



# *The Compassionate Friends*

*Central Indiana Chapter*  
**Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

## **Central Indiana Chapter Newsletter** **April 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 1<sup>st</sup>

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:**

April 3rd & May 1st

### **Northside Meeting** is the 3<sup>rd</sup>

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:**

April 16<sup>th</sup> & May 21st

### CENTRAL INDIANA TCF CHAPTER

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**Regional Coordinators:**

Position Open

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**Special Events Coordinators:**

Position Open

# DEAR NEWLY BEREAVED PARENT



This will likely be the hardest thing you'll ever do. Survive this. And eventually, maybe even thrive again.

At times it will feel virtually impossible. You'll wonder how a human being can survive such pain. You'll learn you know how to defy the impossible. You did it from the moment your child's heart stopped, and yours kept beating. You do it with every breath and step you take. You're doing it now. And now. And now.

Your fingernails will become bloodied from clawing your way from the depths of despair. Your spirit will grow weary from fighting to survive. Your eyes will cry more tears than you ever thought possible. Your arms will ache an ache for which there aren't words. For a lifetime.

Your heart will break into a million tiny pieces. You'll wonder how it will ever mend again.

But with every morsel of unspeakable pain, there is love. An abundance of love. A love so strong, so powerful, it will buoy you. You will not drown.

Others will say things that are intended to be helpful, but aren't. Take what is, leave what isn't.

Still, you'll meet other along the journey who will get it without ever saying a word. Kind souls who will breathe you back to the life again. Let them.

Years down the road you'll tire of hearing the same advice and cliché, over and over again. Advice you don't want or need. Everyone will try to tell you how to best "fix" your broken heart. The trouble is, you don't need fixing.

There is no fixing for this.

Eventually you'll learn how to carry the weight of this pain. At times it will crush you. At other times you'll learn how to shoulder the burden with newfound grit and grace. Either way, you'll learn how to bend the weight of it.

It will not break you. Not entirely.

And even if you don't believe in hope – not even a little – hope will light the way for you. At times you won't realize your path is lit. The darkness feels all-consuming when you're in it. But know the light is there. Surrounding you now. And now. And now.

Know you're being guided, by all of us who have survived this impossible hell. You may not hear us, or see us, but we are with you. Beside you. Hand in hand, heart to heart. Always. Just like your child still is.

Above all else, know that no one can save you but yourself. You are the heroine/hero of this sad story. You are the one who gets to decide how, and if, you'll survive this. You are the one who will figure out a way to survive the sleepless nights, and the endless days. You are the one who will decide if and when you'll find a purpose again that means something to you. You are the one who will choose how you'll live with the pain. You are the one who will decide what you'll cling to, what will make your life worth living again. You, and only you, get to decide how you'll survive.

No one else can do this for you.

People will speak of "closure," of "moving on," of "getting over it," of grief coming to an end. Smile kindly, and know, anyone who says these things hasn't lived this thing called grief.

To lose a child is to lose the very heart and soul of *you*. It is overwhelmingly disorienting. It takes a long time, long time to find yourself again. It takes a long time to grow new life around the chasm of such grave loss. It takes a long time to grow beauty from ashes.

There will always be a hole in your heart, the size and shape of your child. Your child is absolutely irreplaceable. Nothing will fill the void your child left. But your heart will grow bigger – beautifully bigger – around the empty space your child left behind.

The love and pain you carry for your precious child will be woven into every thread of your being. It will fuel you to do things you never dreamed you could do.

Eventually, you'll figure out how to live for both of you. It will be beautiful, and it will be hard.

But, the love you two share will carry you through. You will spread this love everywhere you go.

Eventually, you'll be able to see again. Eventually, you'll find your way again. Eventually, you'll realize – you survived.

[A Bed For My Heart by Angela Miller](#)

# GRIEF, COMMUNICATION, AND MARRIAGE

In couples, fathers and mothers may find they express their grief differently than each other. Men, in our society, have often been programmed from early childhood not to show feelings; thus, some fathers may tend to hide their feelings or have difficulty talking about their child. Fathers may also hide their feelings because they have been led to believe that they must “act strong” for the sake of their spouse who is grieving deeply.

In addition, fathers are often not shown the same kind of support from friends and relatives that is given to the mother. One father complained bitterly that whenever he ran into a friend or relative they asked how his wife was doing and totally avoided asking how he was doing. The resultant bottled-up feelings may lead to physical symptoms or behavioral change such as extreme irritability or bossy, demanding comments.

Mothers often grieve more openly. They need to talk frequently about their child, about the circumstances of the death, and about their feelings. Too, their deep grief responses may continue for a long period after death, whereas fathers may be forced to move forward faster. It’s not unusual that a mother may share most of her pain with the child’s father. This may be difficult for some fathers. If the father cannot face his wife’s expression of pain, he may begin to avoid discussions or stay away from home. The mother, on the other hand, may begin to think that her husband doesn’t really care about the child or about her when he refuses to listen to her or to talk about the death. In addition, both the mother and father may become irritable which also affects their relationship with each other.

