



Central Indiana Chapter Newsletter

June 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:
June 5th & August 7th

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:
June 18th & July 23rd

CENTRAL INDIANA TCF CHAPTER

Chapter Leader: April Leo
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Treasurer: April Leo
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Webmaster: Larry Gardner
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Regional Coordinators:
Position Open

Secretary: April Leo
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Special Events Coordinators:
Position Open



Subject: July Southside Meeting

Dearest Compassionate Friend Members,

There will be no Southside meeting for the month of July. With the Fourth of July holiday being Thursday, July 4th we have opted to cancel the meeting scheduled Wednesday, July 3rd. The Southside meetings will resume on Wednesday, August 7th. Northside meeting will be held Tuesday, July 23rd.



Subject: Marion County Coroner's Office Free Peer Grief Support Group Facilitator Training

Marion County Coroner's Office is hosting a free training for individuals interested in offering peer grief support in their communities. This two-day training will take place on July 12th and 13th in Indianapolis and will include breakfast and lunch for participants. The goal of this training is to expand grief support resources with a focus on community-led peer support.

Over the next few weeks, they will be offering virtual information sessions for those who are interested to learn more information can be found at bit.ly/mcco-training.



THE MARION COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE PRESENTS
**PEER GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATOR
TRAINING FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR**



**ARE YOU GRIEVING THE DEATH OF A FRIEND OR
LOVED ONE THAT WAS SUDDEN OR UNEXPECTED?**

**WE INVITE YOU TO STEP UP TO SUPPORT OTHERS
AND LET OTHERS SUPPORT YOU.**

**COME AND PARTICIPATE IN TWO DAYS OF EATING,
LEARNING, HEALING, AND DANCING IN COMMUNITY
WITH PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND THE PAIN AND
BEAUTY OF GRIEF.**

This free event will take place
in Indianapolis in July. To
learn more, sign up for a
Zoom information session by
scanning the QR code or
visiting bit.ly/mcco-training

Upcoming Information

Sessions:

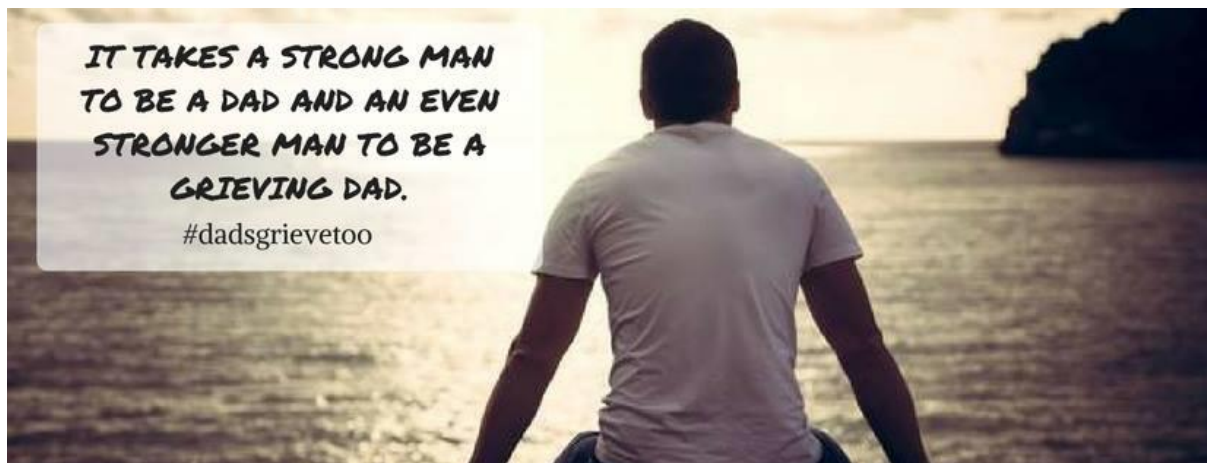
May 21, 1:00 - 2:00 PM

June 11, 12:00 - 1:00 PM

June 12, 6:30 - 7:30 PM

June 20, 6:30 - 7:30 PM





Dealing with Father's Day after Losing a Child

Father's Day is coming up, and this day can be incredibly painful and heartbreaking for fathers who have lost a child in some way, shape or form. Whether you've dealt with losing a baby to a miscarriage or stillbirth, or you're working through the loss of a teenager in an accident, or an adult child to some sort of disease, days like Father's Day can make it hurt that much more. In this article, we're going to explore a movie that was put out about the pain of losing a child and we're going to talk about how you can work through your grief on Father's Day.

