

The Grief School

Sharon Brubaker

Grief Specialist

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Ken Guiroz Interview Part 2



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the grief school
**THE PLACE
WHERE YOU
LEARN TO
GRIEVE**

with Sharon

Hey everybody. Welcome back. This is part two to Letters to my son in Prison with my favorite, favorite guest, Ken Giros. And we're gonna continue on. We just are starting, if you guys haven't caught part one, please go back and listen to it. We really break down how we got to having a son in prison and starting to write him letters. Can you finish that first letter and then you decide to continue writing letters? Tell me about that, that, that urge to continue writing the letters.

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

So the, the real breakthrough letter was that when I channeled David, that, that's when I realized he and I could make this elegant connection in prison. Like we could actually rebuild or, or reconnect. 'cause You know, it had been 10 years of, of really almost no, no genuine connection. Because when you, when you're dealing with an addict, they're, they're never themselves, right? Yeah. They're just, it's just, it's like a non person. That's why I think even sometimes parents can feel relief when their child dies or, or something be because they kind of, that person's dead and almost already. Right. They're, they're

Sharon ([32:51](#)):

No longer in pain. Yes. And

Ken ([32:53](#)):

The person's a shell longer in pain. Yeah. They're no. Yeah. And, and you almost, if it's real bad, I can even see how you would almost feel like it's a relief to them too, to be dead. Yeah. Because they're, anyway, so when I realized that I,

Sharon ([33:08](#)):

Well, I wanna add in that. 'cause We got a lot of grieverers that say, they get embarrassed to say that. And I wanna say to every griever who just heard that comment, that is how we do feel a lot of us, when it, when it is suicide, when it is drug abuse. And it is absolutely okay to feel that way. It is. And know, and know that they are no longer in pain. So, yes.

Ken ([33:30](#)):

And, and even I, when, when, when my son had broken down in prison, and I, I felt great, you know, like, I was like, whoa, what the heck just happened? How did, yeah. Right. And I went and I drove home. So I'm, I hit the 1 0 1 and, and I had this weird feeling as I got on the highway. I was like, I'm actually more at Lucas. And I get home about a 45 minute drive. I get home and I'm like, come up to my office. I'm like, I'm really. It was like his honesty, let me be more honest with myself. And actually, you know, when he, I journaled, I was trying, I processed things, things with journaling. I, I am I that, that's just one of the most effective. Yeah. And, and I, a couple days later, I ended up journaling and I just said, I actually hate my kids. Mm-Hmm.

Sharon ([34:19](#)):

<Affirmative>,

Ken ([34:20](#)):

I actually wish I'd never had kids. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And I remember writing that thinking, did you just write that? Are you se Right. And it's this admission of, of honestly how you feel. And it's funny, I wrote that a long time ago. I showed it to Joyce, and it wasn't until a couple nights ago, just like two nights ago, two days ago, we were talking, and she goes, you know what, when you, when you wrote that in your book, that actually helped me. 'cause I actually felt it. And I never would've admitted it to myself. Yeah. I was like, and I, I didn't say much, Joyce. 'cause You don't have to get weird. Yeah. When, when you're with your wife. Yeah. <laugh>, I don't wanna make things weird. <Laugh>, but inside I'm going for her to think that Yeah. For her, of all people on the planet earth to think that. Yeah. Whoa. But anyway, so back to the letters, or did

Sharon ([35:12](#)):

You wanna say, well, there's freedom and honesty.

Ken ([35:13](#)):

There is,

Sharon ([35:15](#)):

There's freedom in the telling the truth.

Ken ([35:18](#)):

And I even think honesty begets honesty. In other words, if you're honest about that, you'll start being honest and, and say some scary things. And I, I don't know. I say either write 'em down or say them now. I deleted it. Yeah. I wrote it. But I'll be honest, I deleted it. 'cause I never, you know, my, yeah. I journal on Google Docs and I realize, realized that probably my sons could read it one day if I die <laugh>. So I've deleted all the places where I, I ranted on them. Yeah. Out. But honesty begets honesty. And it brings, I think even other layers of honesty. It's like an onion, you know, where you peel a bag and all of a sudden you find yourself being super, super honest and maybe even exaggerating. Yeah. I even think exaggerating is not a bad thing.

Sharon ([35:59](#)):

Oh, no.

Ken ([36:00](#)):

Maybe say something that isn't even true and is ex is beyond what's true. But yeah. Maybe that helps you come to what's true.

