



The Compassionate Friends

Central Indiana Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Central Indiana Chapter Newsletter

December 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 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:

Dec. 3rd & Jan. 7th

Northside Meeting is the 3rd

Tues. of each month @ 6:30 pm

Epworth United Methodist

6450 Allisonville Road

Indianapolis, IN

Facilitator: Melanie Stewart
melanie.stewart@tcfcentralindiana.org

Upcoming Meetings:

Dec. 16th & Jan. 20th

CENTRAL INDIANA TCF CHAPTER

Chapter Leader: April Leo

april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org

Treasurer: April Leo

april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org

Webmaster: Larry Gardner

larry.gardner@tcfcentralindiana.org

Secretary: April Leo

april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org



ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

Please join us on Sunday, December 14, 2025, for The Compassionate Friends 29th Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony.

If you have not submitted your loved one's photo for the slideshow presentation, please email it to: tcfindy@sbcglobal.net. The cutoff date for submitting a photo is Tuesday, December 2nd.

Please include the following information with photo: name, birthdate and angel date. Photos and information should be submitted as soon as possible to allow an ample amount of time to update the slideshow presentation.

If your loved one's photo was in the 2024 Slideshow Presentation you do not need to resubmit a photo.



New Hope Church
5307 W. Fairview Road
Greenwood, Indiana 46142

Sunday, December 14th
Time: 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Program Leaders:

April Leo, Central Indiana Chapter Leader
Angie Groover, Melanie Stewart & Kelli Clarke Support Group Facilitators
Larry Gardner, Webmaster

Fellowship Hour:

5:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Make an ornament for the holidays in memory of your loved one.
Please bring your favorite finger food for the refreshment pitch-in.
Drinks provided by TCF of Central Indiana.

Candle Lighting Ceremony:

6:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Chapter Leader & Support Group Facilitators
Readings, Slideshow Presentation, Music & Reading of Children's names.

Photos:

Every family is welcome to bring a photo as well to place on the remembrance table.

6 Ways to Survive the Holidays Without Your Child

For a bereaved parent, this time of year might not be the season of Yuletide-cheer it once was. The whole season might feel like a cruel, sick joke. Worse yet, you might feel like the *only* person who has one or more missing from your holiday table. The anxiety of the looming holidays can be downright debilitating. Surviving it can often feel virtually impossible. Guess what? That's perfectly ok. Not easy, but it's ok to allow it to be exactly what it is– nothing more and nothing less. If you feel like crap, allow it. Though repugnant, this is your new holiday reality. For now. You certainly don't have to like it. It's also possible you might need some new traditions and tools to help you survive. Here is the good news: there are compassionate souls ready and willing to offer their open arms, shoulders to cry on, and hard-earned wisdom, to help you navigate the emotional landmines of the holidays. Seek the support of these gentle and loving hearts often. Keep in mind, none of this is simple or “easy” to do. Nothing post-loss is. In fact, oftentimes it is excruciatingly difficult, and might feel more like torture and a whole lot of ‘Bah! Humbug!’ than ‘Happy Holidays!!!’ Just remember all you have to do is survive, and you get to decide how you'll best do *that*. People will probably forget that it's *your* job, and not *theirs*, so you might have to gently remind them. That *your heart* is the one that is broken beyond repair. Here is what has helped me survive the holidays these past six years as a bereaved parent. Keyword: *survive*.

Practice sensational self-care.

Give yourself permission to take good care of yourself. You deserve it. And you *need* it. Trust me. Treat yourself as you would a physically wounded person with deep, visible, bleeding wounds. Just because emotional wounds are invisible, doesn't make them less debilitating, or less real. Remember that. Remind your loved ones of this too. Treat yourself extra gently this time of year– like the carefully marked packages that read, *Fragile: handle with care*. More than that, be proactive. Have a plan to give yourself the gift of good self-care all season long.

Remove all expectations. Free yourself to participate in as little or as much holiday hoopla as you'd like. Forget about everyone's expectations,



especially yours and people who might not understand your pain. Adjust your expectations to be realistic with what is. Keyword: *realistic*. This year might look much different than last year, so adjust accordingly with what you can handle right now, as you are, at this moment. As hard as it might be, try not to compare what you are able to do this year with anyone else, including past versions of yourself. Yes, I know. So. *painfully*.

hard. But try to do it anyway. Be realistic, radically kind, and oh-so-loving with yourself.

Just show up (or not.)