How Do I Deal with Father's Day?

So this brings us to the main question - how does a father who has lost a child cope with Father's Day? What should be done in order to get through this painful, yet important day in your life? Here are some things that can help you work through the pain in a healthy, compassionate, and helpful manner.

Remember, it is still your day. Even if you don't have any other children, *you are still a father.* Don't forget that. Don't think that you're any less of a dad because you lost your child - even though you may have just been a father for a few brief moments, you are still a father and it is still your day. Father's Day is your day and you deserve to be recognized for it. You are a wonderful man who has taken time out of your life to love someone more fully than you have ever loved anyone, except perhaps your spouse. That alone is worth being recognized, and if you can bring yourself to do it, celebrate if you can. You are still wonderful and you are still loved, and that's important to remember.

Be patient and gentle with yourself - it's okay to hurt. If you cry on Father's Day, it's okay. Actually, it's healthy. Let yourself cry. Allow yourself to feel, allow yourself to remember. It's not a bad thing, and it's a part of the whole healing process. Grief is not something that we go through once and then forget about it; grieving is something that we may have to go through again and again and again in different ways. That's not to say that we're stuck in a cycle of grief forever,

but that moments of grief may come up at times, even years after your child has passed away. So be patient with yourself. Don't do any of this "I have to be a man" business. Allow yourself to cry and feel the pain that you feel - it's normal, it's healthy, and it can help you to become stronger in the end.

If you have other children, focus on them too. Father's Day and Mother's Day is as much for the kids as it is for the parent that is being celebrated. If you have other children, then give them some extra love today. They may be thinking about the loss as well, because Father's Day and Mother's Day have a way of bringing out that grief for everyone that is involved. Do something fun with them, like going to the movies or playing mini-golf. Let them love on you today too, because children are incredibly perceptive, even if they are older children. They will know that something is going on with you today, and they will do everything that they can to help you, even if it's something as simple as making a cute little card or taking you out to dinner. They can really help you to get through your day, too, because your children are precious and, even though they may remind you of the child you have lost, their support will help you remember why you're so special as a dad. Pass the love around!

Recognize those in your life that you see as fathers. Is your father (or your father in law) still living? Chances are, they are struggling with today too - obviously, it doesn't have the same impact that it has on your immediate family, but they still feel the pain that you are going through. Obviously, you want to make sure that you put some focus on them today, but let them walk with you too. They may have some words of wisdom that can help you out, or they can just be fun to be around for the day. On top of that, if you have father figures (from your place of worship, work, or other associations), make sure you give them a shout out today as well - they're just as much dads as you are, even if there's no biological connection. The reason I say this is because it really helps you to work through your pain if you're loving on other people.

Talk about it. Last but not least, don't avoid it. Please, don't avoid the topic all together. Don't forget about Father's Day and act like it doesn't exist at all. If you can and want to, go and put flowers on your child's grave, or just take a visit there. It may hurt, but the more that you talk about it and talk through it, the better it will be for everyone involved and it will help make the next time this comes around that much easier to work through in a healthy way.

Some Last Thoughts

If you know a father that has lost a child, make sure that you stand beside them on this day. It can be really hard to know what to do, but ***just be there***. It's a very difficult day for a number of people, and the love and support of friends and family can play a crucial role in helping these grieving fathers to get through what may be the most difficult day of the year. You don't have to do anything out of the ordinary - just be there for them and show that you support them in a healthy manner. Let them know that you're there and let them know that you think they're pretty awesome.

www.theravive.com

KEEPING OUR LOVED ONES ALIVE THROUGH MEMORIALS

Those of us who have lost children know the fear of their memories fading. After saying goodbye to our beloved children, we don't want to forget their existence — but people are often afraid of saying the wrong thing or “reminding” us of our tragic loss, so the memories of their lives quietly stay below the surface.

