

Taking Accountability for Your Grief

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](#)):

Grief is something that you do not get over. You don't get over your grief. You 100% go through your grief. You go through it and going through grief is one of the most painful things. That's not true. It is the most painful thing you'll ever experience in your life going through grief, but it is never gonna change unless you, the griever starts to take some action, some action steps that you can do while you're grieving to help you move beyond the pain period. That's it. Today's topic is action steps.

Erica ([01:24](#)):

It's so easy to throw our hands up in the air and just wallow and get stuck in our grief. But it's so much more beneficial to fight. You have to fight to get through it. Grief absolutely has a beginning, a middle and an end. You don't don't have to stay in grief for the rest of your life. It, despite what society tells us, you have to fight for your life to get yourself back and you have to be accountable for your actions and taking those action steps to make sure you find a path towards healing.

Sharon ([02:06](#)):

Grief is a broken heart. Grief is an emotional experience that happens in your heart. Not our heart, not Erica's heart, not my heart in your heart. This grief is yours. Nobody else owns it. Nobody else can fix it. Only you can fix this. It's your responsibility to go after it, hear me out. And let me just walk you through the path. You have a loss, a major loss in your life could be a minor loss in your life. It causes a grieving experience. One of the things that we know to be true. The first thing that happens is what Eric and I call the zombie state. Your body feels numb you you're not sure what to do. There's moments within the numbness that you awaken and you are either bawling and crying or you're feeling this unbearable pain. This zombie state stays on. And we have it down to assignment science, almost one to six months is where it's in there in there. There's also this moments where you're in denial. You're pretending like your loved one, went away on a vacation. You're

pretending like they went on a long distance job and they'll be back soon. That's what's going on in between. Your brain and your heart are in a tug war to figure out what is going on. And while your heart is in so much pain, your brain is really trying to figure out a way to fix you. And you are not broken. Your heart is in pain, but you are not broken. And all of that is going on at one time. And you're not really sure what this is and why it feels like that. Around the six month mark, you get to a part in your life where you absolutely can't stand the pain anymore. You can't stand it. And my friends, that's the time that the work, the action steps need to begin for you.

Erica ([04:10](#)):

We've said this before we did a podcast on it. No one is coming to save you.

Sharon ([04:15](#)):

No.

Erica ([04:15](#)):

You have to save yourself. You have to find a way to get through it and a healthy way, a healthy way to find healing. Alcohol is not gonna solve it. Over the counter. I mean, a prescription medication is not gonna solve it. Losing yourself in Netflix series is not gonna solve it. Googling ways to get over grief is not gonna solve it.

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

No, and definitely not sex. Sex is not gonna solve it either. Not that I'm speaking from experience, but even though it might be fun in the meantime, it's not gonna solve it. There's so many things, all the things we can eat, all the things we can drink. All the ways of avoiding that we come up with. Those are not the action steps. The number one action step that you, the griever can take is to lean in, lean into the pain grief fricking sucks. It sucks big time, but you gotta lean into that pain and, and allow the pain. Grief is something we get through. We go through, but you lean into the pain and you allow it and you figure out what those emotions are that are coming up for you.

Erica ([05:34](#)):

You absolutely need to find a safe, supportive circle or person where you can speak the dark thoughts. Yeah. Whether that be a therapist, you know, a trained professional, your best friend, that absolutely lets you say whatever without judgment your sister, that lets you say whatever without judgment, but a person because the thoughts can get very dark and it's not that we want it that way. It's just, that's how it happens. We're human. And that's what shows up our very, very dark thoughts. And you need to have a space to speak those out, to get them off of your heart and out out of your brain.

Sharon ([06:15](#)):

So we often hear that people tell us that grief only takes time. Currently right now, even though we've done this for many, many years, and we've sat at the feet of so many grieverers, we have not been out to be able, been able to figure out how much time it takes. We haven't been able to figure that out, but you know what we do know. We know that it's the action steps that a griever takes within time. That helps them to move through it faster. You can sit back and just be in grief. That's obviously a choice and you can take that choice 100%, but taking small calculated, action steps is one of the things that's gonna help you. I'm gonna tell you guys something. Listening to this podcast right now is an action step.

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

Mm-hmm.

Sharon ([07:09](#)):

It's absolutely you going after the grief. It's you leaning into it a little bit. I gotta get in some of this information so I can learn what to do. It's an action step. Kudos to you, right? Leaning in to the action steps. Erica, let's discuss some of the other thing, other action steps that they can do.

Erica ([07:28](#)):

They can.

Sharon ([07:29](#)):

I'm sorry. You did say talking and I thought that yeah.

