

There Are Layers to Our Grief

Tony ([00:02](#)):

Erica and Sharon, her sisters who began a grief journey in 2006, when Eric, his 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 Eric, his oldest son, Donovan was killed in a motorcycle accident, Eric and Shannon are committed to sharing their experiences of love loss and healing through this podcast. Now, your grief specialists, Sharon and Erica,

Sharon ([00:42](#)):

I think the one thing that really surprises us is that there are layers to our grief. Sometimes I describe it as an onion. It's like we peel off that first layer and then there's a second layer. We peel off that layer and we go to the next layer. That's happens in our healing process that we're peeling back the layers. But sometimes when our griever, our grieving friends get to us, they're already deep in layers that have to be grieved and they don't understand why this seems so difficult. So let me give you an example. When I say layers, we get clients that their moms die, but their mom was also their best friend. Like they did everything together. You're not only grieving the loss of your mother. You're now also grieving the loss of your best friend, your confidant, your counselor, your leader, your guider. It can go so many layers deep in that grief. And I think that that sometimes really surprises us in shock

Erica ([01:43](#)):

Yeah, it did. For me with Donovan, I didn't realize how much our friendship, not just me losing another child, but how much our friendship and losing him as my person. You know, hey, I need some bread. Can you get this? Hey, can you grab a bread, Jordan? Someone I could rely on, count on. And we had our little inside jokes, how much that added to the grief, because that is a whole separate piece of it. Also with Austin, you know, I thought, okay, he was 10 we're grieving. This is terrible. But then when we got to the point part where he missed milestones, like graduating from high school or you know, other important things because he passed when he was 10, how much that was going to affect me. So that's another layer. There are absolutely so many layers to our grieving and I don't think we're prepared for them.

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

I think the thing that's really important is for people to understand that grief is unique and individual it's unique and individual in every single relationship it's unique and individual in every loss that you have, right. It's unique and individual in everything that you experienced

over time. Right? So, what we, what we need to understand is just because I lost my dog doesn't mean that when I lose my mom, I'm going to have the same experience. It's going to be different. It's going to be so much different. And it's saying that I want to say this. You could have a deeper layer of grief with the loss of your dog than you do with your mom, right? These shocks people sometimes. And it is so true. What if that dog was your best friend and you've had him for 13 years and you've taken him everywhere and everywhere you go, that dog is right there with you? You could experience that at a deeper level than you do the loss of your mind. And I think that shocks people sometimes, right?

Erica ([03:38](#)):

Well, as we know, and we teach all the time, sometimes the relationship with our parents is not what it should be. Sometimes we have a less than loved one situation and it's, we're kind of a strange or detached from our parent, but that dog becomes our, everything. They, you know, they're always happy to see us. They're always ready to greet us and want to comfort us. And you know, they really just, their whole existence is to make us happy. Of course, in that situation, your grief for your dog would be so much more than your mom. And then when you are grieving your dog, realizing, you know, you feel alone because your dog has left you and you can't pick up the phone and call your mom because she's not going to be there for you. That the layer two.

Sharon ([04:22](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And that sometimes when we're doing the grief work with our clients, we have to grieve every layer. We have to grieve the mom. We have to grieve the loss of mom, but we also have to grieve. You were always here for me. I pick, I feel like I want to pick up the phone and call you. I need your advice. COVID is going on. I'm having a discussion about whether my kids should wear a mask. Who did you normally call during those times? You called mom, right? And moms not here anymore. That's a layer to the grief that has to be grieved. Here's the other thing you and I could both. And we D we have multiple times lose the same person. And one of us can go down the drain so much deeper than the other, and we can handle it different and look at that person and say, I don't understand. Why are you not still grieving this?