One way to get around the awkwardness or timidity of our losses and keep our kids' memories alive is through memorials. By celebrating a loved one's life and creating a space for others to do the same, we keep our son or daughter in people's minds — and hearts.

But deciding to host a memorial and finding the right way to honor a child are two different things. It can sometimes be easy to pinpoint the perfect thing: If your son loved soccer, you may want to sponsor a soccer scholarship. If your daughter had a special connection with animals, an annual donation to a local animal shelter may be a great way to remember her.

There are lots of memorial efforts to consider, and each has an appeal for its ability to keep our loved ones' memories close.

A tree, rock, or park bench: Planting a memorial tree or buying a memorial bench or rock at a beloved park can be a great gesture. One grieving mother whose son loved their neighborhood park planted a tree in his honor and placed a plaque below it in tribute to him. She said, “I love the idea that he would have climbed that tree as he got older, and it makes me smile.”

A garden: If you're interested in honoring an outdoorsy, nature-loving child but want to do something that engages you, a garden is a good option. Many towns have Adopt-a-Spot opportunities or need help maintaining existing — or proposed — gardens in parks, nature areas, and community blocks. Creating a memorial sign for the garden keeps your child's memory close while the demands of planting, watering, and weeding can keep you busy and attached.

A scholarship: Many parents who have lost older children find scholarships appealing because they can honor a particular subject area of interest or school. A father who lost his son in a drunk-driving accident in college said that his son loved the school he attended and that inspired him to create a memorial scholarship in his son's honor.

A website or page: While guest books have long been a part of digital obituaries, many websites have cropped up to host memorial pages. These pages often are built on templates that can be customized to incorporate a child's favorite things — butterflies, baseball, travel — and become a “living memorial,” allowing people to leave memories, particularly on special days like birthdays. You can also build your own website if you want to create a more robust picture of your son or daughter, such as creating a portfolio section for his or her artwork or a blog for his or her writing.

A charity donation: Like a scholarship, a charity donation is a wonderful way to put money behind the things that mattered to your child. Some parents opt to donate to causes that will prevent other parents from enduring similar losses, such as cancer research or the children’s ward of their hospital. Others choose to donate to causes near and dear to their child, from homelessness to art therapy.

An event: An event allows parents to actively bring together people who cared about their child in memory and service. This requires more substantial planning and organization, but an event can take any shape: You could host a fundraiser or put together a carnival to simply inspire warm feelings. One couple decided to remember their daughter by hosting a fundraiser for her rare autoimmune disorder, working with local retailers to put together an auction and dinner. They said that the event lets them put the focus on her for one night, and it gives them something to look forward to.

There are as many ways to honor lost children as there are personalities, and memorials can help inspire, distract, and lift up parents who are hurting. Best of all, they offer a tangible way to keep a child’s memory alive.

Dr. Gloria Horsley

Author's Website: <http://www.opentohope.com>



What the Loss of a Child Does to Parents, Psychologically and Biologically

Though parents mourning the death of a child experience classic psychological, biological, and social grief response, there are unique challenges.

The loss of a child may be the worst trauma a human being can experience. Though it's not a terribly common experience in the United States — about 10,000 children between the ages of 1 and 14 died in 2018 — the horrific potential for losing a child looms large. And although reassuring, the numbers also make plain why the death of a child brings so much grief, and why it's so feared, so painful, and so stigmatized.

“The death of a child is considered the single worst stressor a person can go through. Parents and fathers specifically feel responsible for the child's well-being. So when they lose a child, they're not just losing a person they loved. They're also losing the years of promise they had looked forward to.

Although parents mourning the loss of a child are, in many ways, experiencing classic grief responses - the usual battery of psychological, biological, and social repercussions - there are many unique challenges. The trauma is often more intense, the memories and hopes harder to let go of. As such, the mourning process is longer, and the potential for recurring or near-constant trauma is far greater.

