



The Compassionate Friends

Central Indiana Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Central Indiana Chapter Newsletter

March 2024

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a non-profit, self-help organization that provides comfort, hope, and support for bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. We cordially invite you to attend our meetings.

Southside Meeting is the 1st

Wed. of each month @ 6:30 pm

New Hope Church

5307 W. Fairview Road

Greenwood, IN

Facilitator: Angie Groover

angie.groover@tcfcentralindiana.org

(317)777 4258

Upcoming Meetings:

March 6th & April 3rd

Northside Meeting is the 3rd

Tues. of each month @ 6:30 pm

Epworth United Methodist

6450 Allisonville Road

Indianapolis, IN

Facilitator: Peggy Johnson

peggy.johnson@tcfcentralindiana.org

(317) 850 2559

Upcoming Meetings:

March 19th & April 16th

CENTRAL INDIANA TCF CHAPTER

Chapter Leader: April Leo

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Treasurer: April Leo

april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org

Webmaster: Larry Gardner

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Regional Coordinators:

Position Open

Secretary: April Leo

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Special Events Coordinators:

Position Open

How to Cope With PTSD after the Death of a Child

Traumatic events like the unexpected death of a child can profoundly impact a parent who's suffered through this type of loss. Coping after a child's traumatic death can have life-long effects and may even develop into a mental health condition known as PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder.

PTSD is a complex mental health disorder that carries a lot of stigmas. But, in reality, it makes up a natural part of the grieving process for many people. You should never be ashamed of experiencing PTSD. The disorder is now widely recognized and isn't anything anyone should ever have to keep hidden.

Anyone can develop PTSD after witnessing or suffering through extreme or life-threatening events. Whether from natural causes or otherwise, the death of a child can have long-term effects on a surviving parent's mental health.

Can the Death of a Child Cause PTSD?

Experiencing the death of a child can cause a surviving parent to develop PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Surviving the traumatic death of a child means witnessing or suffering through one of your children's unexpected, sudden, or violent death.

These traumatic experiences sometimes lead to the development of PTSD. Anyone can develop it, and this diagnosis doesn't signal that a person is mentally or emotionally weak or unstable. Adults suffering the death of a child have an especially heightened vulnerability for developing PTSD. The violent death of a child, death by suicide, drug overdose, or other unexpected or violent death can create ongoing emotional responses for months and years.

What Does PTSD After the Death of a Child Look or Feel Like?

There are common signs that you may have PTSD after the death of a child, like fear and panic entering into certain situations, along with flashbacks of the child's death.

A child's death by accident, suicide, violence, and drug overdose is more challenging to cope with because of the stigma attached to the manner of death, making it hard to open up to others about your grief.

PTSD can trigger substance and alcohol abuse and is another marked result of PTSD for some sufferers. Some parents will turn to drugs and alcohol to numb their pain.

Some of the following factors predict the onset of PTSD after the death of a child and how well a parent copes with loss:

- The child's cause of death
- The parent's gender
- The parent's self-esteem
- The availability of social support
- Their grieving style

Examples of PTSD after a Child's Death

The burden of loss after the death of a child manifests as being haunted by the trauma and having flashbacks, nightmares, fear, and anxiety. Seeing your dead child in the faces of strangers is another recurring phenomenon sometimes linking back to PTSD.

Being overly worried about the health and wellbeing of your other living children might also become an obsession leading to an overbearing parenting style.

The signs you may have PTSD after the death of your child are:

1. Re-experiencing traumatic events
2. Symptoms of anxiety
3. Avoidance
4. Negative self-talk
5. Uncontrollable thoughts about the event
6. Symptoms interfere with your day-to-day life

Ideas for Coping with PTSD after a Child's Death

Getting through the trauma of the death of your child can be emotionally devastating. Navigating the aftermath can be complicated for the surviving parents and everyone else affected by their death.

Parents usually have to learn to cope with their loss while helping other family members get through their grief. When suffering from a child's death, you may not know how to cope with the following stress and anxiety effectively. Below are some coping strategies to consider.

1. Learn about PTSD

Learning how trauma and the causes of PTSD affect you is beneficial for anyone navigating through the loss of a child at any age. Understanding how PTSD works, what causes it, and how to cope with the signs and symptoms is necessary to regain control of any misdirected thoughts and emotions. Survivors who have PTSD benefit from getting educated on why and how this disorder affects some people.

