

The Grief School

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Grief Specialists

Episode : S8E192 -

Death By Suicide Part 2



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

Suicide is one of the top causes of death in the us. So we have had nearly 46,000 Americans die by suicide in 2020, according to the c d c, suicide can be preventable. And that starts with knowing what to look for and what to do. If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, they have shortened the number, which I absolutely love, is 9 8 8. It's always open, and you can speak to a trained counselor. If someone is threatening to kill themselves, don't leave them alone. Call 9 1 1. If you can do it safely, take them to the nearest emergency room. Try to keep that person calm and get help. For others, it's beautiful advice, really is beautiful advice. I really love it. But what happens, Erica, when that is not the case, when it doesn't line up as A, B and C, a, she's been depressed. B she tells me she wants to kill herself. C I go over there and I take her to the emergency room. What happens when it's not that way?

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

It's shocking to me that you're saying that it's the number one cause of death. I, it's sad. It is. It is so sad that that is our reality right now. But also it's, it's very telling about our times, right? The times that we're living in right now. And we better heed this advice and start paying attention because it seems as though it used to be like, I don't know, I'm gonna make, I don't hope this comes out the way I'm thinking. It just regular ordinary people used to kill themselves. Right. You know, just, just Joe Schmo. But now our big bright and beautiful shining stars, and not that they're any better than Joe Schmo, but they're killing themselves. So from the outside looking in, they have looks, they have talent, they have money, they have, you know, the most beautiful partners in their lives.

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

They have this lifestyle that growing up, we've all envied the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Right. So you are thinking, I'm sorry. You, you're thinking, well, what, what could they be going through? They have all this money. They have all these resources. They have all the all they have all the things, but clearly they don't because it's as recent as last week Twitch Ellen's producer on her show, famous dj, beautiful dancer, unlied himself Anthony Bourdain, Kate Spade, a famous designer, Robin Williams. Just trying to think who else. Those are like the top ones in my brain right now. But our most beautiful, the best of the best as we, as we think, you know, that's what we're trained. The stars have it all, but they don't, there's something hurting them and they're not talking about it.

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

Right. And I wanna go back to the Joe Schmo. The reason it seems like Joe Schmo is because back in the day, we never talked about it. They were considered weak and we didn't talk about suicide. So, because he was considered weak or we didn't talk about it. Oh, what was wrong with that?

Erica ([03:31](#)):

Yeah,

Sharon ([03:31](#)):

Because that was happening and we didn't talk about it. It just got pushed under the rug. But because of a Robin Williams and an Anthony Bourdain and a Kate Faith, we're now talking about it. But one of the other things that we're talking about is when you talk to that person, how to talk to that person and

what are the things to say? So some of the warning signs, people don't commit suicide because they wanna die. People don't commit suicide because they wanna unlive themselves. They want their pain to end. They want their pain to stop. They want this pain to stop. And yes, like what you were saying, they can have it be portraying this totally beautiful picture on the outside. And one of the things that's killing us the most, I believe, is social media, because we're portraying that everything is perfect. <Affirmative> in our social media. But yet we're, we're dying inside.

Erica ([04:32](#)):

We gotta start talking about the ugly. We gotta, whether you not, you even have the right words to say. We just, the the people hurting need to say how dark it is and how, you know, for some reason we have, and we said, we just said we're gonna make this another show, but we have this impression in our world and in society that's sad or, or heartbroken or pain is bad.

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

Okay. I agree with you. So one of the things that you and I, okay, Erica, what do you call all of this? The people that, that, what deep down, what is it deep down, what is going on in their heart?

Erica ([05:19](#)):

Grief.

Sharon ([05:21](#)):

Yes. A hundred

Erica ([05:23](#)):

Percent. You and I will call it <laugh>.

Sharon ([05:25](#)):

It's grief, it's brokenness. It's the years of pain. Grief is any brokenness that occurs in our heart, any loss that occurs in our heart. And we know for a fact. And you and I have pinpointed even back to two and three year old, two and three years old, you and I have stories of grieving experiences that happen to us. That's number one. Number two there are, when we came here, we agreed to feel all of the emotions. Call it God, call it the universe, call it whatever you want. We agreed that we were gonna have these emotions and we were gonna feel them. One side of our heart was gonna feel sad, lonely, isolated, broken, the other side of our heart was gonna feel happy, joy elation. <Affirmative>, what happens over time, and we don't know you and I can't pinpoint it. At some point in society, the one side of our heart, the feelings that we had and the emotions of the sadness and brokenness on our heart, people started telling us that that was no good. Don't feel that. Don't show the emotions of it. <Affirmative>. And what is happening to us now is years and years of covering up those emotions. You stop that crying right now, or I'm gonna give you something to cry for. You don't cry. You and I were just we actually made it into a joke. But we both remember going to our parents and saying, I feel sad, or I'm unhappy. And our parents telling us that we didn't even know what sadness was like, clearly, like really correcting us.