The death of a child brings with it a range of different and ongoing challenges for the individual and the family. Everyday questions such as ‘How many kids do you have?’ can trigger intense distress. Some people do find ways of living with the loss. Others struggle to find meaning in life.

Biological Impacts: How the Death of a Child Changes a Parent's Body

In 2018, Frank Infurna and colleagues examined the general health and physical functioning of 461 parents who had lost children over the course of 13 years. “We did see some decline, followed by a general bounce-back, or recovery, over time,” Infurna, who studies resilience to major stressors at Arizona State University, told *Fatherly*. Physical functioning was focused on one's ability to complete various everyday tasks, and “we didn't see much change in this,” Infurna says. But when he reviewed bereaved parents' self-reports — whether they felt they got sick often, or whether they expected their health to improve or decline — he found poorer perceptions of health.

As with all major grief responses, the trauma of losing a child can kick off physical symptoms, including stomach pains, muscle cramps, headaches, and even irritable bowel syndrome. A handful of studies have found more tenuous links between unresolved grief and immune disorders, cancer, and long-term genetic changes at the cellular level.

One surprising impact, often seen among parents mourning the loss of a child, is known as the **broken-heart syndrome** — a condition that presents oddly like a textbook heart attack. Symptoms include “crushing chest, pain, ST-segment elevation on electrocardiography, and elevated cardiac enzyme markers on lab results,” Fuller says, citing her previously written work on the subject. “As a reaction to

emotional or physical stress, the body's natural response is to release catecholamines, also known as stress hormones that temporarily stun the heart muscle."

Chronic stress can even impact how the brain functions, as long-term exposure to the stress hormone cortisol has been linked to the death of brain cells. And in a cruel twist of neurobiology, the regions of the brain responsible for grief processing, such as the posterior cingulate cortex, frontal cortex, and cerebellum, are also involved in regulating appetite and sleep. This may explain why grieving parents develop eating and sleeping disorders in the aftermath of the loss.

"There are many, many studies that have looked at the ongoing health effects of high levels of chronic stress," says Gail Saltz, a psychiatrist at the NY Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell School of Medicine. "And when you look at lists of stressful life events, this is at the top."

Psychological Impacts: How the Trauma of Losing a Child Harms the Psyche

The impacts of this tragedy are not solely biological. Interestingly, however, very few studies have delved into the nightmare of the death of a child. Most of the research on the psychological response to death focuses on the loss of a spouse or a parent. Presumably, this is in part because of the difficulty of finding subjects for study and also in the potential difficulty of recruiting participants in anything longitudinal.

"While there have been significant advances in our scientific understanding of grief, we have a long way to go," MacCullum says.

That's not to say we are without literature. One 2015 study of 2,512 bereaved adults (many of whom were mourning the loss of a child) found little or no evidence of depression in 68 percent of those surveyed shortly after the tragedy. About 11 percent initially suffered from depression but improved; roughly 7 percent had symptoms of depression before the loss, which continued unabated. For 13 percent of the bereaved, chronic grief and clinical depression kicked in only after their lives were turned upside-down. (If those numbers seem low, it's worth remembering that it is entirely possible to be deeply sad without being depressed.)

Unfortunately, the research suggests that psychological damage was done by a child's death often does not heal over time. A 2008 study found that even 18 years after losing a child, bereaved parents reported "more depressive symptoms, poorer well-being, and more health problems and were more likely to have experienced a depressive episode and marital disruption." While some parents did improve, "recovery from grief... was unrelated to the amount of time since the death."

"The first year after losing a younger child, a parent is at an increased risk for suicide and everything from major depression to complicated grief," Saltz says. Complicated grief differs from expected, normal grief, in that "there are more intense symptoms, alternating with seemingly no symptoms — a numbness — which potentially impairs their ability to function."

"A parent who grieves without any type of serious complications, such as suicidal thoughts or self-harm behaviors, would be the best-case scenario," says Kirsten Fuller, a physician and clinical writer for the Center of Discovery treatment centers. "Worst-case scenarios would be experiencing suicidal tendencies, psychosis, or developing a mental health disorder or an eating disorder."