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

Right. Exactly. I had a situation where a lady called me, her father passed away and she had a different relationship with him than her other sisters had. So, at the time of the past, and he had a long-term illness. So, at the time of the passing and she's also in healthcare. So, her viewpoint on it was different. You know, almost like what we experienced with our sister Yolanda, you know, going through the process with our dad dying. So, by the time he came to pass, she really felt, they had said all the things that they needed to say they had ended their relationship, the way that she was comfortable while her sisters were angry and kind of resentful towards her because she wasn't grieving the same way they were. But she called me and asked me, she said, am I wrong? Can, because they're making me feel

like I'm on. I said, absolutely not. Each one of you have a different relationship with your father. You're not going to grieve in the same way. It's going to be different. So that is something people also need to factor in because they're not prepared when that happens. Oh,

Sharon ([06:18](#)):

I agree a hundred percent, but the truth is only, you can answer that question about whether you're wrong because only, you know, what your heart is going through. So, some of the other layers to grieve can be definitely losing a best friend that has been experienced that I've had. I felt that losing Sharon not only did I lose Sharon, but I also lost that best friend. I lost that confidant, that person that was there talking to me all the time. That was given me the advice she share this often. It's like, I will call her, and we would talk for three hours about whether I should get orange or blue drapes in the living room. Right. So then when that person dies, I, I turned to Tony and I'm like, hey, should I get orange or blue? And he's like, what?

Sharon ([07:05](#)):

Like, he doesn't get it. That's a huge missing part. And it's a huge missing part. And when they were the person that you called all the time, and they were your person, you miss that, you miss picking up the phone, you miss calling them. That was the, some of the stuff that you and I miss with daddy. We called them to find out where was the best price for chicken. And I have to cook for 300 people and what do I need? And all of the places that he filled in. Right. But the same thing could happen, Erica, if you absolutely hate the person.

Erica ([07:34](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([07:36](#)):

If you spend your whole life hating the person or mad at them, or you have an area that you never solved and completed with them, you could have that same experience and a whole layer to your grief, with the hate and the anger.

Erica ([07:49](#)):

Well, because when that person dies and you feel like I need to call someone to find out if I want to do orange or blue, gray drapes, and you know, you can't call them and you know, you couldn't call them before and now you still can't call them. Now. It definitely brings up a layer to the grief of, well, gosh, it's almost like an abandonment, you know, I'm alone. I don't have anyone. You weren't there for me. And that unresolved anger and all of that undelivered communication, just bubbles right up to the surface. And it does take you down a path of grieving that you may not be prepared for.

Sharon (08:24):

Exactly. So that's a layer of grieving to your relationship. So, I think, and this is so true, guys. It totally shocks you when you come to meet Eric. And I, and we tell you that you have layers of this, or you're not just grieving your mom. You're also grieving your best friend. And they hear us say that, that it gives them relief. Like I thought I was going crazy almost because I don't see that. Okay. So that's number one, number two, there's also layers to your grieving experience that you can experience different layers to your grieving experience. So let me give you an example. My dad dies. I go the funeral home. I make all the arrangements. We buried him and that's the first layer my dad dies during COVID. I can't go into the hospital. I now can't go to the funeral home. We can't have a funeral. That's another layer. Two years later, I still haven't been able to put him to rest. That's another layer. There are layers to your grieving experience as well.

Erica (09:25):

Yeah, absolutely. I, my heart has absolutely gone out to every single person that had a loved one die, whether it was from COVID or whatever else, but during the pandemic, I cannot imagine what that would have been like if it happened to us, if, you know, if we would've had to hold Donovan in a place and wait, or, you know, we couldn't get together with the, our family, the way that we normally do to celebrate him and honor his memory and hold space for one another, that we witnessed that when we had one of our, our cousins lost their husband at the very beginning of COVID and he was expecting everyone to show up and everyone was scared. Well, one, we were told not to not to do that. So, people were not showing up and that hurt her. It hurt her so much because that's not how we operate as a family. When we get the bad news, we start showing up at 5:00 AM and stop for like two weeks later, you know, that's how we are, and she didn't get that. And so that's another layer because

Sharon (10:33):

I can only imagine that grief is such a lonely place. That that was really lonely.

