



# *The Compassionate Friends*

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

**February 2025**

**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:**

Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> & Mar. 5<sup>th</sup>

**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:**

Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> & Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>

**CENTRAL INDIANA TCF CHAPTER**

**Chapter Leader:** April Leo  
[april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org](mailto:april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org)

**Treasurer:** April Leo  
[april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org](mailto:april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org)

**Webmaster:** Larry Gardner  
[larry.gardner@tcfcentralindiana.org](mailto:larry.gardner@tcfcentralindiana.org)

**Regional Coordinators:**

Position Open

**Secretary:** April Leo  
[april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org](mailto:april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org)

**Special Events Coordinators:**  
Position Open



For those of you who attend the Northside Meetings at Epworth United Methodist Church, please be advised the group will now meet in room #6. It is located in the church basement. There is a sidewalk, to the right of the main entrance and next to the playground, which leads from the parking lot to basement door. Meetings will continue to be held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month and begin at 6:30 pm.

# Grief and Bereavement: When a Child Dies

Everyone grieves in his or her own way. The process of grieving is often long and painful for all who knew the child. This can include parents, siblings, grandparents, relatives, friends, peers, teachers, nurses, neighbors, and anyone affected by the loss of a child.

## What are the symptoms of grief?

The emotional and physical symptoms of grief are often the most obvious part of mourning.

Everyone expresses sadness and loss in different ways. But, there are some common characteristics

Crying, sorrow, and anger are common emotions when dealing with death. Often anger is misdirected. This can cause conflicts with family members and marital relationships. Feelings of loneliness and desolation can be dangerous to some extent. If the living feel there's no point going on without their loved one. Feelings of suicide can preoccupy their thoughts. These desperate feelings need immediate intervention. It may be normal to think about death and feel left behind when someone close dies, but it can overcome all other emotions and lead to suicide.

You may have appetite changes, eating more or much less. You may need more or less sleep.

Survivors may detach from all those around them. They include surviving siblings and spouses.

However, attachment to surviving siblings may become overbearing and unhealthy to both parent and sibling.

These strong emotional and physical symptoms of grief may not happen for all people who experience a loss. These symptoms may last as short as a week after the death or may last months or years.

# What are the stages of grief?

The grieving process is very personal. People may experience the stages in different orders and for different times. People who are grieving don't always progress in order. Some people may start with anger. Others may start with denial. The stages of grieving aren't necessarily a one-time experience. Often people who are grieving will cycle through the different stages more than once. However, each step helps with the healing process. Grief is usually divided into 5 stages:

**Denial.** Denial is a stage where one can try to believe that the death hasn't occurred. One may feel numb, or in a state of shock. Denial is a protective emotion when a life event is too overwhelming to deal with all at once.

**Anger.** Anger is a stage in which you're very upset and angry that this tragedy has happened in your family. One of the best ways of dealing with bursts of anger is to exercise or participate in another type of physical activity. Talking with family and friends, other parents who have lost a child, and the hospital staff, may also be helpful.

**Bargaining.** Questioning God, asking "Why my child?" and "What did we do to deserve this?" are common questions in this stage. Guilt is a primary emotion during this stage. Searching for something that you personally did, which could have contributed to the death, is all part of bargaining. It's important to remember that there's nothing you or your child did which contributed to the death.

**Depression or sadness.** This is a stage in which the death of a child can no longer be denied and parents and siblings may feel a profound sense of sadness. This is normal. It may be accompanied by physical changes, such as trouble sleeping or excessive sleeping, changes in appetite, or trouble concentrating on simple daily activities. It's important to talk about depression with a healthcare professional, such as a social worker, or counselor, or meet with a support group to help you cope with these feelings.

**Acceptance.** Acceptance is the stage in which you've accepted death. You are at a point where your child's death has been incorporated as part of your life. You've made an adjustment to the loss. This doesn't mean that you'll never feel other emotions, but usually families find that they're better able to manage their lives overall on reaching this stage. Some resolution has taken place with the child's death. This may include your religious and cultural beliefs and practices.