Predictors: How Age of the Child and Other Factors Impact Grieving Parents

A handful of studies have tried to pinpoint key factors that influence how well parents adjust in the aftermath of losing a child. One 2005 study found that the child's age, the cause of death, and the number of remaining children were strongly linked to the levels of grief displayed by parents, while depression was linked to gender, religious affiliation, and whether the bereaved sought professional help. Subsequent studies have uncovered other predictors of lower grief responses: a strong sense of purpose in life and having had the opportunity to say goodbye.

"It depends on the psychological makeup of the parent, whether they have a history of mental illness, what coping skills, and what social supports they have," Saltz says. Outside factors can play a role, too. Suicide is often more difficult, but a terminal disease can present recurring traumas over a long period of time.

Saltz also suspects that gender may be part of the puzzle. "This will undoubtedly shift, but historically mothers have been the primary caretakers and more likely to have their identities wrapped up in being mothers," he explains, adding that this may result in stronger responses among women who lose their children.

One of the most salient predictors of trauma is the age of the child. Miscarriages and stillbirths are devastating and made worse by the fact that the loss is often diminished by the public perception that a fetus is not a fully-formed child. But "is it as devastating as the death of a child who has been alive for many years? Not to diminish this experience, but I think not," Carr says.

Once a child is born, however, the script flips. Older adults who outlive their children generally have an easier time coping than parents who lose very young children. "The age of the child is really important because it speaks to promise," Carr says. When a young child dies, that promise dies with them: "the graduation, the grandbabies, the marriages — that's lost, too."

Nonetheless, even older adults may suffer intensely after the death of an adult child. "You can meet someone who is 75 who loses a 50-year-old child, and it's still devastating," Carr says. "There's this belief in the natural order. A parent should die first. So even though age matters, older parents still are quite bereft. They're just losing less of that long-term promise."

Social Impacts: How the Loss of a Child Strengthens (Or Ruins) Families

Major life stressors naturally take a toll on marriages. But divorce in the aftermath of a child's death is not inevitable. "It's really important to underscore that the death of a child is not going to ruin a marriage," Carr says. "It generally makes a troubled marriage worse, and a strong marriage better." When dealing with illness or addiction, spouses who disagreed over the best course of treatment are at particularly high risk. "If one spouse blames the other, or feels the other did something to hasten the death, that's almost something that cannot be recovered from."

There are also factors, beyond the couple's control, which may sour or save the marriage. "Grief, trauma, and depression impact one's ability to participate in all meaningful relationships," Saltz says. "But I have seen couples where the opposite is the case. They become closer, they support each other. This is the only person who can really understand how you feel."

Mothers and fathers who lose a child often must also contend with surviving siblings. Figuring out how to parent after losing a child is a unique challenge. Here, too, experts agree that the outcomes for both the surviving children and parents largely depend on the state of the relationship before the trauma. Death can bring a family together or tear it apart.

When dealing with terminally ill children, one particular risk is that other siblings may feel neglected, or find too many responsibilities foisted upon them while the parents shift their focus solely to the suffering child. A sick kid “is going to consistently get more attention, because they have to,” Carr says. “Sometimes the other children’s needs aren’t met, or they are treated like little adults, given more chores to do, or expected to provide emotional support to the parents.”

“That can be really troubling for them. Or it can be empowering, but difficult.”

Coping: How to Seek Comfort after the Death of a Child

After a child dies, those who are left behind may experience depression, biological and neurological changes, and a destabilization of the family and marriage. “If you’re in this situation, and it is impairing your ability to function, you need to seek treatment,” Saltz says. “Parents who fall into major depression will be unable to parent other children or be in a marriage. Psychotherapy can be helpful and medication can too, at least in the short run.”

The best thing that friends and loved ones of bereaved parents can do is be present, available, and supportive. If the bereaved speak of suicide, take them to an emergency room; if the situation is less dire, but the grief does not seem to abate over time, help them make an appointment to speak with a professional or attend a self-help group with other bereaved parents. Because even the most sensitive souls are seldom equipped to help parents cope with a loss of this magnitude — and no matter how hard you try, you’re unlikely to really understand.

