

When Families Fight

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

Erica and Sharon are sisters who began a Grief Journey in 2006, when Erica's 10-year-old son, Austin, drowned. Together, they participated in a grief education program and 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 Sharon are committed to sharing their experiences of love, loss, and healing through this podcast. Now your Grief Specialists, Sharon and Erica.

Sharon ([00:40](#)):

Okay. So you've just had a major loss in your family. One of your parents has died. There are five kids in the family. Everybody shows up with their grief. Everybody shows up to the table with their own brokenness. And what we find happens over and over again is that everyone's aspect of the grief comes to the very first part. You know, in the beginning, we're doing all that hugging, we're hugging each other. We're supporting each other. We're loving each other, but very quickly that goes away. And what shows up is the daughter who had a tumultuous relationship with her dad, the daughter who was spoiled by the dad, the son who got beat by the dad, all of that pain shows up and all that grief shows up. And what ends up happening is now we start fighting with each other because our grief showed up into the room 10 minutes before we got there. And it is not uncommon that while we're trying on a plan, the service or why we're trying to grieve, we all start fighting with each other.

Erica ([01:53](#)):

Yeah. That that's so true. Everybody has their own. We, we did a podcast. We can't compare the laws cuz it's unique at individual. So everyone has their own hurt. Everyone has their own hurt. And when you show up with your hurt and I'm expecting your it to be just like my hurt and you say something that I'm like, no, that's not right. It's like this and you, and then you're like, no, it's this color. And then next thing you know, you're in a full on family brawl. It's more common than you think. And, and it's sad because like you said, you should be hugging one another and holding space for each other, other and, and supporting, you know, each other through the pain and the loss. But you're not, you can't get over that.

Dad bought you this special chocolate bunny and I didn't get that one. I, you got the bunny that was this big. And I got the bunny that was this big. And he showed up to your place. He never came to my basketball games. I mean, that's what comes up, right?

Sharon ([02:53](#)):

Yeah. That's what comes up. And a lot of times we're not saying that,

Erica ([02:56](#)):

Right. Because

Sharon ([02:57](#)):

I know that you always got the big bunny. I know that, of course. But that, wasn't what I said. What I was saying is that that's not what comes up. So then you and I were just talking about this. Like our dad was we were blessed in that he planned his own service with us and we actually had a family meeting and he told us what he wanted. But even with that, there were still aspects undone. And at the time that we sat down to write the obituary, you and I, the family, we sat down to write the obituary. Just that in itself was a perfect example. All of the different ways we all wanted to write it. What we wanted to come across in that obituary. That was the part he left undone. It, he didn't care what we wrote. And so you guys just write whatever you want. I'm fine. Just make sure it's nice. I think he made a joke about it. And when we got there, one person wanted it to be serious. The other person wanted it to be funny. The other person wanted it to be a 10 page novel, like everybody's aspect that came to it. Luckily for us, we kept it together and we held it together. But that one event alone could send the whole entire family into a tizzy and a fight.

Erica ([04:07](#)):

Absolutely. And that's, that's what people need to realize. When you experience a loss as a family, you gotta give people the space to grieve how they need to grieve and to say the things that they, they need to say sometimes what shows up is anger. And if I'm mad at dad and you're not mad at dad, you love him. You know, you, you think he was the best dad ever. You need to allow me the space to be mad and tell. And don't say to me, you shouldn't feel like that he was a good dad to you. That's that's not the place to say it. Time or place. You need to give the person the space until that subsides a little bit. And then maybe go back and have a follow up conversation. But if you don't, if you don't want a world war II breaking out at the

funeral, You gotta give everyone the space to grieve how they need to grieve. And to, and to say the things that they need to say, even if you don't agree

Sharon ([05:04](#)):

And acknowledge that your emotions are showing up right now and your loss and your incomplete communication is showing up right now. I was an event planner for 25 years. I did event planning and I specialized in weddings. And so I was a wedding coordinator and you know what? My job was Erica, 99% of my job was table arrangements. My dad can't sit next to his mom cuz they haven't spoken 20 years. My stepmom can't be at the table with my mom. My mother will kill her. My brother and sister are not speaking. Please make sure they stay separated. Like I had to have the list of who hated who, who didn't like, who, who doesn't like the color red, you know, we're, I'm making a joke out of this, but that's exactly who it was. I'm here to tell you that, that same family members, those same family members show up at the, at the, after the death. How many times have we heard? I'm never speaking to my brother again because they were, the, the pain was so deep and that just planning the funeral, threw it off or I've kept it together while my dad is alive. And now that he's gone, I don't need to speak to you anymore. It's layers and layers deep. I'm mad at dad. Now I'm mad at brother. Now I'm gonna do this. It's completely outta whack where that is concerned.

