



A Season of Grief, Loss and Hope

This may appear to be a depressing start to an article that should be uplifting, but please be patient, and read on. Yes, it is the beautiful season of spring...however it is also a season of grieving. All of us caregivers, educators, coaches and helpers have tried so very hard this past year, to be positive and hopeful. We are now at the anniversary of a year defined by losses, some great, some some small. I believe it is the time to allow our children to GRIEVE. It is time to give our children the opportunity to talk, to cry, to mourn, and to be angry. It is frightening to hear such a suggestion. What if they start crying and not stop? What if they stay sad and depressed forever?

What I know of grief, on a personal level, is this: Like physical pain, grief is best faced head on. Not to stuff it, ignore it, numb it, or deny it. With deep loss, it may feel as if we will actually die ourselves should we let ourselves feel the full extent of that loss. Yet, when we put a name to grief, call it what it is, we allow the feelings to happen which will eventually evolve into empowerment.

David Kessler is the world's foremost expert on grief and the founder of www.grief.com. He co-wrote "On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss" with Psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Kessler explains that when we are dealing with a loss, it is important to acknowledge it, learn to manage it and learn to find meaning from it.

For children, the five stages of grief they may have experienced this past year look like this: **DENIAL** (*this virus won't affect my friends and I*), **ANGER** (*COVID has taken away my sports and music and cancelling grad*), **BARGAINING** (*okay, if I wear a mask all day, it will get better*), **DEPRESSION/SADNESS** (*this is how everything is going to be forever*) **ACCEPTANCE** (*I guess this is really happening, I better figure out how to move on, within provincial regulations*).

Kessler tells us that it is *in acceptance where the power lies*. He reminds us that the stages are not linear or even happen in order, oftentimes we circle back and repeat a stage.

Once we have allowed our children to process their grief, there will come a time of acceptance. When our children are able to accept this past year of losses for what it is, then, my dear friends, they will have hope. Brene Brown's words of wisdom seems fitting: "*When we deny the story, it defines us. When we own the story, we can write a brave new ending*".

I am finding that spring 2021 seems to be bringing more hope than most years. Perhaps it is just me, but doesn't it seem as though the sun is brighter, the birds more cheerful, the sky more blue? With anticipation of normalcy on the horizon, it feels as though the weight of the past year and the dreariness of the long winter months are being lifted from our weary shoulders.

Our children need us to be the safe sanctuary as they grieve the many losses of this last year and they also need us to point their sweet faces to the warmth of the rising sun and share with them the message that all hard times come to an end, giving way to the promise of better days ahead. While they need us to help them name, navigate and process their grief, they also need us to embrace this season of hope. As a Buddhist Monk, Thich Nhat Hanh once said "*if we believe tomorrow will be better, we can bear the hardships of today*".

**Wishing all Northern Gateway Public School Division students, families
and staff a wonderful Easter break.**



This article was submitted by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW. Tammy is Northern Gateway Public School's Student Support Facilitator. She advocates for students and parents, providing a link to other supports within the community. Tammy has been a social worker for over 20 years and is a mother to 4 teenagers.