2. Identify your triggers

The unexpected death of a child provokes strong emotional reactions in almost every parent. Going over all the "what ifs" can trigger someone trying to cope with their child's death. That means asking yourself things like, "What if I hadn't allowed them to walk to school that morning?" or, "What if I would've answered their call?"

Learn to reframe your thinking process to include all of the things that you did right and recognize those situations that were beyond your control

3. Connect with your support group

Talking about your experience with the people you love and trust will help you cope with some of the difficulties associated with PTSD. Open up to others to let them know how you're feeling or what you're going through.

Although they may not know how to help you initially, it helps them understand the signals and what the best course of action is to help you get through an episode of PTSD. You'll need to first learn about your symptoms to instruct others on what to look out for.

4. Practice self-care

Self-care can take on different meanings for different people, depending on who you ask. Generally, self-care encompasses eating right, getting exercise, and engaging in comforting activities.

Allowing time for spiritual practices and taking time out for meditation and reflection is also part of taking good care of oneself. It also includes refraining from abusing drugs and alcohol and finding healthier outlets to release stress and grief.

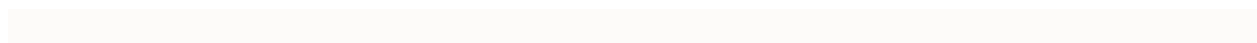
5. Join a PTSD support group

You'll find a variety of grief support groups for parents who lost a child online. You may want to set aside some time to go through a few of them to see which ones resonate with you according to the type of loss you've suffered. Support groups help you connect with other people who've experienced a similar loss as yours. They can offer you firsthand knowledge of the best coping strategies that worked for them.

Healing Trauma after the Death of a Child

A child's death at any age brings trauma and grief to their parents that never goes away. Healing from profound sorrow can take many months and can lead to developing PTSD for many people.

How a person deals with the challenges of this disorder affects the family's reunification after loss. Almost everyone benefits from professional mental health counseling or grief therapy after the death of a child. You can heal from your loss and learn to manage your stress and anxiety with the proper help.



There are losses that rearrange
the world. Deaths that change
the way you see everything,
grief that tears everything down.
Pain that transports you to an
entirely different universe, even
while everyone else thinks nothing
has really changed.



MEGAN DEVINE

SURVIVORS GUILT

Grieving parents may be flooded with negative emotions such as guilt, regret, and fear. All of these are normal feelings for bereaved parents but they can be difficult to accept, to understand and to share with others.

Feelings of GUILT occur as bereaved parents begin to flounder for the reasons for their child's death. During this process, many parents blame themselves by thinking that something they did, or neglected to do, may have in some way contributed to the child's death. Mothers of infants who die of various causes may feel guilty for not protecting their child during pregnancy or may feel their body failed the infant.

Parents of children with a health problem may feel guilty because they think they might have detected the symptoms of the illness earlier or because they signed the operative permit giving their approval for the surgery from which the child did not survive. When the death was caused by an accident or suicide, parents often feel guilty because they were not somehow aware of what was going to happen and did not prevent it.

Since parental guilt feelings are often closely related to the cause of death, it is vitally important that parents have a good grasp of the cause of their child's death. If this is unknown, or if there are still unanswered questions, parents should contact someone who can help them find the answers.

Guilt also floods parents in other ways. Parents often begin thinking of all kinds of things they wish they had done differently with or for their child. For example, a father may experience guilt because of feelings that he didn't spend enough time with the child. A mother may feel guilty because she had gone back to work. Sometimes parents feel guilty because they did not take the child to a requested activity or did not buy the child some desired object.

Sometimes parents blame themselves when they enabled something linked to the child's death such as purchasing the car in which the accident occurred, giving permission to go out with a friend who was driving, or owning a gun involved in a child's death. Feeling one was not a good enough parent is also common.

When there has been a conflicted parent-child relationship or a child exhibited difficult behavioral issues, guilt can be particularly profound. Guilt may occur when parents feel some sense of relief that the conflict or behavioral issue no longer must be worried about. Some experience guilt feelings as they believe the child's death was a punishment for their own past transgressions such as a pregnancy before marriage, a past abortion, extramarital affairs, or even poor attendance at church.

Guilt can even emerge when older children have moved away from home, often times causing communication to falter as the child moves into a new stage in life with new friends and, possibly, even a new family. Even knowing that the causes for any feelings of guilt are irrational or not based on reality does not make the feelings any less intense.

Guilt feelings are difficult to share. However, it is helpful for grieving parents to find someone with whom they can share these feelings, especially if the guilt feelings are intense and prolonged. Bereaved parents also should try to learn to forgive themselves so they are not haunted by the guilt.