Erica ([07:31](#)):

Well finding a safe space for sure. Yeah. Finding a safe space is, is key because you need to get that stuff off of your heart. Some of the you need to be able to say, you know, I, I I'm in shock. I can't believe this happened. And, and just let, just have someone who will just listen. Cause sometimes we just ramble and we don't know the direction. You know, our thoughts are, are all jumbled and they jump from point A to point Z. And there's kind of no in between, but you need someone to just have the patience to just let you ramble on and on. Also I was gonna, I wanna go back to your point about the, we don't know how much time we don't know how much time, because every griever is different and every relationship is different. So that's why the length of time I think is dependent upon the person. So it's like, there's no cookie cut or more, no math formula to say, okay, this amount of time, when you put all the numbers together, cuz everything is different. So we can say of an amount of time.

Sharon ([08:31](#)):

And the one thing that you and I have been fighting all these years in the same myth that's out there is that it's five stages that these five stages that you miraculously will go through these five stages and that you will come up the other end. I don't know what, but first of all, I am so mad that I hear this cuz we still hear clients saying, well, I'm in anger, I'm in denial. I'm in bargaining. There are no stages for you, the griever. Grief changes over time. It changes us. Grief evolves and it shows up different every single day. And sometimes you get stuck in one area where it absolutely, you can be there for a very long period of time. You could be in denial where you're acting like the person, the loss hasn't happened. You could be in bargaining where you're absolutely asking God to bring them back to you or the universe or whoever you believe in your higher power to bring them back to you. All of those things could be happening, but they're all gonna be happening on the same day in and day out. And it's not like you're gonna go through one stage and then get to the next stage and get to the next stage and be out through it.

Erica ([09:44](#)):

It definitely makes you feel like you're going crazy. Cuz that's what grief feels like. Grief feels like you're going crazy and you're losing your mind. But that's part of the process and it's totally normal. Also summer grief, completely different from holiday grief.

Sharon ([10:00](#)):

Oh yeah. Complete.

Erica ([10:02](#)):

Holiday grief is just when you think you can't feel any worse, wait until the holidays come.

Sharon ([10:11](#)):

So grieving feels like someone took a knife and stabbed you clear through your heart. That's the way I describe it. Erica describes losing the boys was like having someone stab a knife clear through her soul. The holidays are someone grabbing that knife and churning it.

Erica ([10:28](#)):

Mm-Hmm.

Sharon ([10:28](#)):

That's the holidays.

Erica ([10:31](#)):

And it's it's, it's more isolating. It's like it. That sounds you can't imagine that you could feel any worse, but when you get to the holidays, it's worse. It's more isolating people. Don't wanna come around because they think that it's gonna be like the funeral part two. So they

don't wanna be there to support you. They don't necessarily wanna invite you to their house cause they don't want you crying all over their couch and into on their fruitcake. It's sad because it doesn't have to be that. It doesn't have to be that. Like we were just talking to someone whose kid loved a certain character and we're like embrace the character and do a Christmas tea where people come dress as their favorite character like to, you can make ho the holidays, whatever you want. There's no rule or recipe. You can cook gourmet pizza on Christmas. If you choose, you could just make Christmas cookies all day. If you choose and eat Christmas cookies, you can do whatever you want because that's the thing is you to do whatever you need to, to survive.

Sharon ([11:41](#)):

But Erica, I have the most important question to ask you. Do you eat fruitcake?

Erica ([11:47](#)):

No. I always associate nasty fruitcake with Christmas. The only time I ever.

Sharon ([11:55](#)):

She talking about fruitcake. Okay sorry. I, I, I. I digress for a second. All of those steps that you were talking about is what you and I teach about the holidays and it's have a plan. Having a plan for the holidays is an action step. That's one of your action step friends. When you come up with your plan, I'm gonna stay in bed all day and watch love stories on TV and drink hot chocolate on Christmas. I'm not gonna have anybody over. That's your plan and that's okay. And that's an action step that you take. Your brain actually comes up with something that I can do to survive the holidays. It's an action step. We have to keep moving forward because the only way out is this way. It's this way. It's not going backwards. It's not sidestepping. It's straight ahead.

Erica ([12:48](#)):

And it's not clinging onto the walls. Like a cat. Like you're not gonna budge. Like you can.

Sharon ([12:52](#)):

Oh yeah.

Erica ([12:52](#)):

It stuck in in there because that's not gonna help you either. Hopefully your action step will lead you to me and Sharon, because we definitely have the remaining formula to help get you through, but know that you just saying, okay, well I'm I cried. Like that's it. That's my action. I'm crying. That's not even the tip of the little tiny iceberg. Like that's even, that's a little baby step but crying cuz that's kind of like a given there are gonna be tears, but what's next?

Sharon ([13:28](#)):

Journaling is a good action step. Journaling is a great action step. Erica and I are coming up with a book a 30 day journaling book that will be coming out soon. It's a great book to have. We'll get, we'll put it on our website and you guys can download it. It's a great lead in. We ask some great lead in questions that you can just answer and you don't even have to answer the questions. You don't need to pick up a pencil and write the answer out. You can answer question in your brain and that helps.

Erica ([13:57](#)):

Mm-hmm.

Sharon ([13:58](#)):

Leaning into that one question will really help.

