



The Compassionate Friends

Central Indiana Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

July 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:

Aug. 7th & Sept. 4th

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:

July 16th & August 20th

CENTRAL INDIANA TCF CHAPTER

Chapter Leader: April Leo
april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org

Treasurer: April Leo
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Regional Coordinators:

Position Open

Secretary: April Leo
april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org

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 16th.



There are so many competing causes it's a wonder anyone can keep up with them.

But when one or more of them become near and dear to your heart, it's easy.

July is Bereaved Parents Month. A designation I knew nothing about until several years into my own journey as a bereaved parent.

And while I'm unsure about the necessity for declarations like National Trivia Day or National Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day I am absolutely convinced of the need for Bereaved Parents Month.

This is why: Child loss is unlike any other loss a person may experience. It is out-of-order death, [unnatural](#), unexpected and unfathomable.

Every day, bereaved parents are walking in the world, going to work, doing all that life requires and often caring for their other children while carrying a very heavy burden that mostly goes unnoticed.

Many parents desperately want to speak about their missing child but **feel constrained by fear** others will think they are vying for sympathy or attention. Sometimes they don't say anything because they've been **shamed** or **shushed** by negative comments on their social media posts. Still others are longing to find a community where their uniquely painful experience is understood.

Bereaved Parents Month is an opportunity for these parents to share their child with the world without fear or condemnation.

It's a chance to post articles, information and personal experience that can help those outside the circle of child loss understand the ongoing struggle of walking this path.

Hopefully it is also a season where newly bereaved parents can find resources so their own hearts feel heard, understood and encouraged.

So as a bereaved parent, please take advantage of this month set aside to raise awareness of our journey.

If you **LOVE** a bereaved parent, please acknowledge and affirm your friend or family member who may choose to share in person or online a little more freely this month.

Hearts hold on best when they are free to tell their story.

Bereaved Parents Month is set aside for us to tell ours.

WAYS TO DEAL WITH “PARENTAL GRIEF” OPENLY

Below, you'll find some ideas that are more closely related to parental grief after the death and loss of a child. The resolution of parental grief may seem like an overwhelming task, but it is possible. It's important to be both realistic and optimistic – you will never get over the death and loss of your child. But you will survive it, even as you are changed by it. You will never forget your child or his or her death. As you go through each holiday, each season, each happy and sad occasion that may trigger another wave of grief, you will gain greater strength and better tools for coping with the pain.

Don't hide from your guilt: After the death and loss of a child you have feelings of guilt - which are common but not always present – confront and admit them. Examine the reality of how your child died and your actual intentions and actions at the time. You may see your actions or reactions in a more positive light. Forgive yourself for being imperfect – you did and continue to do the best that you can.

Accept happiness: After the death and loss of a child one of the major hurdles parents experience in their return to the world of the living is their inability to accept pleasure – or acknowledging that it even exists. But happiness or enjoyment is one of the most important survival tools, even if for just a moment in your grief. It's okay to laugh in the midst of tears, to smile at someone or something. You might feel that your laughter betrays your child's memory, but you need to know you are not abandoning your grieving by enjoying yourself. The only way to survive bereavement is to step away from it occasionally.

Take small steps: After the death and loss of a child it is important to break down the future into small increments, an hour or a day, and deal only with one portion at a time. Focus on tasks – feed the cat, do the laundry. These little bits of normalcy and focusing on the moment at hand will make grief more bearable.

Remember the positive: Focus on the positive events and experiences in the relationship you had with your child. At some point, consider making a journal of all the details you want to remember about your child's life. Review your family photographs and include some in your book. You may not feel ready to do this right away or you may take great comfort doing this in the early days – each person is individual in his or her needs.

Let others know your needs: After the death and loss of a child many people want to be supportive but are at a loss for what to do – they are unable to process this loss or know exactly what to say. Bereaved parents may have to be the ones to take the first step in reaching out to others. Let friends and family know your needs, and don't be afraid to ask for help. If you're afraid of running into someone who might say something about your child, ask a friend to do some shopping for you. Others could help you deal with daily tasks. Maybe you'd like someone to be available to listen to you or be around to ease your loneliness. Only you know what you need.