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

Yeah, absolutely. This

Ken ([36:08](#)):

Grief is a, is a wily animal.

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

Yes.

Ken ([36:12](#)):

You know this better than anybody. Yes. Grief is a wiley. It's a, it's this cagey just crazy animal that there's no solution. And I, I know that you, you have a, you have insight in it. But I would imagine when you get with somebody, it's a whole new thing. Yes. I, if you counseled me, I'd be one way. If you counsel Joyce, she's another way. A hundred percent. And every client is a complete different animal.

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

And here's the other thing. You all were suffering the grief of Luke's experience. You were grieving differently than Joyce. Jess was grieving differently, and Chris was grieving differently. And so was the whole community, because every single one of us has a different relationship with Lucas. And so our grief showed up differently for him and, and everyone. So what happens a lot of times with Grievers is they think they automatically get you and they understand you. But the truth is they don't. 'cause They don't, their relationship with him is different. Yeah. And you had your own personal struggles you were going through.

Ken ([37:13](#)):

Yeah.

Sharon ([37:14](#)):

Did you writing, so the letters writing, oh, go ahead. Go ahead. Did you

Ken ([37:16](#)):

The letters. So the letters, once I, once I realized David had connected so well with Lucas, of course the David story's perfect, right? Yeah. A man makes the mistake of his life. He is confronted, he's humble, he re he repents. He, he changes. He, he sees it. He doesn't defend himself, and he rebuilds his life. I mean, come on. For a kid in a 30 year old in prison. Yeah. That, that's about as perfect a story. But I realized though, that there was a spiritual connection I could make with Lucas as well as a fatherly connection. Right. That was the, that was the moment when I realized there was power in the letters. That's what you asked. You said Ken. One was the That was the moment. And so then that letter led to another letter. I did this, a channel, Adam and Eve, and, and how feisty Eve was and how Yeah.

Ken ([38:08](#)):

How boring Adam was and how, you know what I mean? Yeah. And I had a lot of fun. And he, he, he kinda laughed about that. So I did all these letters, not just that stuff, but other stuff that was real and kind of just honest. I even told him about my life and my weaknesses and about my upbringing. And I mean, I had, here's this kid that's got nothing but time on his hands. Right? Yeah. So he starts writing me these crazy letters, these long letters. He's, you know, being open himself almost almo it almost became this weird, you know, portal like this, this, this Yeah. Hype through which we could almost be this weird self. We never were in real life and yet say things. Yeah. It was, it is really pretty cool the way it morphed.

Sharon ([38:54](#)):

The this, it is, is an amazing story of healing, of the healing journey. Did do you commit to writing a letter every day? Or it was just as you move? No,

Ken ([39:05](#)):

That's too much. Okay. at least for me no, you know, it was, I mean, there was a period, I, so my dad got sick during this, so I, I actually went to Arizona and there's a period during, in Arizona, I think a month or two, where I started every third day. I remember going to the mailbox all the time, and then he started writing me a bunch, and he was in this place called reception. So there's jail, there's reception, and then there's prison. Right. Okay. So jail's, where you're held until you're sentenced, reception is where California holds you until they decide where to put you based on your sentence. And then prison is where you serve out the remainder of your sentence. So he was in reception, no visits, no phone calls, only letters. Oh, right. So that's kind of what, that was the trip wire that got us going. Yeah. That was in Arizona at the time. So I started writing him a bunch, and he got nothing but time on his hands. Yeah. And, and reception doesn't have much in the way of, of you know, libraries or programs. It's just this place where, where thousands of men are just sitting there with nothing to do, nothing to do. So once I learned that, I started, I said, well, I'm gonna write 'em a bunch of letters.

Sharon ([40:11](#)):

So may I ask, were the letters handwritten or did you type 'em? And how were Lucas's letters?

Ken ([40:17](#)):

All were typed and all of his were handwritten.

Sharon ([40:19](#)):

Okay. All right. All right. That was just a, an inquisitive question. Yeah. Okay. So tell me about your favorite letter. Do, is there a favorite letter?

Ken ([40:31](#)):

Well, there, there was the do you mind if I read it? No, I mean, just a section.

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

Yeah.

