

We Don't Compare Losses

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](#)):

Grief is painful. Grief hurts. Grief will change your life forever. We say this over and over again. We keep talking about grief, but there's this little aspect to the grief that immediately after we find out someone has experienced a loss, a death, a divorce, a breakup of a romantic relationship. I don't know why we do this, but we instantly go in there and start comparing our losses to theirs. We go up to our friends and we're just like, I know how you feel. I, I remember what it was like when my grandmother died 10 years ago, and we start telling this story and we don't understand what we've done to the griever at that moment.

Erica ([01:27](#)):

It's honestly one of the most disrespectful things you can do when you find out someone has experienced a loss, because it completely minimizes their feelings and makes it about you. Instead of you trying to be there to support them and comfort them. You're turning the attention and the focus back to you. And we definitely need to get this message out there because people do this all the time, and it is so wrong. It's really, really sad. But the crux of the issue is when you do it, when you say I know exactly how you feel. I remember when my grandma died. That's your unresolved grief that you haven't dealt with. And you're now taking that and putting that on the person you're supposed to be comforting.

Sharon ([02:17](#)):

Someone else's grief has no bearing on your grief. That's the first thing, right? So, I, we need to understand that when someone else has had a loss and they start sharing that loss, it has no bearing on what we're currently experiencing while I'm here. And I'm currently experiencing this, and you come in and share it with me that you just lost your cat, or your grandmother died. And you're trying to compare the lo those two losses, even though they were deep for you, it has no bearing on my grief, but that's not the way that I take it. It tends to take the active griever. So, I'm talking about the one that has had the new loss. It tends to take them down a couple of notches, and they become quiet. We actually

have grievors that share with us that I just start listening about her story and about her grief. I stop sharing about how I'm feeling altogether, the griever retreats. They go inward, they stop talking, they stop sharing. And the next thing you know, you start comforting them. When they originally came there to comfort you, how is that appropriate?

Erica ([03:24](#)):

Right. We have so many different scenarios where this has worked out. We've seen this play out so many times, friends let's understand. First and foremost, grief is unique and individual. Yeah, no two people are gonna have the same experience. I would never go to a mother and say, I know exactly how you feel. I'm the only one that could help you because I know this pain, I would never do that because I don't know what her relationship was like with her child. It could have been a less than loving relationship. There could have been conflict in turmoil, and then I'm gonna bring my best friend relationship that I had with Donovan and compare it to her broken heart, where she had a conflicting relationship. That's not the same. I can't, that would be wrong of me to do that to someone. And I would never do it. We need to stop doing it to other people because it's not right. And it does feel bad when you feel like you have to become the comforter to when your heart is, is broken.

Sharon ([04:30](#)):

Let's just call a spade, Erica. When you tell someone, I know exactly how you feel, you, it is one of the most disrespectful things. You can tell a griever, don't say it. We need to stop saying it. It needs to be taken off the list. We, you and I actually have it on this list called the stupid things. People say it is the number one thing on the list. I think what happens is that the supporting friend or staff or member that comes in, they wanna be validated as, as the Grief Specialists in the room. They wanna validate, I know this grief. I can help you through this. These are the things that I did. You know I did the same thing to you. I didn't know any better. I didn't know any better, but the truth was, it was not helpful. It's not helpful from me to get in there and say, I know exactly how you feel

Erica ([05:28](#)):

Well, it's impossible for someone to know exactly. You have to be the person to know exactly how someone feels. You have to be in their brain and in their heart to know exactly how someone feels. And no one, I mean, as far as I know, I haven't seen any new body snatch or situations recently, although I wouldn't be surprised with the way the world is going, but it's impossible for someone to know exactly how someone else feels. Can you relate to their pain? Absolutely. Do you remember what your pain was like when it happened to you? Absolutely. A thousand percent. So, say that, gosh, I remember how broken I was when, when my dad died. I know this must be so hard for you. That's completely different.