Erica (10:37):

Yeah. Yeah. Because you know, like that is such another layer, but like you said, the funeral homes are backed up. So, we had an uncle that passed, and he was like, how long was it for uncle I now, before they could bury him

Sharon (10:51):

That he died in March, and they couldn't bury him until April.

Erica (10:55):

Was it just one month? I thought it was longer.

Sharon (10:58):

Oh, no. He died in January, and he didn't get buried until March. Yeah.

Erica ([11:02](#)):

So, it may, and he didn't die of COVID, but it was just said just unfortunate that they couldn't get into the arrangements because the funeral homes were so backed up with all the COVID, you know, processing and all that. I mean, those are people don't think about Erica.

Sharon ([11:18](#)):

I'm here to tell you that it totally makes a difference. So, hear me out on this when and this is not good or bad, it was just a different experience, which when my girlfriend Sharon died, her children decided they wanted to bury her on her birthday because they were going to celebrate her. So, we did this huge celebration, which was so beautiful, but she died on June 28th and her birthday wasn't until July 28th. So, there was like a month, the month of planning and getting everything together to me, my own personal experience, I was like, oh, this is going to be cool. I don't have to rush it, dragged it out. Yeah. It out. And it ended up being the best celebration in the world, the best celebration we celebrated her 100%, but it dragged it out. So yes, there's different layers to the Grievant experience as well. Also, one that you just brought up is suicide and religion, having grievors, trying to make the arrangements after they've had a family member die by suicide based on their religious beliefs.

Erica ([12:23](#)):

Yeah. I was shocked when I heard this, but it happens and I'm sure it happens in all different faith communities because they have their certain stance or viewpoint on, on suicide. But because suicide is becoming more and more prevalent, I'm sure you know, that this is becoming an issue, but the church refusing to bury your loved one because of the manner in which they died. And I can only think that for me personally, if that were, if I was in that situation, it would be such a betrayal because your church home is your family, your extended family. And they, you know, are supposed to hold you up and carry you during these dark times. But to have them close the door in your face and almost rejects you through no fault of your own, you didn't make this decision for that person. You couldn't control their actions, but you need to lay them to rest and being denied that because that's not in alignment with their viewpoint has to be devastating.

Sharon ([13:26](#)):

Oh, I can't even imagine. I can't even imagine. So now you're not only fighting the pain and the grief in your broken heart, but now you're arguing with the religion and the, and the shirts that you're dealing with trying to get everything settled. And that sense that that's the perfect example of a layer. It's totally a second layer because here's the other thing you can now, sometimes what we've seen people do is they turn their grief into anger and they face it at that person or that thing, or that group. And then they only want to concentrate on

that. They only want to concentrate on that, and I don't want to offend anybody, but it is also something like concentrating on the drunk driver, concentrating on the murderer putting all the attention of your grief to that direction instead of honking on your broken heart, that happened because you've gotten to this layer where you ended up in this fight or this argument, and now you've taken it to this degree.

Erica ([14:29](#)):

Yeah. You, you make that campaign that you start for, you know, to go after whoever. And that becomes your sole mission and your sole purpose. And you put all your attention and you're focusing your energy and you're not able to go beneath that to get into the grief. So, what that does is just delay your grieving experience. And I see that one on the poor school shooters, when the parents become the activists and they want to take on the government and start going to the meetings and just in the manner of which they're speaking, they focus all their energy there. And they don't the one thing you and I pick up on is they're not speaking in feeling words, they're not talking about emotion. They're talking about statistics, and you know, history, you know, past shootings and comparison and graphs and charts. But there's not a lot of emotion, a lot of feeling, a lot of showing their true brokenness

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

Because that falls under two minutes. The book doing that falls under two minutes, and this happens a lot with layers. So, you got ladies, you need to hear us when we're talking about these men, you need to hear us when we're talking about this. When we put all of our energy into the drunk driver, we are, we've taken on two myths that we're living in. We're keeping busy, because all I can do is spend all my time going after how many drunk drivers are in the area, what are they doing? How do I get them? And being strong, we take those two things which are intellectual. We tie them together and we go after the drunk driver a hundred percent and we think it makes us feel better. We actually think, and it's not that we think it actually does because we're so concentrating on the drunk driver. We forget that sometimes how bad we even felt about the fact that our little girl die.