Erica ([06:31](#)):

And, and a lot of times when we have a situation like that, everybody wants somebody to blame. Yeah. So if you're the oldest and you were the one making the decisions, then it's your fault. You killed dead. You know what I mean? Like then it turns into that because then they want,

Sharon ([06:44](#)):

Oh, are you trying to tell me something?

Erica ([06:46](#)):

No good thing. I was there. Those last two. Cause I witnessed that you did not kill dad, but,

Sharon ([06:56](#)):

And that's time when he slapped me. You were there when I got

Erica ([06:59](#)):

Slapped. Right. I don't think I came right after that

Sharon (07:03):

Anyway. I was still being corrected even in the last moment. Sometimes what we have to do is we have to grieve the parent, but we also have to grieve the brother or sister. But we have to grieve the planning of the funeral. Sometimes the, the planning of the funeral is not just what we're talking about. Cuz the planning of the funeral was gone by the three weeks. Right. And then we have to learn how to live together. We have to learn to live together in our grief. I need you to understand how bad I feel. I need you to understand how bad this feels. Now take that same family. That's arguing about that and put in selling the estate.

Erica (07:45):

Oh my gosh. Yes.

Sharon (07:47):

The will, the life insurance selling the house, how much hurt and pain come about by that? How much hurt and pain you and I did a show a few months ago about making the arrangements, letting our everybody know who's getting the cup water. Who's getting my favorite blanket. Who's getting this. It's so much better if we have that handled. But when we don't have that handled, we have all the emotions show up for that. It scares families apart.

Erica (08:15):

It does. And it's so sad. It's so sad that that they let that get to them cuz it's material sad and it's everybody wants to keep score. You can't keep score. You know? And my mother-in-law just I had this experience with her. I was with her two weeks ago and she gave me her Fox coat that my father-in-law bought her 40 years ago. She said she still remembered when he gave it to her. And she gave me the whole details that, and she had been wanting to give it to me for a lot of years. I had borrowed it when I went to a Modi GRA ball and she told me she wanted to give it to me. So she finally gave it to me. She said, you know what? I decided that I'm gonna start giving stuff to the people. I want them to have it while I'm here. Instead of having everyone fight over and I thought that was the smartest thing. Especially her knowing her children.

Sharon (09:06):

She's a good mama.

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

She is a good mama because that's the thing. What happens when the peacekeeper, when mom, the buffer, the older of all the secrets. And then it becomes a free for all for the kids to just attack one another.

Sharon ([09:21](#)):

And all of their, all of our emotions show up at that time. And you know what, to be honest, sometimes the emotion isn't about the person that die. It's just all the unresolved grief within us. Unresolved grief that we've had for years, years, you know, he was an alcoholic. I was raised by an alcoholic father. I was raised by a drug addict mother. My parents had a tumultuous relationship and they hated each other. And all of that pain shows up at the time when you were not expecting it because you know what, for 25 years you've been able to manage that. Right. You've been able to get through without it. And guess when it's gonna show up when you don't want it to

Erica ([09:59](#)):

Absolutely. And the, the misunderstanding at the service over the chicken's not about the chicken.

Sharon ([10:08](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([10:09](#)):

You know, you, you, you, I can't believe you ordered all the chicken. I mean it just something so asinine. It's not, it's not about the chicken. It's about my heart is broken. I have these old hurts and they bubbled up to the surface. Now that dad is gone, mom is gone. Whoever's gone. And I don't know what to do with it. So I'm gonna attack you.

Sharon ([10:32](#)):

And if you're brave enough, that's the exact paragraph you need to say. I have all of the, these emotions showing up right now. I don't know what to do with them. And they're all the anger is coming out. And every time I come here and I come around, all of you guys, all I, all I get is angry. I wanna apologize ahead of time. I'm gonna do my best to work with my own personal emotions. And I suggest you guys do the same, but we have to get this done right now. So let's be respectful to one another.

This can always be shelved and we can come back to it later. That's the thing we need to do. That's the thing we need to say.

Erica ([11:12](#)):

Tell the truth about ourselves. Always. We say all the time, we've gotta speak your truth. And we, God, I good point. It was about, oh, I say it. I love it. It's my favorite saying, but anger is sad's bodyguard. I heard it from her client. I can't unhear it. It's my most favorite thing. And we have a sibling who shows up in anger all the time and we, you know, we love her. God bless her. But she shows up in anger, Sharon do you have feelings about this?

Sharon ([11:44](#)):

Why are you calling me out?