Initially, I assumed what was comforting for me would be comforting for my husband as well. I scrambled to find every picture we had of Tony. I wanted to make sure they were put together and stored safely. I wanted to look intently at each picture as if reaffirming my memories, I would cherish forever. I wanted my husband to do this with me. After a few tense weekends, I learned he could not handle looking at pictures where looking at pictures provided me comfort.

Since our ability to share feelings is not gender related but based on many variables including our personalities and experiences with feelings as a child, these stereotypical views of grief should not be considered cast in stone. Mothers may have difficulty in expressing their pain and fathers may be the more open and verbal of the couple. Sometimes both parents may feel it is important to appear “strong” so as not to upset the other person or the rest of the family. It may be difficult to face and share these very personal and painful feelings even with each other.

Sharing the pain is an important aspect of grief work and is vitally important in maintaining the relationship. It is important during these difficult periods for couples to keep open the lines of communication, even though communication when under stress is very difficult. To keep the communication open and to restore a feeling of closeness, parents may need to plan times to be together—alone. A night out for dinner or a weekend away from the family may be necessary. Communication with one’s spouse also involves developing an understanding of what he or she is experiencing or may need to communicate. Talking to a professional or to other bereaved parents may help to enhance communication if there are problems.

Many professionals have heard, believe, and repeat that 70-90 percent of marriages fail after a child dies. Studies have proven this a myth. In actuality, a very low rate of marriages fail after a child dies. Generally, these marriages were in trouble before the child died. When a couple has had a child die, it is reassuring to know that it is rare for them to face the additional stress of a failed marriage. Marriages survive because the life of the child—and the death of the child—was a shared experience. Those memories can never be shared and remembered in the same way with any other person.

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

“If you know someone who has lost a child and you’re afraid to mention them because you think you might make them sad by reminding them that they died, they didn’t forget they died. You’re not reminding them. What you’re reminding them of is that you remember they lived. And that is a great, great gift.”

- Elizabeth Edwards





<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Daryn Barnett	<b>Apr 05</b>	Oct 18
Jasbrielle Harden	<b>Apr 05</b>	Oct 03
Kaitlyn Isbell	<b>Apr 05</b>	Nov 14
Daniel Hill	<b>Apr 08</b>	Aug 10
Joshua Wright	<b>Apr 08</b>	Nov 15
Jeffery D Hopper	<b>Apr 09</b>	Mar 11
Connor Emery	<b>Apr 09</b>	Jun 04
Trevon McGee	<b>Apr 12</b>	
Kevin Jay Elkins	<b>Apr 13</b>	Jun 01
Katie Garrity	<b>Apr 13</b>	Jan 28
Eric Ward	<b>Apr 13</b>	Jun 22
Morgan Gaither	<b>Apr 17</b>	May 18
Michael Rusomaroff	<b>Apr 17</b>	Jan 06
Glenn Schoenhals	<b>Apr 17</b>	Oct 02
Adam Wisley	<b>Apr 17</b>	Aug 12
Kenneth Davis III	<b>Apr 20</b>	Sep 03
Mariah Benefiel	<b>Apr 21</b>	Apr 11
Ryan Huter	<b>Apr 21</b>	May 17
Drew Nichols	<b>Apr 22</b>	Sep 06
Ted Schlechte	<b>Apr 24</b>	Sep 19
Blake Jamison	<b>Apr 27</b>	May 31
Ellie Kaschner	<b>Apr 28</b>	Aug 17
Derek Hickman	<b>Apr 30</b>	Sep 21



<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Maxwell Jacobson	Jun 16	<b>Apr 02</b>
Jonathon Kalin	Mar 31	<b>Apr 03</b>
Rebecca Ann Christen Freed	Mar 08	<b>Apr 05</b>
Harrison Conner Strader Wood	Nov 08	<b>Apr 05</b>
Erich Ennen	Mar 27	<b>Apr 07</b>
Mariah Dawn Sophia Benefiel	Apr 21	<b>Apr 11</b>
Shauna Lydy	Jun 21	<b>Apr 14</b>
Matt Price	Nov 06	<b>Apr 15</b>
Alex Cummings	Jul 14	<b>Apr 15</b>
Dustin Mullins	Jul 16	<b>Apr 19</b>
Matthew Luedeman	Jun 20	<b>Apr 21</b>
Kaley Michelle Pitrelli	Oct 17	<b>Apr 23</b>
Troy McElfresh	Mar 17	<b>Apr 25</b>
Kyle Jackson	Feb 23	<b>Apr 27</b>
MacKenzie Barnes	Jan 09	<b>Apr 28</b>
Maurice Martinez	Nov 24	<b>Apr 29</b>
Jeremiah Goldsby	Jul 31	<b>Apr 30</b>
Cameron Alexander Sherrill	Jan 23	<b>Apr 30</b>



# *The Compassionate Friends*

*Central Indiana Chapter*

**Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

## *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](mailto: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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