Erica ([16:22](#)):

Yeah. I was speaking to a woman recently who lost her daughter to domestic violence. And she's kind of started a lot of campaigns and things, and she's getting herself involved. But I've noticed since we speak more regularly, now she's at the point where she's like, I can't look at her pictures. I don't know what that's about. And I'm like, you know, now the grief, I think things kind of slowed down a little bit, you know, interrupt her campaign. So now reef is seeping in more and more. And that's what happens when you, when you start really feeling the grief, but you're not acknowledging it. You can't look at their pictures. You go back to, you know, not being able to say, they're dead. You come up with, you know, the accident or the day of the day it happened. You start using words like that. And that's when

you know, there's drift happening. They don't know it, but you and I see, see right through it. You're like,

Sharon ([17:18](#)):

I think that's a show in itself talking about all the things that we do to avoid just feeling the pain. That can be a show all to itself, right? Yeah. Oh my God. Yeah. And so, it's like a delayed grief. Yeah, we got, we got involved in other things. Okay. Not only is the layer, the two different types of layers that we talked about, the layers that you have in that relationship, right. That you've got to grieve every layer. My mom, my best friend, my confidant, I got to grieve every layer. Then there's the layers that happen to us during our grieving experience where people put in extra pressure, or we got to jump through hoops to grieve those. But every layer has to be grieved properly in order to get a release. So let me explain this to you. You can grieve the loss of your mom and then six months later, you're like, I just missed her so much. You and I have sat with people, and we've talked about it and looked at their heart and examine you. It's now time to grieve the loss of your best friend. You've got to grieve every layer. You, you're not going to get it all, unless you go all the way to the heart of that. Right? So that last layer in that onion,

Erica ([18:26](#)):

And we get that, we get the phone call, you know, six months later, a year later on Christmas. And I don't know why I'm crying so much. I thought through this and that we have to bring to their attention. You know? Well, what, what happened? What started it? Well, you know, my mom and I would cook every day and we would, we'd split at point and make this and go to do this. Well, you're missing your friend that, and then it's like, they have these aha moments like, oh yeah. But they don't make those connections. Sometimes, sometimes we get the people that do. But a lot of times people don't, and they feel like they didn't do it properly, or they didn't finish the work. But it's not that it's that there's another layer surfacing. And once we get the one out of the way that makes room for the other, I think I've used the Pez dispenser as an analogy before, but it's almost like the Pez dispenser. You take out one, another one pops up.

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

Yeah. And that's the part of sticking through your grief work and making sure you get it all the way to completion, making sure you're getting in there, figuring out what it is and getting it all done. I think it's shocked. Some people sometimes when they end up having to call us at Christmas time a year later now, I don't know what this is. I don't know how this happened. Or they just get sick over something or a delayed grief like you, your friend.

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

Absolutely.

Sharon ([19:46](#)):

So, I think the thing that we want to leave our friends with today is that be open to the idea that you may have not just lost your mom. You may have lost your best friend. Maybe you didn't just lose your dad. You may have lost your best friend. There's going to be parts of it that are going to be beautiful. They're going to be parts of it. That's going to be painful. But telling the truth is the most important thing that you can do in that situation.

Erica ([20:09](#)):

Absolutely. And like you said, it doesn't have to be the best friend scenario. It could be the dad, I haven't talked to in 10 years, the mom that we have a, a very conflicting relationship. And I don't call her when I need someone. It could be those relationships too. So don't always look forward on the loving, warm, and fuzzy side. It can also on the sad depressing side.

Sharon ([20:35](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. All right, prince, thank you so much for joining us for this time. We'll see you on the next podcast

Erica ([20:43](#)):

By friends,

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

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 the tip.

Erica ([20:56](#)):

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 ([21:10](#)):

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.

Erica ([21:25](#)):

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