Surviving the death and loss of a child takes a dedication to life. As a parent, you gave birth to life as a promise to the future. Now you must make a new commitment to living, as hard or impossible as it may seem right now. You will survive this; however, the experience may change you.

www.healgrief.org

Imagine being separated from your child for the rest of your life. Imagine never being able to see him, touch him, hold him, hear his voice, his laugh, or see him smile again. Imagine a violent period permanently placed where there should have been the endless run-on sentences of childhood. Imagine your garage filled with sharpie-marked boxes of your son's entire life, the clothes he wore yet will never wear again. Imagine you took the last picture of your child without knowing it was the last. Imagine.

Imagine not being able to watch your child grow up. Imagine waking up to a living nightmare that never ends. This is how child loss feels, every second of every day, for bereaved parents everywhere. This is why grief lasts a lifetime.

-Angela Miller
A BED FOR MY HEART

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.

A quote about memory and time overlaid on a sunset background. The text is centered and reads: WE TALK ABOUT THEM, NOT BECAUSE WE'RE STUCK OR BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T MOVED ON, BUT WE TALK ABOUT THEM BECAUSE WE ARE THEIRS, AND THEY ARE OURS, AND NO PASSAGE OF TIME WILL EVER CHANGE THAT.

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Scribbles & Crumbs



<u>Loved One's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Sean Gilson	Jul 02	Feb 04
Jackson Ellis	Jul 03	Mar 02
Adam (brother) Bowles	Jul 04	Sep 11
Katie Adkins	Jul 05	Jul 19
Barry L. Pavy	Jul 05	Sep 11
Steven Brown	Jul 06	Sep 10
Matthew (Matt) Fritz	Jul 07	Jan 26
Kasey Wayne Willis	Jul 07	May 25
Roxannae Young	Jul 07	Nov 12
Morgan Lynn Gummer	Jul 09	May 15
Melissa Runnels	Jul 10	Jun 15
Jacob Alan Davidson	Jul 11	Oct 07
Xhaiden Strauser	Jul 12	Jul 16
Landen Branam	Jul 13	Jul 13
Lisa Roberta Poppleton	Jul 13	Jun 11
Alex Cummings	Jul 14	Apr 15
Dustin Mullins	Jul 16	Apr 19
Ashley Marie May	Jul 18	Nov 26
Ann 'KATE' Kathleen Mowery	Jul 20	Jan 12
Carson Query	Jul 09	Aug 08
Taylor Shields	Jul 27	Dec 22
Charles D Jackman	Jul 30	Dec 16
Marvella Jean Love Barton	Jul 31	Aug 02
Wyatt Bush	Jul 31	Jun 18
Eric Edgell	Jul 31	Oct 04
Jeremiah Goldsby	Jul 31	Apr 30



<u>Loved One's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Caleb Joseph Keyes	Sep 26	Jul 01
Stephen Allen Pavy	Oct 07	Jul 01
Zachary Voelz	Sep 27	Jul 01
Tim "TJ" Rich, Jr	Sep 09	Jul 02
Clinton Ron Walker	Jan 31	Jul 02
Gary Ward	Aug 25	Jul 03
Jasper Carter	Jun 17	Jul 05
Devin Michael Leo	Sep 25	Jul 09
Stephanie Michelle Toof	Nov 13	Jul 09
Ezekiel James	Feb 01	Jul 10
Ahmari Smith	Sep 21	Jul 10
Natalie Donlan	Aug 09	Jul 12
Landen Branam	Jul 13	Jul 13
Matthew Hidding	Jun 08	Jul 13
Jeremy	Aug 22	Jul 13
Dodi Mills	Sep 19	Jul 14
Brice Thompson	Oct 26	Jul 15
Robert Land	Feb 15	Jul 16
Xhaiden Strauser	Jul 12	Jul 16
Tyler Wilson, MD	May 16	Jul 18
Katie Adkins	Jul 05	Jul 19
Brad Clark	Dec 02	Jul 19
Megan	Dec 17	Jul 20
Tyler Rugg	Nov 09	Jul 24
Ruby Amarech Sharer	May 13	Jul 24
William B. Jones	Dec 21	Jul 25
Michael Faust	Mar 04	Jul 26
Damon Joachim	Dec 29	Jul 26
Anthony J Elder	Mar 18	Jul 27
Isabelle Mackenzie	May 21	Jul 27
Jesse Walton	Oct 21	Jul 27
Luna Passow	Jun 28	Jul 28
Christopher "Cody" Pea	Mar 18	Jul 28
Corey	Mar 07	Jul 30
Kyle Richardson	Jun 08	Jul 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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april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org

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