That’s where a self-help group’s value really shines through. “The one thing that people who have lost a child hate hearing from others is ‘I know what you’re going through,’” Carr says. “They cannot possibly know.”

By Joshua A. Krisch
www.fatherly.com

"It took an instant
to lose you,
and it will take
my entire L I F E T I M E
to grieve the loss of you.
G R I E F never ends because
L O V E never ends.
I will love you,
and ache for you
until my very last breath."

— Angela Miller —

A Bed For My Heart.com



<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Michelle Clark	Jun 01	Dec 15
Addley Rae Cushing	Jun 02	Jun 03
Logan Scherer	Jun 02	Sep 15
Genesis Eppert	Jun 03	May 20
Brian Apman	Jun 04	Oct 05
Kevin Wiley	Jun 06	Feb 27
Matthew Hidding	Jun 08	Jul 13
Kyle Richardson	Jun 08	Jul 30
Elizabeth Rudie Laura	Jun 08	Mar 28
Jackie Quandt	Jun 09	Nov 05
Kyle Satterthwaite	Jun 09	May 20
Jeff Risner	Jun 11	Mar 06
Paul Michael Cain	Jun 12	May 05
Mark Campbell	Jun 12	Mar 21
Lindsey Anne Wilkins	Jun 15	Dec 08
Maxwell Jacobson	Jun 16	Apr 02
Melissa McBride	Jun 16	Jan 14
Jasper Carter	Jun 17	Jul 05
Robin ("DD") Johnson	Jun 17	Oct 21
Chloe' Nicole Corbin	Jun 17	Oct 28
Matthew Luedeman	Jun 20	Apr 21
Shauna Lydy	Jun 21	Apr 14
Ryan Allen	Jun 25	May 29
Linsey Parsley	Jun 27	Nov 26
Luna Passow	Jun 28	Jul 28
Jerrold Lee Bridges	Jun 30	May 13
Abby Scheibelhut	Jun 30	Dec 06



<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Kevin Jay Elkins	Apr 13	Jun 01
Alexander Raymont Eli	Feb 07	Jun 01
Harold Lynn Shelton	Sep 21	Jun 02
Addley Rae Cushing	Jun 02	Jun 03
Shane Alexander Elmore	Aug 26	Jun 03
Braden Caldwell	May 15	Jun 03
Connor Emery	Apr 09	Jun 04
Anthony Pahl	Mar 25	Jun 04
Honesty Kiley	Feb 22	Jun 06
Benjamin Lowry	Mar 23	Jun 06
Darcy Celestine Dunne	May 04	Jun 08
Jacob Churchia	Dec 19	Jun 09
Jean Ann Ervin Gruber	Mar 13	Jun 09
Lindsay Marie Johnson	Nov 17	Jun 09
Crystal Olin	Oct 06	Jun 10
Lisa Roberta Poppleton	Jul 13	Jun 11
Tyler Rowland	Aug 01	Jun 13
Henry Tucker	Dec 29	Jun 14
Nichole Danielle Ross	Feb 13	Jun 15
Melissa Runnels	Jul 10	Jun 15
Andrew Moreland	Aug 25	Jun 16
Kairi Maxson	Aug 26	Jun 17
Miles Hartman	Feb 25	Jun 17
Wyatt Bush	Jul 31	Jun 18
Suzanne Binder	Sep 05	Jun 19
Kayla Goggins	Feb 11	Jun 19
Allece Tyshea Walker	Oct 25	Jun 20
Andreas Gaynor	Dec 21	Jun 21
Eric Ward	Apr 13	Jun 22
Kristen Fleckerstein	Feb 02	Jun 23
Nicco Picchetti	Feb 28	Jun 24
Mason Cole Garvey	Oct 27	Jun 25
Andrew "Drew" Sims	Jan 19	Jun 27
Andrew "Drew" Sims	Jan 19	Jun 27
Jonathan Titchenal	Sep 05	Jun 27



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. 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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