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

I agree with you a hundred percent. I agree with that. I think with trying to get validated, we also think that our grief has to be the worst case possible. Right? Mine was the worst case possible. It was the worst experience I ever had. And that's why you said saying what you said. I don't know what this feels like for you, but I remember when my worst-case scenario happens, this is how I felt. Remember that also you experienced grief over losing a job, not having a dream breaking up of a relationship. But those are all manageable for you. You were able to walk that path and go through that path. That is never to be the same as someone losing a child. And now that we've gotten to that point, when we're talking about losing a child, so many, so many, so many grieverers are reluctant to share their grief on the opposite end, especially with you because they feel your grief was so much worse than theirs.

Erica ([07:17](#)):

Right? And we we've done a show. There is no hierarchy of grief. That there's not one grief that outranks, another grief. Grief is experienced a hundred percent in your heart. So, whatever causes it, you feel it, your heart is broken your heart. When we did the losing your business was equally as broken as my heart. You know, we can't judge it. There's no ranking system. So, I feel bad when people say that because they say that to me all the time, like Erica, this is nothing compared to what you've been through. Your heart is broken. It doesn't matter what I've been through. I'm here to help and support you in the best way that I can. And that's what people need to understand. If you've been through a divorce and you're talking to someone whose husband passed away that still broke two broken hearts, sharing their pain, and that's okay. It's okay to share your pain. It's not comparing. It's understanding. This really hurt me. And you're really hurt. And, and our hearts are broken. We can share our pain together. That is a thousand percent. Okay.

Sharon ([08:20](#)):

So, I, I want our grieving friends to understand that when we don't share our grief, because we feel someone's grief is, is deeper than ours. Or we feel that they're in more pain or we get embarrassed, because they actually say, I'm embarrassed to share that I'm over here crying about my cat. When I know you've lost two boys, that's comparing on the other end of the, that is still comparing. And we never, ever, ever compare our grief period. Just don't compare your grief. Be there for the griever. Love them. Sit next to them next to them. Sit quietly, hear their story. Don't compare your grief to theirs. No matter what aspect of it. It is Erica. I know that we have been with grieverers that have recently lost a husband and they are so reluctant to share, especially if you're in the room and they come out and say it, you know, they will literally come on and say, this doesn't compare to anything that you've experienced, right? As if one you're still actively grieving because you're not as if two yours was so down, deeper than theirs, they could never go to those deaths. They can't imagine what it's like to lose a child, let alone two. And, and it stops them from moving forward. It

stops the griever from moving forward, even in the healing process when you and I are working with them.

Erica ([09:43](#)):

Yeah. And it's I feel bad when people do that. I never want anyone to minimize their experience and their pain because they think my pain is greater and you're right. I am not actively grieving anymore. I have done the work that I needed to do to get me where I am so that you and I could go out and try to help those that are broken hearted. So, I really, I feel bad when people do that because I understand that their hearts are broken and then they kind of, I think they feel like they're not gonna get the help because they're not going after their pain. You know? Does that make sense?

Sharon ([10:17](#)):

Yeah. Oh yeah. They're not gonna get the hell. Cause they're not going after the pain. It kind of stops them from moving forward. oh man, I just had this great thought I wanna share. Oh, okay. So, it's like you and I actually did this too in the beginning and we would kind of laugh about it, but I would, I would say things like do not go on stage when we do speak engagement, don't go on stage and just laugh out that you lost two boys. People can't handle that. It's too overwhelming. And you know, we were laugh about it. I'm like people are gonna think you're crazier. You lost your mind. And so, we've actually held back from just telling the story. We could, the way we kind of tell it is story. Then you come in with the Donovan story and we ease people into it. That's a protection mechanism that you and I have done because it's sometimes it's so overwhelming for them. But the truth is that you've worked through your grief, you've done the action steps needed to heal your heart. And that's how you're able to sit with somebody without you're lost to theirs.

