

# What Grief Support Really Is

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](#)):

So many times, Erica and I work with clients one-on-one, but our absolutely favorite process is working in a group. And so, we are here to share with you two amazing women who have just finished a group session with us, and we want it. We asked them we begged and pleaded with them. No, we didn't have to. If they wanted to share, we both completed them. Hey, could you guys come on and just talk about what it's like to work in a group. And so, I'd like to introduce you to Pauline and Amanda. Hey, Erica, tell them about how amazing this group was.

Erica ([01:18](#)):

This was awesome. And I'm so glad we're doing this show because I think when we do a lot of our advertising for our business, people get the wrong impression about what we really do. So, you guys are going to clear up a lot of misinformation. That's out there about group work, and also just sharing your personal experience about what it was to walk on this healing journey with us as your guide. So, I'm actually really, really excited about this show. And I'm sorry, I'm not on camera, but my internet is spotty, and this is the best way to get a clear sound. So, we gotta make do with what we got.

Sharon ([01:58](#)):

Exactly. What are the real quick before we start to ask them questions, one of the things that you and I first and we totally believe grief is grief? It doesn't matter if it's death, divorce, breakup of a romantic relationship, your heart is going to experience the pain. And a lot of times what we do as grievers is we run to the grief specialist and we're like, well, my grief is different. It's worse. Or I don't want to share intimate details with other people, but what they miss out on is the energy that the group has when you're all healing and working together in a common, with a common goal in mind. Yeah. And, and also group can be you. We work group anywhere from two to 10, so it doesn't matter the number, the chemistry develops. And it's so awesome for us to be witness to that on the bond that comes out of

working other people, no matter what their loss is, just meeting them where they're at and you guys partnering up and speaking.

Sharon (03:07):

Exactly. Exactly. So, I'm going to open up the floor, Pauline. You go first and then you, Amanda, I want you to add, answer this question. How did you find us?

Pauline (03:18):

I found you sisters. You ladies on Facebook. Wow.

Sharon (03:23):

And Amanda, how did you find this?

Amanda (03:26):

I found you guys through a friend who attended one of your conferences at a nearby church. And I had never heard of you guys. And she sent me a video and just recommended to take a look at it if I felt so inclined. And then I did more digging and research, you guys found your podcast on your website. I was like, wow, I probably really need to talk to these gals.

Sharon (03:58):

So, both of you had your initial calls with me that isn't always the case, but on this side, your initial call was with me. So, Pauline, what was that like?

Pauline (04:12):

It started off kind of scary because you're a stranger. Yeah. But you had a way of asking me why called, you know, kind of what's my story. And I thought it was my wife, but as we talked more in you, you have this outrageous gift to pull out information, to see where I was at. And I think after, I don't think it was five or 10 minutes, it felt I got, I need to talk more to you. I needed, I needed me, I needed help.

Sharon (04:54):

We all needed help. Trust me that day. Amanda, what was your first interaction like?

Amanda (05:04):

Kind of similar. I was very anxious going into it very uncertain what it would be like. I've been in a lot of different kinds of counseling and talk to a lot of different kinds of people, but it was very, just peaceful speaking with you before. And I felt very welcomed and understood, and it felt like natural by the end of it.

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

Oh, that's cool. Erica. Then at some part we all get together. We gonna have our first class. What was it like for you? Because I didn't already meet them

Erica ([05:45](#)):

And I want to do a follow-up question to that, answer your question, but it, for me and it, I know it sounds weird because you know, we're the professionals and we're supposed to be, you know, all and all seeing. But for me coming in it, there's a level of insecurity for me. Cause I haven't met you too. So, I know in that, because I've done those phone calls, I know that there's a lot of bonding and a lot of trust established in that phone call to get you to go to the next step, which is our group meeting. So, I always feel a little like, are they going to respond to me because I know, I know Sharon is she's fabulous on the phone and really makes you feel warm and comfortable. So, it's like, are they going to like me? Cause I'm more of the silly, goofy grief specialists.

Sharon ([06:35](#)):

No, no, no one would ever say that.