## **Sibling and peer bereavement**

The impact of a child's death on their siblings is important to remember and address. Most young children can overcome the trauma of a sibling's death with the necessary support and time. Many children have strong feelings of guilt and blame when their sibling dies. Often the child who has died is idealized after his or her death. This leaves feelings of inferiority and neglect for the surviving siblings. These siblings have often been surrounded by death, illness, and great sorrow from all family members, especially parents, during the dying child's experience. More often, the young siblings of a child with a terminal illness have been protected from some of the experiences associated with the death. They may not have been allowed to visit the dying child, prevented from participating in the religious or cultural rituals, and possibly, even prevented from attending the funeral. However, all of these experiences may help with closure and can make a sibling's survivor-guilt less burdensome.

Peers and classmates may experience the grief process in a variety of ways. Many children may not have had an experience with anyone their age dying from an illness or accident. For any age group, review of our own mortality and purpose in life is evaluated. Young children may fear they will die soon also. They may also have feelings of guilt and blame, similar to the sibling's expression of grief. The peer of a dying child also needs time and emotional support to grieve over his or her loss of a friend, neighbor, or classmate. There are many support groups that include nonfamily members and peers in helping work through the grieving process.

# Help is available

There are many support groups available to help families cope with a loss and work through their emotions associated with grieving. The phone book, hospitals, churches, and the Internet are all full of sources that are available to help.

It's important to understand that grieving is a normal response. Grieving, however, should be managed so that activities of daily living and relationships among the survivors are able to be maintained. Misdirected anger and feelings of guilt and blame can be very detrimental to a family and marriage. Seeking out support groups and professional help may make the grieving process more manageable and have less long-lasting effects.

No support group will be able to take away the hurt and sorrow, nor will they be able to magically end the grieving. Support groups will, however, help you understand your emotions, the loss, and meet others who have had similar experiences and what helped them through their toughest moments.

Follow-up care is also an important task for support groups. Often there's a lot of attention focused on the family in the first few months following the death, but there may be little support years down the road. Grief can resurface years later. It may be triggered by a memory of the deceased, another child in the family, or by an anniversary or birthday associated with the deceased. Follow-up care in the bereavement process is important to be able to detect recurrence of grief and to manage long-lasting effects of grief. Follow-up care may take place over months to years.

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

# Grief Journal Prompts

There is no right or wrong way to write a grief journal. It's a tool that can be used to grieve the loss of a child. The most meaningful approach to creating a grief journal will differ for each individual. Allow yourself to write freely, without judgment or self-editing. This raw, unfiltered self-expression is often the most effective way to start healing.

People frequently turn to journaling prompts for grief to help create a starting place or structure to use as they write. Some people even believe that goal-directed writing offers greater personal fulfillment.

## **1. “Today I am really missing...”**

Prompts like these have a calming effect on the person writing it because sometimes it is hard to recall good memories in the midst of grief. Reminiscing fond memories can have a calming effect both physically and emotionally.

## **2. “The hardest time of day is...”**

This prompt helps you begin to analyze the times that are most challenging and why. For example, perhaps this is an unstructured time and you have too much time to think about your loss. Once you're aware of these dynamics, you can begin to use coping techniques to offset the intensity of the feelings of loss.

## **3. “I have been feeling a lot of...”**

The act of identifying feelings and allowing yourself to be aware of and vulnerable to them is the first step in healing. This prompt allows you to begin to initiate this process and move forward.

**4. “A comforting memory of my loved one is...”**

Recalling a memory that brings comfort can help you feel closer to a loved one who has died. It also has psychological benefits as the act of recalling these memories can reduce blood pressure and alleviate stress.

**5. “Whenever I start to feel overwhelmed by pain, regret, guilt, or despair, I will...”**

This prompt is helpful because it helps to ground you and think about what you *do* have control over. Remembering that you have agency when you have these big feelings can help to reduce the load and weight of these feelings.

**6. “To be more compassionate toward myself, I am willing to try...”**

Prompts like these help you identify techniques that help manage painful, negative emotions. They can also help you regain a sense of control over your emotions which can be an empowering experience.