Erica ([07:01](#)):

Right? Yeah.

Sharon ([07:03](#)):

That is a generational curse that has got to be broken.

Erica ([07:08](#)):

Very, very true across all cultures. Cuz it's not just, you know, the way it's, I think it's across the board. I see it in all different cultures where you're trained out of your emotions, you know, because that the older generations, you know, children were to be seen and not heard. So can you really imagine those generations of pain and things that have been bottled up inside because you weren't even allowed to speak anything. You know, you're just, we, we had you just to look at you and for you to get up and work the farm or whatever it was. So yeah, definitely, definitely a challenge for sure. What I experienced when I felt my deep, dark brokenness after Donovan died, I already knew I could, I could see and understand why people would take those steps, but I knew I would never do that to Louis Jordan or Kayla.

Erica ([08:09](#)):

I, they had already been through so much, I never wanted to put them through one more ounce of pain. So that is what really prevented me from going there or even allowing myself to go there because of them. So I at least was very clear with myself that I would not do that to them. But there are people like Twitch. You look at his, I'm sure he never wanted to inflict this mu much pain on his beautiful wife and children. But it's, it's something that I believe is done on impulse. I believe that the the old thought process with that, a lot of planning and time and effort went into these decisions. I don't think that that's always the case. I think that people just do it impulsively because they just want the pain to stop. And they don't know another way out.

Erica ([08:59](#)):

And it was always seen as a very selfish act because that's how I thought of it. When our cousin's husband took his own life. I thought, my God, that's so selfish. Because he left her and their children who he adored, adored his family above anything. But I really believe that it was an impulse thing because he just wanted to make the pain stop. We gotta let people know, you can sit in the pain, you can bring your pain to a safe space and talk about it. You can unburden yourself. Taking your life doesn't have to be the only answer.

Sharon ([09:38](#)):

So I think also that from my, I'm gonna speak from my own experience. We just recorded a show with my daughter Brittany, who was talking about her depressive deep depressive disorder. Right? And as I was listening to her and she's sharing all of these, these things, of course, I come in as a mother, right? And I'm like, what's wrong? Tell me what's wrong. I'm gonna fix this. I don't want you to be in pain. Who wants their child to be in pain? Who wants their child to feel this? And even though I know this right, I don't want my child to be broken. I don't want her to feel sad. So let, what can I do to fix this? How can I make this better? Was my response all along as the young kid. Like I didn't tell her, you don't know, sad, but I didn't teach her sad.

Sharon ([10:29](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, I didn't teach her that it's okay to be sad. I didn't teach her that. In some days you're going to feel sad. And so here she becomes, this young adult has two major grieving experiences in her life. And to be honest, I didn't know how to fix it. I honestly didn't know how to fix it, how to make it better. But the number one thing that I know now that I made a mistake, I wish I would've created a

safe place for her to talk. And I don't know that I was, that I, I could've been her person. I don't know that I ever could've been her person. I think more so I needed to be just like the song says the one beneath her wings. And that's what I feel that I did. And I hope that that's what I did. But sometimes when you're saying, you're saying that ugly to someone really close to you, like your mom or your dad, they try to, to fix you instead of just being and be without judgment. And I, if I ever did that, Britney, I truly apologize to you for that.

Erica ([11:33](#)):

Yeah. I don't think I,

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

I'm sorry, I'm gonna read this. Focusing on death. Some people talk openly about wanting to die or committing suicide or they dwell on the topic of death. So it seems like when that person is doing that, it's open and we can, we can read. Oh yeah. She's talking about it all the time. She's focused on it, but they're the other people who don't talk about.

Erica ([11:57](#)):

Yeah. Well, I mean, it seems as though the, the cases that have been very much in the public eye of the the celebrities, it doesn't seem like they talked about it or gave any indication. Like just what I read about from Twitch's wife, they had celebrated their wedding anniversary a couple days prior. And I think they did a video the day before of them dancing. And they, I mean, his face, just looking at his face, you see animation, you see a beautiful smile. You see just love, love radiating. And I think that's why this has affected so many people is every video that they've done, you just see this immense love that they as a couple have for each other. And she said he just, he said he, he, I don't know if he communicated he was leaving, but his car was there.