Erica ([06:37](#)):

I bring a different dynamic. So, you know, there's the little bit of always insecurity for me to come into the first meeting after you guys have established your connection, but coming in, I mean, it was like love at first sight. You two were both awesome. And just, you know, you guys being open to my thoughts and my opinions and, and welcoming me in, I always appreciate that. And then it's like, I could take that deep breath and go, okay, we're going to be off, but I want to ask you to, prior to coming to the first meeting with all of us, what did you think it was going to be?

Amanda ([07:25](#)):

I kind of was a little skeptical. Honestly. I was thinking a grief group. Oh my gosh. Everyone's just going to be sitting around and bawling their eyes out and passing the tissues. So, I didn't really think, I didn't know what it was really going to be. Like. I just had kind of a stereotypical idea.

New Speaker ([07:52](#)):

Yeah. You're making me laugh. Cause that's Exactly what it seemed like. It should be.

Pauline ([07:57](#)):

I agree with Amanda pretty much that too. I mean, just I've done one-on-one grief therapy. I've done grief, support groups. Faith-Based support groups. Anticipatory classes. I mean, I've done this all over the country. So, I was definitely skeptical. Cause I'm thinking I've been doing this for seven years. What could possibly be out there to help me? And then I had

been looking on Facebook because I even called, but a year ago I called the suicide hotline because we had to wear a mask all the time. So, I started having panic attacks. So, they suggested on the suicide hotline to see a therapist. So, I'm thinking, you know, this could be a loss from my, when my wife passed away and I'm not sure. So, I got off base my five minutes of Facebook and it was bad, fast. Wow.

Sharon ([08:57](#)):

Oh wow. That's cool. That's cool that you found us that we found each other. It was meant for sure. Tell me what it was like. I want both of you to answer this. What was it like having our meetings on zoom because you are in, where are you pulling?

Pauline ([09:13](#)):

I'm in Seattle right now.

Sharon ([09:14](#)):

Seattle right now. Amanda's in San Diego, San Diego. I'm currently in San Diego right now. Erica is in a barn in Louisiana somewhere.

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

No joke, legit the truth, but I wasn't always here. I would, I was in Santa Clarita and then in Texas. So, what was it like having to zoom? Cause we're one, we were all over the different places, but two, because of COVID it kind of forced us to go on zoom. What was it like having your grief group on zoom?

Pauline ([09:51](#)):

It was actually amazing. I was surprised. Wow. Yeah. Cause you, well in, well I work in a hospital, so you have mass. So, I see gorgeous people on the other side, which I don't see normally. Yeah, yeah. You know, and your eyes. So, you get a sense of how close and how connected you are. Yeah. Which we don't see that wearing in the mass all the time. Yeah.

Sharon ([10:20](#)):

What did you think about the zoom meetings? Amanda?

Amanda ([10:25](#)):

I totally agree. I don't think there was ever a moment where it felt like disconnected from the group because it was on zoom. And I just loved the flexibility where like, if we had to meet in person, I wouldn't have been able to fly out to Texas every week or whatever that would have just broken the bank and time. But and it's just kind of comfortable, like I'm drinking tea right now and we're just all talking and yeah, it's very low key. I feel like. And that helps with the atmosphere of comfortability.

Sharon ([11:04](#)):

I personally love the zoom. I like being in person too. Don't get me wrong. I like both. But I think that the zoom gives you more times that you can hook up longer periods of time. And the truth is, you know, you don't have to get totally dressed up. You could just, you know, throw on some lipstick and be ready to go. And you're in the comfort of your own home. So as soon as you're done with your session, you're right back to living your life. And so, I kind of, I don't know, I just like the zoom meetings. I like them both ways.

Erica ([11:36](#)):

Zoom definitely brings that level of comfortability because you get to be in the safety of your own home or your safe space. And I love that because I think with the hesitancy, if we would have, if COVID wasn't a factor and we said, okay, we're going to meet on Mondays. This place, the anxiety that, that brings where, you know, I feel like you kind of hold back from speaking your truth, but when you're in the safety of your own home, you feel more comfortable to share your truths and get to those levels that we really need to get to.