Erica ([11:46](#)):

But you gotta, you, if she would come in and say that what you just said. Yeah, I'm really angry. I have all this. I don't know what to do with it and, and preface, but she doesn't. She comes in and our mom calls her the bull. She comes in like a mad bull. That's what her mom

Sharon ([12:05](#)):

Calls. Oh my God, you, you need to stop. She's gonna hear this podcast. Cuz she listens to all our podcasts and no it's her.

Erica ([12:11](#)):

I'm her favorite. So I could say it.

Sharon ([12:13](#)):

And this is our next show. It's absolutely when we need to be aware of what our emotions are and our feelings are. Yeah.

Erica ([12:20](#)):

Yeah. But that, that's the thing. If she would speak her truth, but we know how she shows up. So we, we know how to handle it. But there's a lot of times in families that they, you don't know how to handle it and you're not used to it and you take it per and then that also leads to a fight instead of just knowing she's struggling. I'm just gonna give her some space.

Sharon ([12:39](#)):

We were just, you and I were just talking about reading the obituary at the at the funeral. You it's one of your pet peeves. We should do a podcast on it. Okay. First of all, no, we should do the podcast on. There are no rules for how to make the funeral. I think we've done that before, but Erica really hates it when you give her the printed program and then you get somebody to read the obituary. It's just,

Erica ([13:02](#)):

If you're just gonna read it to me.

Sharon ([13:04](#)):

OK. That's not what this show is about. The show is about the next part. What did my dad's pet peeve always was having alcohol at the funeral and the REPA after the the funeral has taken place because typically what happens is our grieving friends and family start drinking alcohol. And what the heck do you think happens with all of that? When all that alcohol hits your body, all those emotions show up. Then the next thing you know, we are sitting there consoling Mary, who hasn't seen him in 30 years, but the alcohol has taken over and she starts telling this blabbing story, babbling story that she couldn't get out. And she starts telling all about when she was a little kid and they used to play together and how she feels so guilty. All of her grief shows up when the alcohol shows up. And that's typically what happens at these events is that we mix these emotions with drugs or alcohol and what we didn't want to have happen, happens.

Erica ([14:05](#)):

You ever seen those memes and that's when the fight started. It's like that. Bring the margarita to the REPA. You're gonna see you want some action. Oh, you're gonna have action.

Sharon ([14:19](#)):

Yeah. And that's typically when all the, and it's like, you're going from one person who's falling down. Then you see the other person. Then everybody runs over to that person and they start fanning them and getting all their love around them. It can be a true crappy show, you know, when all the emotions start to show up, but you had add, add alcohol to it. And I was just using that version cuz most of us have been to one of those ceremonies or, after celebrations of life.

Erica ([14:50](#)):

Yeah. It's it's, it can be very, very challenging because you're right. The alcohol breeds all of the emotion bubbling to the surface and it's that liquid courage that

you, you get to speak your truth. Although with alcohol, it's an altered version of the truth. Yeah. Yeah. But you have the courage to say those things that you definitely shouldn't say, what is that? Drunken thoughts, drunken, thoughts, speak sober words or something like that. It's like, I think that's the saying, you get that. And then you have this whole hodgepodge and you gotta start peeling back the layers to get to what's really the hurt in that. Once you add the alcohol in.

Sharon ([15:28](#)):

So not every family fights, not every but most do or most don't like someone in the family. Doesn't like the way things are done, have space for that. Hold the space for the, the griever. That's showing up angry. But to the griever, that's showing up angry, let everybody know, Hey, I got some unresolved things here. I don't know what this is. I'm gonna do my best to control it or make a conscious decision to control it. Go after your own grief before you start taking it out on the other person, do your best to keep the emotions at a minimum while you're planning. And while you're going through the grieving experience, I don't know that this is gonna fix it. I'm not trying to fix it. We just need to be aware of it. We need to be aware of these emotions before they show up there.

Erica ([16:15](#)):

Yeah. And I would also say have a designated person that you, that's your safe space that you vent to. So like while you're driving a mom's house and you're on the phone, I can't believe I don't wanna be there talking to that. HEFA she always does this to me. She does that. Let that out. Cuz I, that takes the steam off. So when you get there, you don't have all that built up. Yeah. And then call them on the way home. So you can dump again on your way home. You don't need that building up. Cuz at one point it is going to explode.

Sharon ([16:47](#)):

Yeah. Good look, friends. We've been there. We know what it's like. We're sending you all the good, good energy that we can. All the good healing energy and know that we, we are thinking of you if you ever wanna talk and just break it down. Erica and I are amazing listeners. We're great at hearing the story and sharing our own stories of how we got through.

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

Yeah.

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

Thank you, Friends.

Erica ([17:12](#)):

Bye, friends.