Ken ([40:41](#)):

There, there was a letter where he wrote, and he had, had really made a change in his life, and he had finished a book. He, he started to, to to read a bunch. So, so when he got to prison, there was California has milestone programs where you can take a, a, a course college course and shave off a, a month of your sentence. You could do this, take this program and shave off, because they have too many prisoners in California. Way too many. Yeah. Way too many. Yeah. So you, if, if you want to reduce a 10 year sentence, which Lucas got, you can just do all these programs and, and boom, and all of a sudden you

have a three year sentence. Yeah. It's just what they do. Yeah. And, and so he did that. And so he starts to read and starts to learn, and his mind starts to go on fire.

Ken ([41:32](#)):

And we're writing letters, and he's reading books like Do Tokis Crime and Punishment Dumas's count of Monte Crito, like deep, deep stuff. Deep stuff that was really rich. He starts talking differently. We're on the phone and he starts using words. He is never used. I start, you know, I visit with him on, on occasion, and, and we start taking these long talks. He starts talking about God, and he starts talking about evolution and how God and evolution can work together. And how, you know, CSS Lewis, he starts reading mere Christianity and starts to really dig his, his logical approach to faith. And, and, and, and he just starts changing. So my favorite moment was when he had read Finished Crime and Punishment. And, and he, he was, I, I can't find it. I wish I had it, but, so he puts the book on his chest, he says, dad, it was dark.

Ken ([42:25](#)):

It, everybody was asleep about midnight. I'm, I'm on the top bunk. And I, I have the, the book on my chest. And I start to think about my life. And, and I start to realize that like the, the protagonist, the, the, the main character in just in crime punishment, I too had died for my sins. And I too, had it started to come to this realization about my sin and about my, my life. And, and like he and Lazarus, I too was ra I'm too, was being raised from the dead. And, and I am okay with where I am. I'm okay with where my life is, and I'm, and I'm going to be born again. And, you know, <laugh>, I read this, I'm like, are you freaking kidding me? <Laugh> this beautiful moment. I was down in my kitchen, the sun was shining in. Was that my, that the bar down there, you know, this breakfast bar? And it was, it was, it was a great moment, moment of, of seeing that I, I, I hadn't thought, I hadn't had a positive thought about Lucas for a long, like, wow, 15 years. Think about this. 15 years.

Sharon ([43:44](#)):

Wow.

Ken ([43:46](#)):

And, and all of a sudden when I got that letter, I thought it may happen. I don't, I can't, I can't think, let myself think it, but it may actually happen that this kid turns his life around.

Sharon ([43:57](#)):

He turns it, he figures it out, and he turns it around. Wow. Beautiful. Ken, at some point you decide to put this into a book. Tell me about that.

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

Because you're

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

Writing the letters for you and him, and your healing journey and your recovery. You weren't writing this to write a book.

Ken ([44:19](#)):

Not at all. In fact, that moment when I had my first positive thought, I actually remember that. 'cause Think about it. You, you think you've lost your son. You think you've lost a loved one. And, and in many ways you have lost them. And then all of a sudden something happens and, and this turnaround. So it was that was a, a tipping point. But then of course, you know, there's a lot more progress. And he, he writes the widow on the second anniversary of the accident, he writes this beautiful, beautiful letter that an earlier alert, if Lucas could never have written, but an educated mind on fire, Lucas can write. And, and a, a man who has been to where David was, has been broken, has been redeemed. That man can write this letter. And I saw it. I, this was that letter to that widow.

Ken ([45:15](#)):

And so it was these series of events that, you know, and the talks. We, we had some meetings. We read a book on, on there's a beautiful book by Francis. It's a last name, the, the past president of the n i h under Biden and, and, and Trump and Clinton, and all the way back to Bush. So the, the guy that head this head of the science part wrote this book. He's a Christian. He wrote a book on evolution in God that Lucas and I read together, that we read it simultaneously and, and, and had these amazing talks about God, because Lucas, for him, evolution was a sticking point. It was, it was one of those things that I, okay, in prison, I believe in God, but everybody believes in God in prison. Yeah. <Laugh>, yeah. Under duress, you know, of course. But when you're out, you're, you re rebuild your life. You just say, oh, yeah, whatever. Yeah. So I knew that evolution was a big deal. So anyway, we do this joint thing. So it's all these things we do together that start to lead to this optimism that this kid may change. And this may actually be a sort of redemption, not a story of, of just pure tragedy. So yes, it was at the, it was sometime during that. I don't have a, an exact date where I go, yeah, what if this was a book? What

Sharon ([46:28](#)):

If this was a

Ken ([46:28](#)):

Book? I, I, I don't, I I just don't. I wish I did. That would be such a cool story. <Laugh>, maybe I should make it up. Sharon. Wait, let's do it together. Let make it up.