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

So there came apart a time we met on Monday nights and there came a part in time where it became a regular thing. And I, were you looking forward to your meetings? I mean, I guess sometimes you had some tough work to do, but I think that it was nice that we got you open up the screen and there was this familiar face. And even though you were sharing some tough stuff, you got to see familiar faces. I don't know. What was it like for you guys on the weekly meetings?

Amanda ([12:41](#)):

I totally agree. I think it was, you know, a little bit like, oh man, here we go out to share this out loud now, but it was comforting that it was just you guys. And I knew that you would understand and be accepting no matter what I had to share, there was like a level of safety and security hopping on and being like, you know, these people are really going to hear me out and understand where I'm coming from with this.

Sharon ([13:18](#)):

Right. I love that. The diversity that came to the group too, we're all, so we're all women, but we're all so different. And one of the things, and I don't know if I'm bringing this up too early, Eric or not, but one of the things, and this is the aspect that Erica definitely brings to the grief healing is we laughed a lot joy at each other and we, when each person was sharing, we were there with them and they could tell we were there with them.

Erica ([13:50](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And I, I, I love that you guys were open to it. Cause you know, obviously we read the room, or I try my best to read the room. I don't start cracking jokes. Right. When

you are sharing your experience, first of all, my timing is well rehearsed, but I, I really appreciate that you guys were open to that. And I think it helped us be more of our authentic selves and really be able to just share where we're at on any given day, because every Monday is different. Some Mondays, you know, are more of a challenge because something happened at work or something happened over the weekend, you know? So, we just kind of would roll with where we were at on that given Monday. And I love that. But my favorite part of being part of a group setting is watching the dynamic that is formed between Pauline and Amanda, like watching the two people like Sharon. And I obviously we're not strangers, but you guys were total strangers coming in and seeing you to build a support system for one another and any, even in our group texts show up for each other and hold space for each other. Like that is my most favorite part of this group because the dynamic and the bond that is formed routine, you two, is just, it's a beautiful thing. And I love it.

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

It helps you get over the finish line. I think that strength that other person is like, you know, you heard the song wind beneath my wings, but it's like, you really are. And I'm this just blowing smoke. I mean, it's true. That's what happens. Something happens in the group that I love. I think it's so much so amazing. So there came a time where we had to miss appointments or change things. How did you guys like the flexibility in the group?

Pauline ([15:40](#)):

I loved it gave me time to take a cat nap. Wait a minute. On Monday for the completion letters, I was still writing. I was still scrambling around. So, it gave me a little bit extra time. So, I liked it.

Pauline ([15:59](#)):

Yeah. You guys were very understanding and patient when we didn't feel ready or we like you would challenge us to, you know, finish it, but you weren't, you wouldn't force us. If we knew that there was something else that we were still struggling with or had to address you gave us that space, which was super helpful. Yes.

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

I want you both to go back to the first bit of work that you did, the first relationship you worked on, how comfortable did you feel ready to share, to just share the first time? Did you feel comfortable to do that or were you still nervous because of the setting?

Pauline ([16:43](#)):

I felt pretty comfortable. Yeah. Because I was able to call either one of you or text you to say, Hey I need help with this. By the time we got to the, to the, to the meeting, I was okay to go ahead and do it.

Amanda ([16:58](#)):

Yeah. I think, I think I'm just a little bit more nervous of a person than Bali, but I, I agree. When we would go over how to process the grief and how to write the letter and how to graph it, like you guys broke it down into manageable pieces and I don't think I had that before. And so, I'd get so overwhelmed. And I called Sharon almost every letter. I did like, don't think I'm doing this right. And she was like, oh no, it sounds like you've got it. I just needed somebody to be like, yeah, keep it.

Sharon ([17:52](#)):

So that was one of the other things Erica that I added on here is that we, oh, we have the text group, which is great. I think it's great. Cause we're all supporting each other, but I give free range for people to call me or text me. And same for you. I want to ask you ladies Pauline and I got to this Sunday night ritual. She had to have the breakdown Sunday phone call.

Pauline ([18:23](#)):

I tried, I put, you know, from the class, you know, to do the homework and, and the, and the online lessons each week. So, it made me think all through the day, even at work, my mind was just going. So, then I think, okay, I'll start over. I'll start doing the graph. And then it's like, I hit a speed bump. And then I thought, okay, wait a minute. I'll put on my big girl panties, and I can do this. And then Sunday hit. And it's like, okay, what time is this? No, she's probably eating dinner now can't wait anymore.