**7. “I wish I knew how...”**

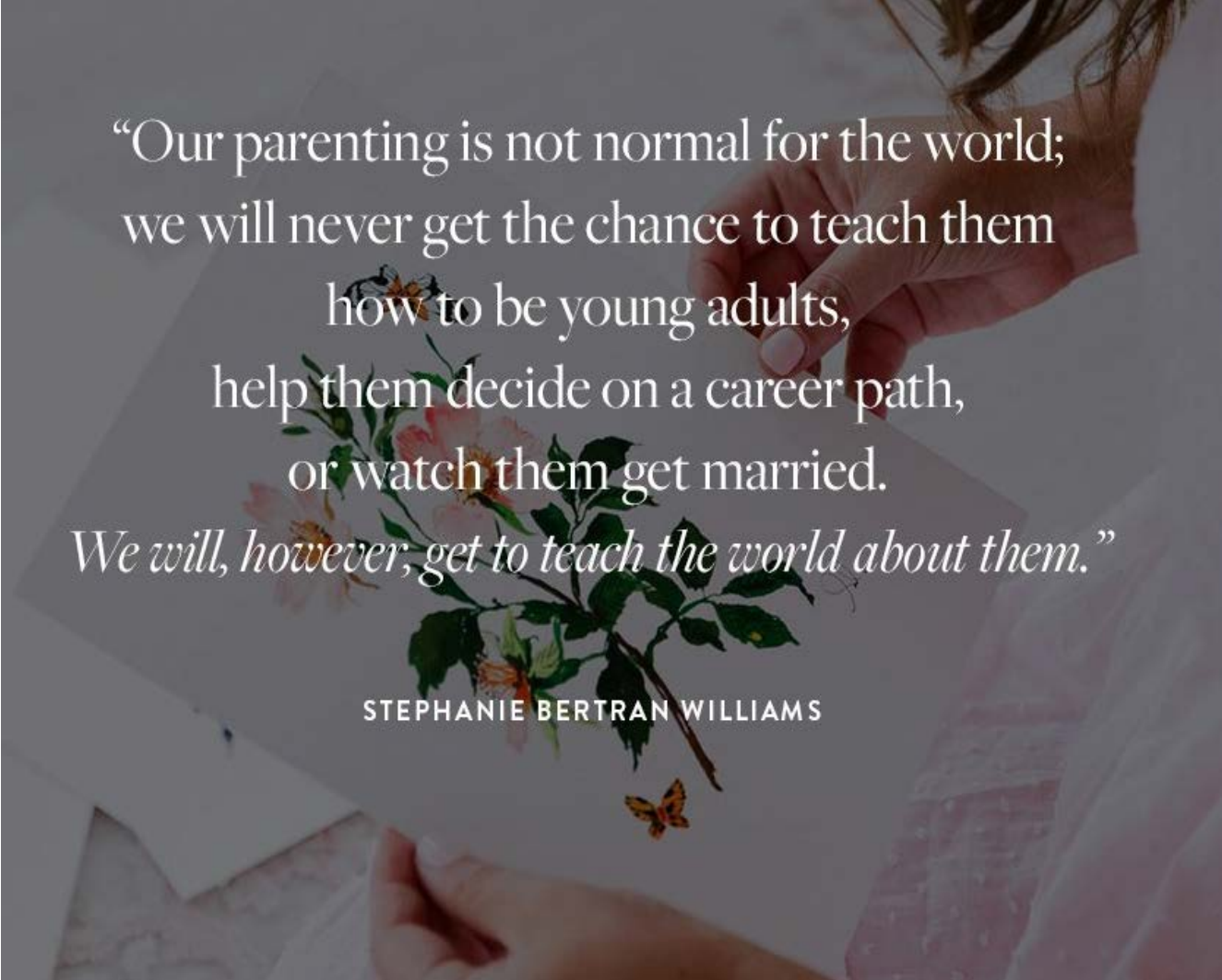
Reflecting on this prompt can help to identify specific tasks or goals that need to be developed in order to move forward in the grief process. It also helps to increase self-awareness, and can help you understand how you can help yourself.

