

The Travell Counselor's Corner



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[Travell School Counselor Website](#)

December: A Discussion of Grief & Loss



To begin, it is imperative to understand that grief is a very individualized experience. Not only will it be unique amongst individuals, but it can also show up very differently within ourselves each time it occurs. The greatest gift we can give to ourselves and others following a significant loss is patience. There is no time table or “normal” grieving period. While research indicates there are several stages of grief- denial, anger, bargaining, depression & acceptance- it has also been proven these stages are not always linear.

It is also important to note that while grief is often tied to a loss, this loss is not always a death. Examples could include the breakdown of a relationship, miscarriage, divorce, the loss of a pet, the loss of a job, loss of independence through illness or injury, and even the loss of a home due to a move.

With regard to children, it is critical to remember the old saying about your oxygen mask. It is important to take care of yourself first if you want to be able to show up for others. Too often, this idea is ignored. However, here is another perspective to consider. While it may appear that many of the different losses listed above do not apply to our kids, this has actually been proven false. Research shows that children, even as young as infants, show physical, emotional and psychological effects when a parent, caregiver or close family member is experiencing a loss or any traumatic event.

Many times, children are unable to identify their emotions or describe what they are feeling. To complicate things even further, the symptoms they display may seem entirely unrelated to the grief and loss itself. This makes sense when we stop to really consider the difficulties most of us continue to experience in this area even as adults. During the most challenging of times, communication remains a crucial component. This means remaining as open as possible to both sharing and listening. Honesty, at developmentally appropriate levels, is always best as well.

On my website, you will find several resources that will provide additional information such as the developmental responses to grief, discussion starters and other ways to provide support to both children and adults alike. Additionally, you will find links to two agencies that offer grief and loss counseling in a variety of settings including individualized treatment, group counseling, family services and many more. Of course, I am always here to provide the more immediate support that I am able to within the school day. Please never hesitate to reach out!

I am aware this topic can be a bit uncomfortable for many and perhaps a strange concept to tackle with the joy of the winter season around us. However, this time can actually be extremely challenging for both adults and children for a wide array of reasons. As always, it is helpful to keep this in mind in an effort to provide grace and patience not only to all of those around us, but ourselves as well.

I wish everyone in the Travell and Ridgewood community the most wonderful holiday season filled with peace, health and a few extra hugs for those we hold dear.