Erica ([11:19](#)):

Right. And it's through trial and error that we've perfected how we deliver it. Cause I I've honestly had a woman scream in my ear on the phone or during one of our phone calls when I shared that I had lost two children. And yeah, that was, that was quite unnerving. So, we definitely have to tiptoe how we present it. It's really hard. It's hard because we don't, we don't talk about this enough in scenarios. And what, what really hurts me is when we have groups dynamics, and we have someone sharing and then they they're cut off by someone else who has a similar experience. Who takes over the story and just starts talking about, and it they really do make me sad because it's like, it's so wrong for the person that get cut off and you, and you're right? It totally completely stops them. And then they don't wanna share anymore because it's like, okay. I finally am opening up grief by no means is easy to talk about. I mean, you and I have perfected it, but I mean, it's not for the fake part. So, when you, when you cut someone off and in the middle of their share and you take over this story, that's so wrong to do because you don't even realize you've made them put, be in a position to stuff, their pain.

Sharon ([12:43](#)):

What you've done is when you compare your loss to theirs, you put up a boundary. You, what you're doing is you're putting up a boundary. My grief is worse than yours or the boundary is I know exactly how you feel. So let me help you. And it's happening for the active griever now, who is the act griever? The act griever is the one that's grieving right there at that moment because you shared that your grandmother died 20 years ago, and you know what it feels like you're not actively grieving anymore. The active griever is the one who's just had the loss. So, you put up this barrier between you and them and it stops the support that you can offer them. No one can know how you are feeling when you're going through this for yourself. I could tell you right now, I had no idea what you went through when you lost Austin. I have no idea what you went through when you lost Donovan. And guess what? I lost Austin and Donovan too, but my grief was different than yours. And in the beginning with Austin, I didn't know, not to compare, but in Donovan, I never compared. And I had an amazing relationship with Donovan, but it was nothing like yours.

Erica ([13:59](#)):

Right. And it's, it's even with our dad, I mean, even we, we recognize we had different relationships with him. So, we could even compare that. Yeah. And that, I think that's a big mistake for families as well. They feel that their pain is all gonna be the same when they lose a parent. It's Not, no, there's different relationships. When you have multiple siblings, you each have a different relationship with that parent. It's not the same grief.

Sharon ([14:28](#)):

No, no way. No way. I had him longer than you had him. I had the younger dad. I had the, he was a different dad that show out up for me than what showed up for you. Right. More disciplinarian yell or screamer, which I think you got some of that too, but very loving and caring. But I was the oldest daughter, and I was treated as the daughter. There were responsibilities that fell on my plate that you didn't have. It must be nice to be so perfect. It is anyway. We definitely lost a different dad. And so even we wanna compare there.

Erica ([15:05](#)):

Yeah. That's very common for siblings to do that. Like I've, I've kind of watched it on the full, since my father-in-law passed away in May with Lewis' siblings, like they all kind of chime in and, speak of him. Like they have the same dad and me on the outside looking in I'm like, you guys all had a different dad. You all had a different piece of him. Some of them worked with him. So, they had that relationship with him. There's only one daughter. So of course, she had a completely different relationship than the boys, you know? So, it's just, it's, it's a dynamic that we have to understand just because we're losing the same person. Doesn't mean our heart is broken in the same way.

Sharon ([15:47](#)):

Yes. 100%. So, I wanna leave us with this final thought. If there's any benefit to grieving, it's understanding that this experience is a universal experience. We will all have it at some point in our life. No one, but no one is getting off this planet without having a grieving experience. And we can show compassion for anyone that's actively grieving show empathy towards them. Right. Anyone who's going through this, and we can value and honor their grief respectfully without comparing it. Period.

Erica ([16:25](#)):

Yeah. And I, I would say for anyone who finds himself in this situation, when you know that you remember what it was like when your heart was broken, don't go to an active griever and say, I know how you feel say, oh my gosh, I remember how hard it was for me. And I'm so sorry, you're having to go through this right now. How can I help you? How can I, what do you need? How can I show up for you. That's a total game changer.

Sharon ([16:54](#)):

That's the perfect ending for, or this podcast. Thank you, friends.

Erica ([17:00](#)):

Bye Friends