that he wouldn't want me to say in front of anybody else. Neither would anyone in my family. So speaking with, without him there, I would say things that I would say if he was sitting right next to me. And a lot of times I feel like he's sitting right next to me. And I wouldn't. I said the words that he couldn't say himself, even if he was sitting next to me, he still would have, would struggle being able to say it. And then he would listen to me say it and be like, yeah, what kind of said, because he knew that I was like his voice for him just as my mom, my siblings, like, we could almost talk for him when he didn't really know what to say. Like, there were a lot of times where, you know, he, he couldn't put the ideas and thoughts together because his brain was like mush. Like every day, like he just woke up and was like, all right, like, got to get it together for like months. So for him to sit there and like articulate what was going on prior to his passing, if you would have asked him the day before he passed away to articulate what was going on, she wouldn't have been able to. But if you would listen to what I would say, he'd be like, oh, okay, like she's got this story together. But just seeing everyone so broken and so confused and wanting those answers, our family unknowingly, like we didn't sit down and say this, we just decided like, this is it. We're just going to be open and honest. And we are going to share the story. There was no time where we were like, all right, team, this is what we're going to say. This isn't, we're not,

Sharon ([34:45](#)):

I was actually going to ask you that. Cause like I obviously was there that very first night and the very first hours and you were, I opened the door and you were just like, Oh, this is what happened. So I was going to ask you, did you guys go, okay? We're telling everybody now, no, he, his actions opened the door.

McKenna ([35:04](#)):

His actions opened the door and there was never like a sit down conversation with my family of like, okay, this is what we're going to say and not say it was just like that general, like, you know, keep respect for dad. But in those very first moments when I got to the house, my mom looked to me and was like, well, what do we tell the kids before we walked

into the house to tell them. And I looked at her and I said, mom, we tell them the truth. We tell them what happened.

Sharon ([35:36](#)):

Okay. I want to, to that in our next show, that's our next show. This is a two-parter guys. We have this amazing guest McKenna Hendrickson, McKenna to everyone who is struggling right now. This is going to be our final question. Everyone is struggling right now and trying to make the decision, whether to do this or not speaking as the daughter who is the survivor. I want you to talk to them. What do you want to tell them?

McKenna ([36:02](#)):

It is the absolute worst, most horrible feeling in the world to not have your dad here to have to wake up every morning and be like, well, I wish I could tell that about this, or I wish I could call dad. And to know that that one silly Monday morning, he decided that he didn't want to be here anymore. And it's like, I wish I wish we could. We could talk. I wish you could call me. I wish you could still be here. And you think in that slight moment, that that is the answer to all of your questions, but it's, it's not into somebody in that thought process. It's so hard to see the other side and to see the way out of it and to see that there is light at the end of the tunnel. And you've struggled for so hard for so long. And it's been so hard to, you know, go day by day. And every day, every hour seems like a struggle. Like I just need to get through this. I just need to get through this. And as a daughter to not have your dad, it's like, you should be here. Like, these are the things that you dreamt up. You dreamt of me moving out of the house and getting my first job. You dreamt of being able to see this. You dreamt of me getting married and having kids one day and being able to be there for that. And it's so hard to be like, you chose not to be here for that. And knowing in that moment, and in those moments leading up to that, you made that decision of you feeling like a burden per se, and you didn't want to be here anymore. And that's, what's so hard is like, we were so close and so loved and did everything together. It's so hard to imagine not wanting to be here. And I mean, we talked about it. I knew how he felt in that part, made it a little bit easier for me, rather than everybody else in his life was. I heard it come from his mouth. I heard how he felt a couple of weeks before the weekend, before I heard it from his not, I heard him tell me, this is how I feel. This is why he answered all of my questions. And I think that's what makes it slightly easier was I didn't leave anything out. There's no question. I didn't ask him. There's no experience that we didn't do. That was feasible in a time. Like we did everything. So, I don't have that feeling of that. I didn't get to complete what I did in those 22 years, but I have that feeling of, well, what were the next 22 years going to be like, what more were we going to do and experience together? But I had the best dad. We did have it all. That is, that is no social media posts. That is real. Like everything that we put out into the world was so real and so raw. And so, he was so incredible. So, it's like, you are so loved and I wish, and I'm sure, just like with any other family of a loved one that takes their life, you wish that they get to see that funeral moment, which sounds so weird. But that funeral moment of everyone saying how much

they love them and care about them and want to be there for them. Yeah. You wish you had that funeral moment on a Tuesday afternoon when you feel like. Yeah. You wish you had that, that funeral moment of everybody saying how much they love you and care about you and respect you on a random day and you, you don't want it to just be that moment. So one of my biggest things about giving to other people is it doesn't always have to be some big thing of like making someone feel so much better. It's in the small things like a quick like, Hey, I love you. I'm thinking about you text or like, Hey, I'm here for you. You know, you can call me and following through with that, I think that's the biggest thing is like in those moments, you know, people say like to my dad, they, they probably would have said things like, oh, I'll be there for you. Well then if you're going to say that, then do it. And I think that's the biggest thing in our family that, that has always made me stand out from some of my friends is when our family says they're going to do something, they do it. And my dad brought that on from our family onto himself. When you say you're going to be there for somebody else and they're struggling and they need you be there for them. And I have been there for other people. I don't even know how, but I have been there for other people that have been struggling in the last year and a half and held it up for them. And as a daughter, not having your dad and then having to like talk to other people and be like, well, I'm really struggling. And you know, when you're growing up, you know, they always say you have 18 years. But my dad always said I have 18 summers because summer was his favorite time because we always the whole summer together. So the 18 years of our life, you know, half of it, we would go to school. But he always said, I have 18 summers because his favorite time was a summer because we spent the whole summer together. It was always about, okay, well, what, what vacation are we going to plan next? Where are we going to go? What are we going to do? So he loved his 18 summers. And then after I turned 18 and I went to college, he was like, no, kind of we have every summer it's every summer. It's not just 18 summers. And you know, people are like, oh, you have 18 years. My dad was like, no, I have the rest of my life with my kids. And I was my dad's everything. I knew that I didn't know how he didn't have to tell me to. I felt, I know I was his everything. And he just wanted to spend so much time together and be together. So it's so weird because we were so close in spending time, like just fricking going to dinner the other night, they're like, oh, how many people? And I was like four, and I don't think I've ever said four for my family. It was like,

Sharon ([42:40](#)):

Okay. Okay, good. Because that's where we're going next. That's where we're going. Next. I want to say this to you. Thank you. Thank you. We loved uncle Matt. We love your family. This was a big hit to all of us. And I want to leave with this thought Suzette, we're dedicating the show to you. We love you. We want to support you. We want to be here for you. We actually asked her to be a guest, but it was a little hard for her, but I just want you to know, we see you. We love you. And we are you. Thank you, McKenna. We're going to continue for part two. Erica, why don't you bring us in

Erica ([43:31](#)):

This show is definitely going to save lives. I mean, there's, there's someone listening that will either connect to how we described uncle Matt or connect to being the daughter and having a dad that struggles with his depression or whatever part of mental illness. And this is absolutely the right conversation at the right time. And we cannot thank you enough for, you know, opening your heart and sharing with us. Like we totally appreciate it. Thank you so much.

McKenna ([44:01](#)):

Thank you so much for having me.

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

Okay. Bye friends stay

Erica ([44:07](#)):

Tuned for part two.

Sharon ([44:10](#)):

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 ([44:20](#)):

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, our webpage, and our email.

Sharon ([45:10](#)):

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. Thank you so much.

Erica ([45:20](#)):

Thanks for listening to our podcast.