Erica ([12:49](#)):

So the fact that his car was still there and he had left the home, she immediately went to the police station and she's like, something is wrong. And I just as a wife tried to think if that would be my go-to with Lewis. Like I, cuz this has happened. We live in the country. So the, the first thing I do when I walk outside and I can't find him, is I count cars. Cuz I'm like, okay, his, his work truck is here, his work car is here. The newer truck is here. Like, I'm like, okay. So then I go look at the side-by-side. Cuz in the country you gotta have many methods of, of travel. So then I look at the side by side, well side. So I'm like, okay, where did he go? My only thing is, where did he go? Not ever, oh my God, something bad has happened. Yeah. So that's why I'm wondering what is the difference? Was she aware, had he communicated certain things? So, and then she, you know, they ended up getting the phone call that a body was found in a hotel. I, I'm constantly thinking about that. What makes it different when I walk outside and can't find Lewis and see all the cars there to her walking outside, seeing the car is there and she's not there.

Sharon ([13:55](#)):

I can only imagine there were a lot of pieces to the puzzle that only she knew and that she

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

Absolutely.

Sharon ([14:00](#)):

That we weren't aware of. This pain that we're talking about happens in our heart. This pain is happening in your heart. These emotions are happening in your heart. They're not happening in your brain. And when I was talking about the heart earlier, being a 50 50, it's, we are feeling our emotions daily and they change minute by minute, 50% positive, 50% negative. But what happens with a lot of us is we, our heart is feeling the negative, but our brain and our body is showing the positive. Yeah.

Sharon ([14:38](#)):

And what happens when someone says to you, I don't wanna be here anymore, is that for a lot of us, we absolutely freak out. We freak out. And I wanna encourage anybody who's hearing this message. And if someone is telling you, I don't wanna be here anymore, I don't see any reason for living, I think the next thing you had to do is ask them a question. Man, that must really suck. Tell me what that feels like. Where, where are you feeling that in your body? See if you can draw them out. Don't run in retreat and call 9 1 1. Get in there with them and ask the next question without judgment.

Erica ([15:27](#)):

Yeah. 100% without judgment, you cannot judge someone who's really sharing openly and honestly from their heart. That is the biggest thing that I think needs to be understood. But I would say even just judging the conversation before asking a question, just acknowledging that emotion. Like, wow, that must feel awful. I'm so sorry you're going through this. Can we talk about it more would be the question I would say. Because I think some people, if you start asking questions, it makes 'em feel interrogated. So then they get guarded. So I would just acknowledge the emotion and allow, allow uncomfortable silences.

Sharon ([16:19](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([16:21](#)):

If someone has shared something, I don't wanna be here anymore. Allow that to just hang in the air for a minute.

Sharon ([16:30](#)):

So yeah. Don't interrogate them. By all stretching, imagination. Let me take this one step further. If you don't know what to say, first of all, you shouldn't know what to say. There's nothing that you can say that's gonna change this. So there's nothing you can say. And the reason that I say ask the questions without interrogating is because I really find, even when, a lot of times when I'm dealing with the grievors, if I just ask the questions, they start doing the searching in themselves. Help them find the answer. Why are we asking the question? The question is to help them find the answer. How would they find the answer? By saying the ugly out loud. When you hear yourself say whatever it is, it's, that's when you're like, wow, I didn't realize that's what it was. And that's why the question, so yes. I,

Erica ([17:15](#)):

Yeah, no, no. When you said ask the questions, it wasn't that I felt like that was the wrong advice. I was imagining me as a mom and I live in a place of, I dwell in fear constantly for the kids. So I could see myself coming off more as an interrogation. So I think that was advice was more for parents. If you're, if your child is coming to you as their safe space, don't interrogate because you're scared that they've brought this, you know, very profound sadness to you. And the thoughts of, I don't want to be here

anymore. I could see myself sounding more of an interrogation because I'm scared. I would be so scared that they would actually harm themselves and not be in my life anymore. That I wouldn't want them to do it. So that fear. So that's the part where I was saying I was imagining me.