Sharon ([18:58](#)):

Yeah. Quite a few Sundays' phone calls. If something about having someone else jump in on the graph, work with you and really look at your heart and say, hey, how did that feel? How did that feel right there? And why don't you address this area? Just something about having someone else look at it, seeing things that you don't see. Yeah.

Erica ([19:20](#)):

I think that this is that such an amazing feature that we offer that. I mean, I don't know if other groups, I don't think they do, like where you could call the facilitator outside of like any time, I'm sure there's an emergency or whatever, but you really like have that open door, like texts call. Cause we, our goal is to keep you as comfortable as possible and encourage you to keep doing the work because we know if we can get you to that finish line, this is life-changing stuff. And you know, if we didn't have that, so many people, they do quit with us already. You know, sometimes because they get scared, and they get overwhelmed even with us having that feature. So, we know this is a scary thing. So, we really don't mind doing the handholding to get you where you need to be in to keep you comfortable and to keep Pauline out of her head and get her into this,

Sharon ([20:23](#)):

Got in her head. Now that you've done work on, on certain relationships in your lives, when you, how does your heart feel now, when you think about the work that you've done and just, you're feeling towards them, do you think that you guys have made advancements in your, in doing your work? She's trying to make Amanda go first. I can already see,

Amanda ([20:57](#)):

I can go. I think so it's just a different kind of mindset I think of them, or I'm approached by them, especially in like a lot of deep-seated stuff that was just always there always affecting my decisions and bothering me. And I don't feel as like tethered to that anymore. I'm still working on just learning how to kind of release the things I've released. But I have had a lot of new realizations that I never ever would have without going through this.

Sharon ([21:51](#)):

So, it's so funny. Cause the show we just did right before you guys got on was how grief can be in layers and like work on that one layer shows up another layer. So that's exactly what you just, you totally just described.

Amanda ([22:05](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It's unreal actually. And it's, it's like things that blew my mind. I remember calling Sharon and saying, I just recognize this about this person. And I never would have ever thought that. And it's kinda like allows more grace in my heart towards them where they're at. That's all.

Sharon ([22:32](#)):

I love that when you can really go down in your heart, but Pauline you and I talk about the backpack all the time. That's the analogy we use is that you have a backpack on, and it's filled with junk. What was it like getting, you're getting the junk out of your trunk? What was it like for you getting cause then the other thing that's so funny is that you called me and were like, I lost my wife and within a few short weeks I was like yeah, but you also have this?

Pauline ([23:00](#)):

Oh my. And it was just a lot of things that I didn't realize that could possibly be connected. And I kind of had an idea, like it was a low-key thing, but then when we started doing the relationships, I realized that, oh, I think the girls, the ladies are onto something. I had no clue of. So, it was amazing to work through those. Thursday, I woke up and I, this piece just, it was a more peace in my heart that, you know, I went to work, and I had actually two staff members. I said, hi morning, how are you doing? And he said, oh my God, my, my fathers-in-law in the hospital and we're worrying, blah, blah, blah. And I stood there, and I said, well, what's going on? And I prompted her to share with me. She says, are you sure? And I said, yes, my heart was warm, very warm. So, she must've, she must've shared like a 10-minute story. And then I walked around, and this was doing rounds in the morning. And



then I walked into respiratory and one of the RTS is going through situations at work with COVID and then her parents are both Aileen and they're seniors. So, I said, well, if you, I gave him my phone number and I said, if you need a heart with ears, you can call. I'm good to listen. I said, I don't cook anymore. At least not right now. He said really. And I said, absolutely. So, you guys have encouraged me and inspired me. It's okay to do that again. Yeah. So that for me, that's really amazing. I'm sorry, Erica. I love that. You said you woke up with a warm heart. I was like, that's how it was when we first did our grief work, like we woke up.