Allow yourself to change locations, holiday traditions or defy social norms. Allow yourself to show up, or not. Here's the thing: nothing is "normal" anymore. Normal died the day your child did. Which means you're now living in the land of defying normal. Anything goes. Give yourself permission to do what you need to do this year, even if it seems "abnormal" or outlandish to yourself or anyone else. Allow yourself the "5-minute rule," where you decide 5 minutes before an event if you can make it or not. Communicate this with your host beforehand. Thank them for the invitation, and let them know you're not sure if you'll be able to make it, but if you're up to it, you'll be there. That alone might feel liberating and more do-able. Less pressure, and the freedom to honor what you need at that moment. Laugh when you need to laugh; cry when you need to cry; let yourself wallow if you need to wallow. Don't worry about what anyone else thinks. They're not in survivable mode, *you are*. Staying in bed until the holidays pass, or ditching town altogether is all completely acceptable options. Think outside the box, and don't be afraid to do something completely different that shakes up all expectations. And possibly your Great Aunt Bertha. What worked in the past might not work now, and that's perfectly okay. Sometimes a change of scenery is exactly what's needed to survive the holidays without your precious child.

Honor your child in ways that are meaningful to you.

Keyword: *meaningful to you*. Light a candle at your holiday table in loving memory of your precious child. Say your child's name. Ask others to do the same. Acknowledge the glaringly empty chair. Participate in random acts of kindness in loving memory of your precious child gone too soon. Donate your favorite grief book to your local library, church, hospital, grief center, therapist's office, or to someone who needs it. Volunteer at an orphanage. Volunteer right in your neighborhood. Or, one of my all-time favorites: donate gifts for children who are the exact same age as your child would be. No matter what you choose to do, spread hope and help others, even if you don't feel like you have much to give. Whatever you give will be multiplied, and it will be *more* than enough. After all, the true gift is in the giving, especially in the midst of deep grief.



Feel your feelings, no matter how messy they are.

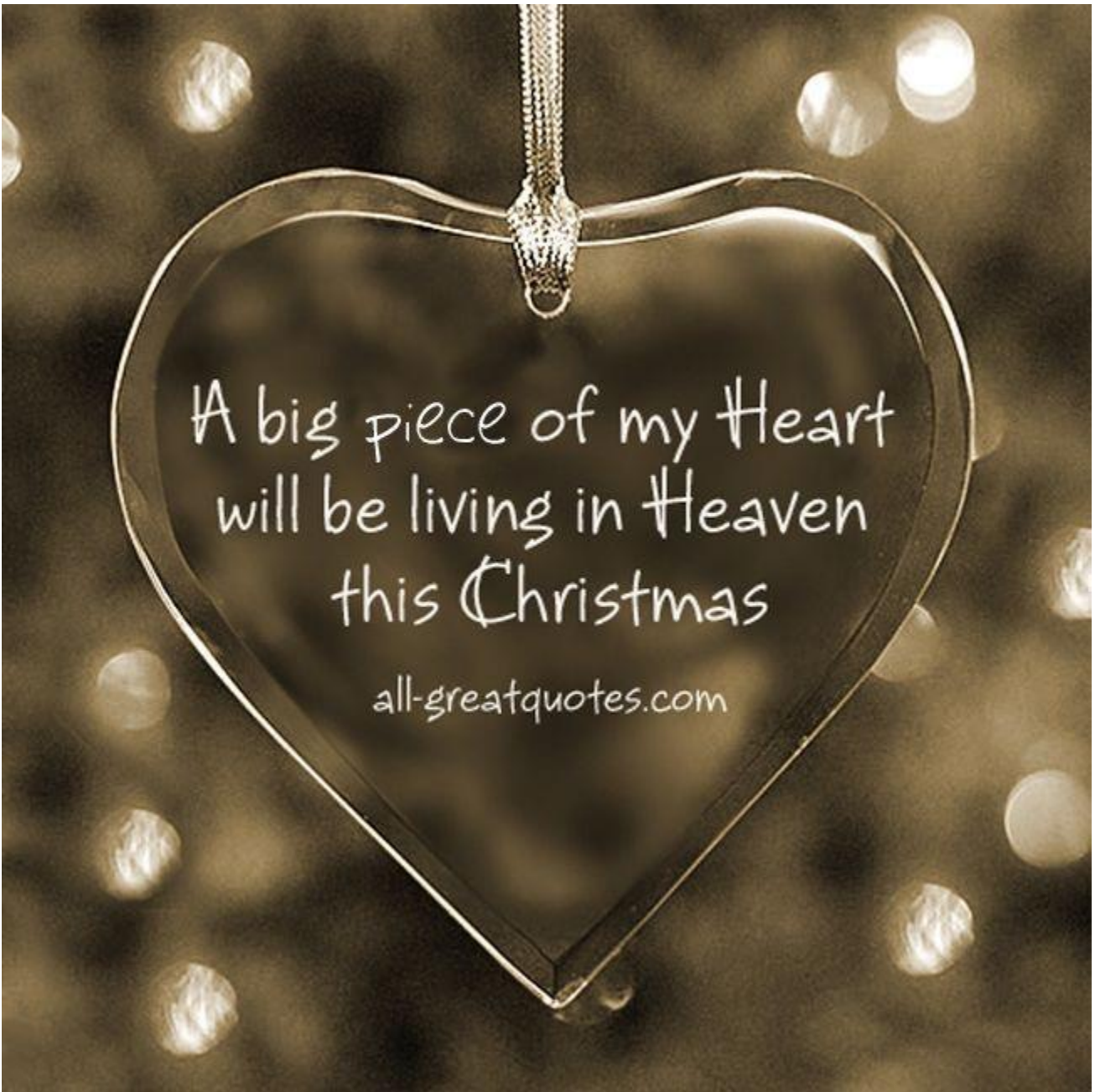
Give yourself ample space to feel however you feel, including opposite emotions at the same time. You might feel hopeful and defeated; joyful and sorrowful; happy and sad; grateful and not; angry and peaceful. And all of these emotions might be even more amplified during the holidays. A wise person once told me that being able to hold space for contradictory emotions at the same time is a sign of extraordinary emotional maturity. It's *true*. You're not crazy— even though it may feel like it— you're *extraordinary*. Remind yourself of this often. Especially every time you feel ripped apart at the seams by your dueling and opposing emotions. It's hard work to continually feel that way. Grief is unpredictable, exhausting, confusing and messy. Do your best to feel all of it until you need a break from feeling. It's ok to take a break and reset.