Erica ([14:01](#)):

I, I used to talk out loud to Donovan when I was driving. Yeah. You know what I mean? Like I would just say, I miss you so much. Like I can't believe you left. Like I don't know why this had to happen. You just, just thoughts.

Sharon ([14:16](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([14:17](#)):

Because when you're driving, it's like, you're so stuck in your head anyway. Yeah. That I would just take that and verbalize it and that would even help a little bit take some of the steam off.

Sharon ([14:27](#)):

I think having a routine is a great action step to have I'm going like this in quotes, like your new normal, right? Having a routine or sticking to your routine, sticking to a walking routine or walking the dog routine or meeting your girlfriend for coffee on Wednesday mornings. That's something you always did sticking to that one routine. One part of your routine might be important to you and you choose to stick to that. That's an action step that you're choosing to take. And that's that's great.

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

Bottom line is you don't get to give up. You don't get to just throw your hands up and say, no, I'm not doing it mean I, I tried it. I tried to not receive the information that when Donovan died said, Nope, no, I don't. I'm not allowing this, but sadly, that's not one of our choices we have to fight and we have to take action and do something about it. It doesn't just go away on its own.

Sharon (15:30):

Yeah. Erica self care. Self care is an action step.

Erica (15:34):

Yeah.

Sharon (15:36):

Getting the right amount of sleep. Yeah. taking care of our appetite, not bypassing hunger when it comes upon us eating regular meals. If we have to staying away from alcohol because we know we can get into trouble with that. Taking a bath, taking a shower, self care is so important during this grieving time. And it's an action step that you, the griever can take.

Erica (16:02):

It's sad that we have to say that, but it's, it's I can honestly speak to, it's easy to lose sight of your personal hygiene. I get you, you just don't the motivation to get into a shower. Well, one thing I did every day was brush my teeth. I absolutely have to do that. I can't function without, but I cannot say I showered every day and I've heard and I've heard lots of people say that they couldn't even get in a bath or a shower. And it's, that's part it's normal. So don't think you, you know, you're abnormal. You are part of the norm because we lose sight of all things self-care related, including our personal hygiene.

Sharon (16:44):

Well, I have two more that I think are great is setting amazing grief boundaries. Yeah. We've got to set grief boundaries. You have to, it's an action step. It's a protection mechanism, I think. And setting safe, clear, understandable, simple grief boundaries, I think is a way of protecting your heart.

Erica (17:06):

Mm-Hmm. It's okay to say to someone. I'm sorry. I can't talk about this right now.

Sharon (17:11):

Yeah. Yeah. Thank you for asking. I can't talk about it right now.

Erica (17:15):

Mm-Hmm.

Sharon (17:17):

And then I think other thing that's also important, Erica. That's a great action step is taking a grief break. Yeah. Taking a grief break and going out to dinner with your girlfriend, take a

grief break and go to the mall and walk around, take a grief break, buy some shoes, take a grief break and just sit on your front porch.

Erica ([17:39](#)):

Yeah. I mean, sadly, I mean, it sounds silly, but you, you can actually just say, I I'm not gonna think about it for this next hour. I'm gonna go. I mean, it, it seems unreal, but it, you can do it. I mean, you really can go walk around in the mall window shop, look at things. Are you gonna be sad? Absolutely. Yeah. But you have a change of scenery. You're not sitting on your couch, staring at the TV. You're not you know, sitting on the phone, crying to your friend, you're, you're out, you're looking at things you're trying to be present. And at least if you're doing that, that is an action step. And you're trying something.

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

I agree. I totally agree. My friend, I don't know what it's gonna take for you, what actions you're gonna put together. But the one thing that I know is staying where you are will never get better unless you commit to taking care of your own personal pain in your heart. This grief is yours. You own it 100%. It's no one else's and no one is coming to save you.

Erica ([18:50](#)):

No one knows how to teach us. No one can prepare us really. Yeah. You know, for the anticipatory grief or for how it's gonna show up for us. But what we can do is help you pick up the pieces after.

Sharon ([19:06](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I really wish we would've gotten in the business of selling hair bows for little girls. It would've been so much easier, not as rewarding, but maybe so much easier. And I don't know why and how we got picked to be your guides, but we're so totally honored that we are. And so totally honored to honor our boys Donovan and Austin, and share their, their lives with you. And Erica's honored to share her heart with you as I am honored to share my heart with you. And I hope that this helps you a little bit and, and today you get up and you take that first step towards healing.

Erica ([19:44](#)):

It would've been easier to sell hair bows for dogs than it is to do this. But absolutely 1000% rewarding and you know, Austin is Sharon's reason why. And I mean, both of the boys losing both of them has shown us that we have a higher purpose here. And our purpose is to help normalize people talking about grief and to help mend as many hearts as we can. And we will be here to mend yours when you're ready.

Sharon ([20:16](#)):

Thank you, friends. Talk to you soon. Bye friends.