**8. “I need more of...”**



This is very helpful because you need to know what you need in order to access it. It can be hard to know what you need more or less of, and a lot of us live on autopilot, but this prompt makes you think about your needs more precisely and with intention.

[www.choosingtherapy.com](http://www.choosingtherapy.com)



“Our parenting is not normal for the world;  
we will never get the chance to teach them  
how to be young adults,  
help them decide on a career path,  
or watch them get married.  
*We will, however, get to teach the world about them.*”

STEPHANIE BERTRAN WILLIAMS



<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Ezekiel James	<b>Feb 01</b>	Jul 10
Kristen Fleckerstein	<b>Feb 02</b>	Jun 23
Rod Everetts	<b>Feb 04</b>	Jan 04
Megan Heidelberger	<b>Feb 04</b>	Dec 22
Eli Alexander Raymont	<b>Feb 07</b>	Jun 01
Heather Ann Adams	<b>Feb 11</b>	Aug 07
Jennifer Maginot	<b>Feb 11</b>	Dec 10
Kayla Goggins	<b>Feb 11</b>	Jun 19
Cory Roberts	<b>Feb 12</b>	Nov 30
Nichole Danielle Ross	<b>Feb 13</b>	Jun 15
Megan Krzmarzick	<b>Feb 14</b>	Sep 28
Aidan Kerry	<b>Feb 14</b>	Aug 24
Jeremiah Harden	<b>Feb 15</b>	Feb 27
James Johnson	<b>Feb 15</b>	May 12
Robert Land	<b>Feb 15</b>	Jul 16
Eric S. Jackson	<b>Feb 20</b>	May 31
Mandy (Russell) Rode	<b>Feb 21</b>	Nov 11
Honesty Kiley	<b>Feb 22</b>	Jun 06
Kyle Jackson	<b>Feb 23</b>	Apr 27
Jade Henderson	<b>Feb 24</b>	Feb 24
Jessica Kocher	<b>Feb 24</b>	Mar 02
Colleen Byron	<b>Feb 25</b>	Mar 25
Miles Hartman	<b>Feb 25</b>	Jun 17
Cooper Tonte	<b>Feb 26</b>	Sep 13
Nicco Picchetti	<b>Feb 28</b>	Jun 24



<u>Child's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Jake Findly	Oct 31	<b>Feb 03</b>
Jordan Amonette	Jan 22	<b>Feb 04</b>
Sean Gilson	Jul 02	<b>Feb 04</b>
Greg Fisherkeller	Jan 08	<b>Feb 07</b>
Jeff Perkins	Dec 06	<b>Feb 07</b>
Ethan Paulin	Aug 23	<b>Feb 11</b>
Aoife McGowan	May 14	<b>Feb 13</b>
Anthony "AJ" Elliott	Oct 19	<b>Feb 14</b>
Matt Espey	Oct 24	<b>Feb 14</b>
Sarah Kish	Nov 28	<b>Feb 16</b>
Sarah Christina-Grace Hamer	Jan 07	<b>Feb 19</b>
Christopher Lamberg	Nov 13	<b>Feb 22</b>
Nikahlas D. Fischer	Sep 19	<b>Feb 24</b>
Laura Van Dyke	May 20	<b>Feb 24</b>
Jade Henderson	Feb 24	<b>Feb 24</b>
Peyton Belling	Sep 20	<b>Feb 25</b>
Mark Bolstridge	Mar 30	<b>Feb 25</b>
Edward (Cody) Frye-Keller	Jan 06	<b>Feb 27</b>
Jeremiah Harden	Feb 15	<b>Feb 27</b>
Kevin Wiley	Jun 06	<b>Feb 27</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  
Treasurer, April Leo  
7133 Nostalgia Lane  
Indianapolis, IN 46214  
(317) 681 4292  
[april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org](mailto:april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org)

**TCF National Headquarters** – P.O. Box 3696,  
Oak Brook, IL 60522  
(877) 969-0010 (toll free)  
Email: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)  
Web Address: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
  
Local Website: <http://www.tcfcentralindiana.org/>