Sharon ([46:38](#)):

We'll add it in there. But you use, you're going to use this book, not, not use the book. Tell us about, tell me more about, now you shared with me, you and I were talking the other day and you said, this is my personal ministry now this is Joyce and our's, personal ministry, and we now go into jails and, and we visit other prisoners that are suffering. Share a little bit about that. How did that come about?

Ken ([47:03](#)):

I mean, that's super recent, right? Yeah. <Laugh>. Yeah. Because the, the inclination to write a book about it is one thing, right? That birthed over, over some years. Right. Things start turning around. He

and I started having these just off the charts conversations. So that's birthed. Yeah. But then getting, doing, that's another thing, right? Writing a book is challenging. Yeah. I thought I was a decent writer, but writing a book is, is a long process. Took me seven years, because you gotta become a writer first. You gotta learn how to write, because I didn't wanna just write a book that my family reads and, and share and Brubaker reads. Okay. You know, I, and again, there's nothing wrong with that. Yeah. If somebody wants to write that book. Yeah. It's, it's a cell, you know, kind of a family project. I wanted to write a book, and as, as I start learning to write, I wanted to write a book that would help other people.

Ken ([47:55](#)):

Yeah. That would be a good book. That would have tension, that would have narrative vibe to it, that would have good dialogue that would have, you know what I mean? Scenes, yeah. Scenes that are gripping, scenes that are interesting scenes that other parents can relate to, et cetera. Right. But do getting that is hard. That takes time. Yeah. To apply classes, counseling, coaching experimenting, beta readers critiques. You know what I mean? Yeah. All. And, and so, but I committed to it. I, but, and it was a little evolution. I wasn't sure what I wanted. And so a year, two or three into it, I start to kind of realize some of the friends that you and you and I know together read it and we're like, it's interesting. But that ain't a book. Okay. Or, you know, <laugh>, it's just you write a bunch of letters, <laugh>.

Ken ([48:38](#)):

Right. you know, there's no, there's not the story. There's no story there. So I was, okay, okay. I'll go back. And, you know, so writing it, so writing a book that I think, I don't know if this is true yet, I'll tell you at the end of next year, that I think is, is compelling and interesting. That's hard. Yeah. But once you get there and you start getting feedback, and so Joyce and I have shared the prologue to the book, right. With four or 500 people over the last month or two. And the feedback we've gotten is what led us to what you just asked about. Yeah. So everybody responds to this with their own son in prison. It's not actually a son, but it's the death of a son. Yeah. Or a death of a daughter. The overdose of, of his daughter. Yeah.

Ken ([49:26](#)):

The, a bitter divorce that, that really brought them to their darkest hour, a bankruptcy that was exceedingly embarrassing, whatever. Right. You have your trauma, Sharon. Yeah. I have my trauma. Yeah. But everyone has their own trauma. Some, for some people it's dramatic. For some it's less dramatic, but it's, it's their, the son in prison. And, and so Joyce and I share, Joyce, you know, reaches out to old high school friends, and they launch into their story. I share with this person. He launches into his story. She, you know what I'm saying? So we finally realized, wow, we have something to say to the world. Yeah. May maybe our, maybe our recovery can be instrumental to, to them, to someone else. And so we start to even, so I started to elicit input and just, Hey, hey. Pose a question to me. I I, I heard what you just said.

Ken ([50:23](#)):

Can you just write it out? And then I would write them a response. So one guy said, a guy, I don't even know that, well, he is a C P A that I work with. He goes, you know what? I feel like I'm gonna be a terrible dad. I, I had a horrible dad, and I have now have a son, and I don't want to be a sucky dad. I want to do well. I want to not let my horrible upbringing and, and I see him being bullied. And I, I, I see this and I see this. So I wrote him this letter, this impassioned letter about how to not be a horrible dad in my 2 cents.

I'm not saying I know. Yeah. It's just my 2 cents. Yeah. And he just responded in his ama like, so anyway, it was those kind of things that made Joyce and I realize that we do have a ministry.