Erica ([18:02](#)):

So that, that's where that came from. Cuz I, I just live in a place of fear, especially with my children prior to getting this grief work because I feel like I'm a different person now that we have this work. And that was also when we first started, I was so scared of someone saying that to me because I was scared to say the wrong thing. And that's the other thing, don't be scared to say the wrong thing. As long as you're listening, actively listening. You don't have to, you know, jump in with your advice. Just sit, we say be a ma a heart with ears. You don't have to jump in and have commentary. Let them talk until there is a pause. Until they, there's no more conversation. And you know, for a fact that they're done sharing, then come in.

Sharon ([18:54](#)):

And the other thing is like, if they go to the ugly cry and what we call the ugly cry, snot running down your nose. They're just bawling. Do not touch them. Don't touch them because it, what we wanna do is this. Oh, oh, you're okay. And what you're telling them by rubbing them, by patting their back, by burping them, you're saying, okay, they're there. I can't take this right now. This is too much. You need to stop. It's better if you don't touch them while they're showing the emotion and just let them be there. If they're, they feel safe enough to go there with you. Don't offer kleenex. Kleenex does the same thing as doing the padding and the rubbing. It's like, okay, here's Kleenex time to stop. Just let it be. We being there and being their person have to be as comfortable as them breaking down as they have to be allowing us, allowing us to be in on their

Erica ([19:52](#)):

Breakdown. Yeah. Yeah. That is, if, if you are sitting in the presence of someone who is doing that, they consider you a safe space. So here's,

Sharon ([20:03](#)):

Here's a deal. I'm sorry Erica.

Erica ([20:05](#)):

Here's a, it's okay.

Sharon ([20:07](#)):

I think we really wanted to do this show is that we gotta stop talking about suicide is, and I didn't say it was number one, suicide is one of the top causes of death. You gotta stop talking about that part. And we have to start talking about how to help someone who's in a crisis, how to go there, how to be okay with it. How to let the person say that they feel sad and be okay with it and not wanting to fix them. A lot of times you and I get grieverers that call this call us. My mom is really feeling depressed. Her son died two years ago and she's stuck in a depression. The reason the person is calling us is because they want you and I to fix her. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, there's no fix for sadness. The only fix for it is to go through it all the way through full circle. So let that and feel it.

Erica ([21:07](#)):

I would say comfort and understanding is what's needed. You know, comfort by the presence of you being there and letting them share and you giving them compassion and understanding. I forgot one of my other points, but we need to, oh, this is it. Take our emotion. Take our, the listener needs to take their emotions out of it. It's not about us. So when they say so like me being scared of someone saying that in the beginning when we first got this training, that's about, that was a me thing. I was making it about me. I need to just be and show up and just listen and give them the space and the opportunity to unburden themselves with the emotion. And my second point was that Britney shared the reason people take their own lives is they feel that they are a burden.

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

Yeah.

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

And that was mind blowing to me. Yeah. Because I was thinking the pain is so heavy they just can't stand it one more day. But they feel like they are a burden to their partners because of their whatever their affliction is. What it's substance abuse, depression whatever it is. That is very profound. Like I think if we need to start communicating to our people who are struggling, my life would not be the same without you. I need you here in whatever form. What, however you show up, sad, mad, glad in different, I just need you in my life. Don't take that away from me

Sharon ([22:48](#)):

Having those conversations and allowing them and that we, you and I are gonna do them part three to this, which is gonna be talking to the kids at a very early age about emotions and changing the conversation. We gotta change the conversation. So let's talk a little bit about how to help. I want you, no matter who you are or where you're showing up on the, on the person's list to take all suicide talk and signs very serious. Take it serious. If they say it, take it serious. Your involvement and support to help them is gonna be so important. And don't be afraid to ask the question, have you thought about unliving yourself? Do you have a plan? Then ask 'em about the plan. What is your plan? What is your plan? Let them tell you now, if you can get them to go that far, you need to be calling.

Sharon ([23:45](#)):

You know, definitely calling 9 1 1 and getting them help get them in front of a professional that can help them. But don't be afraid to have the conversation. Sometimes having the person say it out loud and share it with one other person will help them not to make the decision that day. Talk about how important the person is to you and how important you, you need them in your life. That is one of one of the things you just shared. Talking about it won't make the person act out on it right then and there if you talk about it, trust me, they're not gonna do it right then and there. If you can get them talking, that's absolutely really good because they're gonna talk to you about it. It might actually help to ease the feeling of the suicide ideation or the suicidal feelings.