Erica ([25:02](#)):

and I think the thing is because, because you cleared out a lot of your junk out of your backpack, you now have room and space opening your heart to other people when we're so consumed by our pain, our brokenness, we don't have room for other people. And it, you know, we, it's not that we just mean and selfish, but that's just, we just can't take anything else on. But now that your backpack is clear, you made space for other people. And I love that, it is so awesome. And so sweet of you to do.

Amanda ([25:40](#)):

I see a future where after, after Shirley died, I didn't see a future at all I saw today. That's it? I can manage today, but a future.

Erica ([25:54](#)):

I'm glad you've brought that up. I'm glad you brought that up because that's what you said. The very first Monday meeting, you said, I don't see a future. I don't know where I'm going. And then now yesterday in our text, you were talking about future plans, future.

Pauline ([26:16](#)):

I got to make sure for Canada, if I go on the ferry, have to be back that I need to send money to our PCR tests. I have to have a plan to quarantine it. For some reason I test positive. I wouldn't have gone there. Actually the you ladies encouraged me to go to Alaska back and forth to July because I had planned to move. I was going to stay there when I was working, but I didn't realize I had some brief work to do so. It was an amazing and enlightening trip, which I wouldn't have done if you hadn't encouraged me to do it.

Sharon ([26:52](#)):

That's so cool. Would you recommend the program to someone?

Pauline ([26:57](#)):

Already had? Yes, absolutely. That's why I was asking about the podcast. I sent it to my friend Charles, because he's, he's the queen in my life. I've been listening to the podcast when I'm at work and I'm just, I'm laughing my off. And the other technicians are looking at me or staff, like, what are you? Can't tell that I have an earpiece to my ears because it

blends with my hair. So, I, I S I invited you know, like my, my youngest sisters she passed away and her dad committed suicide. So, I sent it to her. I sent it to my nieces, her siblings, I sent it to cousins. And I said, you guys need to check this out.

Speaker 2 ([27:59](#)):

Thank you. Thank you. I'd love that. I love that. Okay. So, one of the things that I often say in the class is that you're still going to put gas in your car. You still have to go the grocery store, all those things. Like we don't cure any of that, but your life is a little bit lighter. Would you say that you've with the backpack emptied out? Which do you feel that do you, or have you experienced it?

Pauline ([28:29](#)):

I did Thursday when I woke up, I went into work. I had I think when I sit on the Texas, I had a swagger that I felt good about just being Pauline and being human and whatever that entailed. And then I was singing. I was singing out on the floor, my head piece, and I hadn't been singing. So it was like, holy cow. I got,

Sharon ([29:13](#)):

So I don't think I don't, you know, we, we're not having any claim to fame to make an your life perfect, but making it a little bit lighter, it's definitely a thing that we can do. And that, and I want to say this, I want to say thank you to both of you for allowing to perfect strangers, silly sisters to come in and guide you. You guys were adjusts, a joy and a delight. And I looked forward to every Monday. And of course, I started that Monday on Sunday. You hadn't talked Coleen to make it show up on Monday.

Amanda ([29:57](#)):

The most interesting thing for me is that like you guys have talked about, you might not go from the spicy a person to adoring them, but you can go from feeling that like heartstring and twinge, whenever they call or whatever to feeling neutral about it. Oh yeah. That's definitely been the case for me. I just feel kind of like, I think the thing has helped me to do is like detach from other people and like have my own self-identity and like find a voice, be okay. Being different from other people.

Pauline ([30:37](#)):

Yes. So definitely found that voice and I could not have been prouder.

Sharon ([30:48](#)):

Goodness, go, Amanda. So ladies, I want to say thank you so much for allowing two crazy sisters to guide you on your grief journey. And we will have a friendship that will last a lifetime, for sure. For sure.

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

Definitely. You guys are my soul sisters. Yeah.

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

Yep. You guys, they're both kind of like the crazy ants that I wanted or needed.

Erica ([31:26](#)):

I'll take it.

Sharon ([31:26](#)):

I'll take it too. Thanks for joining the show, ladies.

Pauline ([31:31](#)):

Thank you so much. Have a great day. You're the best

Sharon ([31:39](#)):

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 ([31:49](#)):

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

Sharon ([32:07](#)):

The 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 ([32:18](#)):

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