Ken ([51:06](#)):

We do have something we can give to the world. What exactly, Sharon? That looks like, I don't know. Yeah. I'm starting a newsletter once a month. I'm gonna answer a letter from my readers once a month. I'm gonna let her write, answer a letter from my own son. Yeah. You know, one of my sons said, Hey, dad, should we have a kid now? Should we wait? Jess, my oldest son said, Hey, dad. You know, I feel like I'm raising my son and I want him to be a man, but it feels like everything in this world is kind of to tell him to, to be a more neutral than masculine. Yeah. What do you, what do you think? So anyway, I'm I'm gonna do that. You know, I wrote the book. I'm gonna write the newsletter. You know, will it be something I don't know. Yeah. might it be, it could. I, I hope it will be

Sharon ([51:56](#)):

So, so beautiful. And I probably should have asked this question for, I love this, I love every bit of it. Did the letter writing help the other boys as well? And the family as a whole? How did it, it help everybody together with the healing? Or did everybody do their own journey?

Ken ([52:13](#)):

I mean, in a way, the letter writing and, and the writing of the book. Yeah. Because remember, the letters were just to loop. They didn't even know about them. They hadn't read any of the letters.

Sharon ([52:21](#)):

Oh, they didn't know any of 'em. They were, I Oh, okay.

Ken ([52:24](#)):

I mean, right. These are just letters that are sitting in my, my file cabinet. Right. Okay. I mean, I might have shared that they, we were doing it. Yeah. But I wouldn't give them a letter. Right. Yeah. I mean, I, maybe I should've, but I didn't. Yeah. So as this evolution starts happening and I start telling them about this, of course they were digging in. Yeah. By this point, all both of my sons had recovered. Yeah. Right. They, they're, they're building their lives. They're doing well. We're all close. Again, we're playing pickleball on Sunday afternoons, you know, and then we would get together and I would share with them kind of what I'm learning about myself, my parenting. I tell 'em about a scene I wrote about a letter Lucas had written me, and even eventually Lucas was part of this. We would sit in the jacuzzi after playing pickleball.

Ken ([53:10](#)):

You know, and we would just sit there and, and talk. Yeah. And we had these amazing, I mean, amazing talk. So were they included? Not early, but later. And, and I think that, you know, they, they wanna help people. Yeah. My, my boys. Right. We as a family want to help people, and they realize that it's a little painful, especially to Lucas. Yeah. This is, I mean, he wishes this would go under the carpet, right? Yeah. He just wishes they could never see the light a day on one side. Yeah. A bigger part of him is fine with this. And we, and I've talked to him about it a dozen times from, you know, when it became a, the idea

hatched right before he got out of prison to, to two weeks ago. I'm presenting the, his signed copy of the book to today to him, you know?

Ken ([53:57](#)):

Oh, yeah. Beautiful. This afternoon we're, we have a big family get together, so, oh, beautiful. I'm gonna pull him into a side room and I'm gonna present it to him, and I'm just gonna, it'll be a tearful event, you know, but he's supported it again. He wishes it probably never Yeah. Would see the light of day. Yeah. But the bigger part of him wants to see it. So it, it has been a family thing. And now just in the last couple months, it's become a Joyce thing. Yeah. Much more so, you know, because of all of her friends.

Sharon ([54:24](#)):

Beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. Tell our listeners where they can find you and where they can start getting this newsletter and when the book comes out.

Ken ([54:33](#)):

And just, if you wanna do this, Sharon, one thing we haven't really talked about much is the spiritual part of this. I would love to have another session because I just because you and I have a spiritual connection. Yeah. That, that was in some ways the richest part of this whole thing. Yeah. Was the mourning and the grieving I had with God. Yeah. Because it was, that was, it was, I mean, it was just it was uncanny how it, it turned around and how it happened and the way the role of music played and the role really the role of music played in, in it without music, I'm not sure it, it would've happened as crazy as that sounds.

Sharon ([55:18](#)):

So do you have time? Do you have 10, 15 minutes?

Ken ([55:21](#)):

I do.

Sharon ([55:22](#)):

Okay. So tell us when the book comes out and how they can find it.

Ken ([55:26](#)):

It comes out September 6th audio. I narrated the audio book paperback. Yeah. I had Kevin Costner in the Wings, but then I decided to do it myself. I just kidding. <Laugh> Liam Neeson. Of course, I probably would've let Liam Neeson, but he, I think he could've narrated it out. I can listen to that guy read the phone book and I would just be entranced. But anyway so audio paperback and ebook, of course. September 6th ken deros.com, that's where everything is. Perfect. The new sign for the newsletter book, et cetera, et cetera. And it's available everywhere, so, yeah.

Sharon ([56:00](#)):

Awesome. Perfect. Thank you. Okay, friends, hang on. 'cause We really wanna keep this conversation going and we'll see you on part three. Thank you my friends.