Guilt and regret are common emotions of grief. By openly sharing feelings of guilt and regret with others who understand your loss, you may come to a better understanding and ability to live with your child's death.

To Feel You Again



Will we see each other again?
I ask myself this over and over.

I hope we will.

I try my best to cope with
your absence. But there is no
easy way to deal with losing you.
I wish away my living days
so that we may meet again,
so that I may feel the tenderness
of your skin under my palms,
so that I may look into your eyes
that sparkle like a diamond under
under a ray of sun, so that I
may feel your arms tightly wrapped
around me as if to save me from peril.
This my child, is the tangible love
I miss more than the world will
ever know.



<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Regina Krieger	Mar 03	
Shelby Wimmenauer	Mar 03	Nov 04
Michael Faust	Mar 04	Jul 26
Braden Reynolds	Mar 04	Mar 04
Grace Hartman	Mar 06	Mar 09
Rebecca Ann Freed	Mar 08	Apr 05
Linsey Parley	Mar 08	Nov 26
James (JC) Freed	Mar 09	Mar 05
Rachael Valentine	Mar 09	Jan 31
Lori Huter Hardcastle	Mar 10	Aug 19
Jason Sipher	Mar 11	Jan 09
Jean Ann Ervin Gruber	Mar 13	Jun 09
Rylie Surack	Mar 13	May 13
Owen Phillip Watt	Mar 13	Mar 13
Karlee Mason	Mar 14	Nov 28
Alex Douglas Dampf	Mar 15	Dec 23
Aaron Miller	Mar 15	Nov 29
Ava Parker	Mar 15	Jan 09
Troy McElfresh	Mar 17	Apr 25
Anthony J Elder	Mar 18	Jul 27
Christopher "Cody" Pea	Mar 18	Jul 28
Kelsey Devine	Mar 19	Nov 09
Danielle Crum	Mar 20	Jan 08
Isaac Schoder	Mar 21	Mar 21
Tanner Peckenpough	Mar 22	Nov 17
Benjamin Greer	Mar 23	Oct 23
Benjamin Lowry	Mar 23	Jun 06
Ella Rhodes	Mar 23	Oct 24
Matthew Krenzke	Mar 24	Sep 09
Noah Artrip	Mar 25	Mar 11
Anthony Pahl	Mar 25	Jun 04
Andres Ichiro Garcia Hoshiko	Mar 25	Nov 01
Erich Ennen	Mar 27	Apr 07
Amy Michaloski	Mar 28	Mar 12
Mark Bolstridge	Mar 30	Feb 25
Jonathon Kalin	Mar 31	Apr 03



<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Jackson Ellis	Jul 03	Mar 02
Jessica Kocher	Feb 24	Mar 02
Rachel Gambino	Jan 06	Mar 02
Christopher Marcum	Sep 10	Mar 03
Braden Reynolds	Mar 04	Mar 04
James Freed	Mar 09	Mar 05
Jeff Risner	Jun 11	Mar 06
August Diener V	Dec 30	Mar 07
Chelsea Wheeler	Dec 05	Mar 07
Lincoln Henley	Jan 31	Mar 07
Paul Miller	May 18	Mar 08
Grace Hartman	Mar 06	Mar 09
Noah Artrip	Mar 25	Mar 11
Jeffery Hopper	Apr 09	Mar 11
Jennifer Church	May 21	Mar 11
Amy Michaloski	Mar 28	Mar 12
Clinton Ettinger	May 24	Mar 15
Owen Watt	Mar 13	Mar 13
Renee' Hostetter	Oct 07	Mar 15
Shauna Synesael	Nov 04	Mar 19
Mark Campbell	Jun 12	Mar 21
Gary Curtis	Oct 14	Mar 21
Isaac Schoder	Mar 21	Mar 21
Jon Morgan	Oct 07	Mar 22
Colleen Byron	Feb 25	Mar 25
Tristan M Hughes	Sep 21	Mar 26
Laura Elizabeth Rudie	Jun 08	Mar 28
Justin Amandus Stegemann	Jan 11	Mar 29
Abigail Rejer	Sep 09	Mar 30



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The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to the gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for our children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We Need Not Walk Alone – We Are The Compassionate Friends.

We welcome submissions for the newsletter from any of our members. If you have a poem or some other writing that has helped you, or just some helpful insights of your own, submit them to april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org. Please be sure to include the author's name, whether it's someone else or yourself.

Love gifts are much appreciated.
You can mail them to our
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