Sharon ([24:35](#)):

If they can talk about it, it's because most of us can't talk about it. We don't have a safe place that we see a lot of people that have attempted un aligning themselves will tell us I had nowhere to go encourage them to get help. One of the things that Britney said, I'm gonna finish on this last one, was that she loved doing the therapy online because she didn't have to get up and get dressed, but she had a sick person to talk to. I was not her person. I was never going to be her person. She was never gonna

allow me into what she was feeling because she was feeling, I believe she felt that I was judging her. And in some parts, to be honest with you, I was judging in the sense of, I'm I'm your mother, I can help you.

Sharon ([25:17](#)):

Oh, you know, and, and the habits were there. Come on Brittany, let's get going. Let's get moving. Let's do this. But one of the things I do remember, and I wanna share this, is that I felt so calm. I think I even shared it with you. I said to you one day, I said, I'm totally not freaking out. Like I knew she was going into the to get treatment and I felt like it was okay and I wasn't freaking out. Like I felt like this would be so much more dramatic mm-hmm. <Affirmative> and I was just trying to be there and push her towards where she lived.

Erica ([25:49](#)):

Well cause I think at the end of it all, you just want her to be okay so it doesn't matter. Yeah, of course. Course. How what in what form or shape the help comes in, you just want her to get it. So I think that's what the fact that she was pursuing it gives you that calm of like, she's gonna get to where she needs to be. Yeah. You know, and believing in, cuz Bri Brittany is very strong-willed. The one thing that we know <laugh> from a very early age, she has made it clear to you her thoughts and feelings and what she will and will not do. So I think that she has a, an extreme resolve to always be okay even though she struggles getting there. Going back to Brittany getting on the therapy online, you know, I think that's why the help the tip lines are, you know, for suicidal people to call sometimes it's easier to talk to a stranger.

Erica ([26:47](#)):

Yeah. It's easy to tell. And that's what social media does for some people. They are sharing their ugly truths and on the outside looking in, we kinda look at them and we do judge. I'm like, oh my God, why are you putting your personal business? But sometimes that's the way they need to go to get help. It's easier to share with your strangers than share it with, you know, a lot of what you read about Brit's true feelings you read on her posts. Yeah. Cuz she still doesn't openly talk about it. So that's why I love that they have these call centers and I really hope that people are utilizing them because strangers won't judge you. They don't know your day to day. They don't know, you know, that you're drinking the minute you wake up in the morning. And even if you are, it doesn't matter to them because what they wanna do is make sure you make it through another day.

Sharon ([27:37](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([27:37](#)):

So if you don't feel as though anyone in your current and immediate circle is your person, dial the 9 88 number and talk to someone that can help you. They won't judge you. They don't live in your life. They don't see your story. They don't see that, like Brittany says, she's not putting on pants. It doesn't matter. They just wanna get you better, feeling better so that you don't feel as though taking your life is the only answer.

Sharon ([28:08](#)):

Yeah. This world will always be so much better with Brit in it than Brittany not. And I just as a mother speaking that to Britney, knowing that she's been pain and this is a struggle that she's having, my life will always be so much better. You know?

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

Yeah. Oh yeah. I, my heart, like I was really, I was crying when the news came out about Twitch and Lewis looks at me always very weird. And I said, I know I don't know him or his family, but my heart is so broken for them. My tears are for always for the people left behind because that I can relate

Sharon ([28:52](#)):

To. Yeah.

Erica ([28:53](#)):

And it is such a measurable space to live in. So immediately my heartbreaks for them, and if you are listening and you have thought about taking your life, if you can think about how broken your, your people will be, the ones that are left behind, hopefully that'll inspire you to at least make a phone call.

Sharon ([29:17](#)):

Yeah.

Erica ([29:17](#)):

Talk to someone.

Sharon ([29:20](#)):

Also, just adding to that, Eric and I are great listeners and we're all, we pick up the phone all the time. Reach out to us, reach out to us, send us an email, reach out to us, call us our phone numbers everywhere. I'm gonna put it, I'll put it in the show notes here. We're also great listeners and we talk to people that call us one time all the time, you know, and help them through. And hopefully we've been the shining light for someone. This is it's a conversation that needs to be had every single day, day in and day out. We've got to change the conversation on death, suicide, and grief and broken.

Erica ([29:59](#)):

Yeah. And we need to start having it in kindergarten. Like no joke, I'm not we need start having it with children so that they grow up knowing that all emotions are normal no matter how they show up. And we just gotta figure out how to allow them in so that we can continue to move forward.

Sharon ([30:19](#)):

Yes. All right friends, we're here for you. We'll talk to you soon.

Erica ([30:26](#)):

Bye. Bye friends.