Deep breathing, chatting with a friend, a brisk walk outside, yoga, exercise, herbal tea, and healthy eating are all good ways to support the emotional toll grief takes on your body during the holidays.

Ask for help.

Whether online or in person, compassionate, empathetic support saves lives. Period. Having a village of support can often make the difference between surviving or not. I wasn't lucky enough to have a village, but I had one person— and that was somehow enough to keep my head above water. Hopefully, you have a village or at least one dearest one who knows how to offer you compassionate and loving grief support whenever you need it. Everyone needs someone to lean on. There is no worse feeling in the world than feeling utterly and completely alone on your own deserted planet called: *Bereaved Parent*. Do yourself a favor and ask for help, for whatever you need. Be proactive by having your core support “team” at the ready. For whatever might come. Your “team” might be made up of one person, or ten— it doesn't matter. What matters is that a support person will be there when you need him or her most. It might be your spouse, your best friend, or your therapist. Whether you need someone to listen, cry with you, or lie in the ditch of grief with you, have these dear souls ready. As your safety net, your safe place to land, your whispers of hope. It might be the one sure thing that eases your mind and heart this holiday season, in a way nothing else will. In the words of Sarah Longacre, “Let your support rise up to meet you. ”Remember, this is not an exhaustive list of ways to survive. These are just some ideas of things that might be helpful to you. Take what is helpful, leave what is not. I'm no expert, only an expert at trusting my own heart and doing what works for me. Just like grief, there are no rules for surviving holiday grief. Do what you need to do to survive. Honor your child how you need to, and do what feels best for your fragile, aching heart. You are missing a huge piece of you, so do whatever you need to do to find a sliver of peace. Remember that no one, no one, *no one* has the exact relationship you do with your precious child. No one will feel the exact same piercing agony, pain and longing you do for your child. Therefore, no one has a right to give you unsolicited advice about how to tend to your soul-deep wounds— this holiday season— or any day of the year. Throw out well-meaning but unhelpful advice. Throw out any to-do lists that don't work for you. Realistic. Do-able. If it feels like too much, *listen*. Follow your heart. Let it lead you through this holiday season. Your heart knows exactly what it needs to comfort itself and to prevent further damage and unnecessary bruising.

Trust your own broken, beating heart.



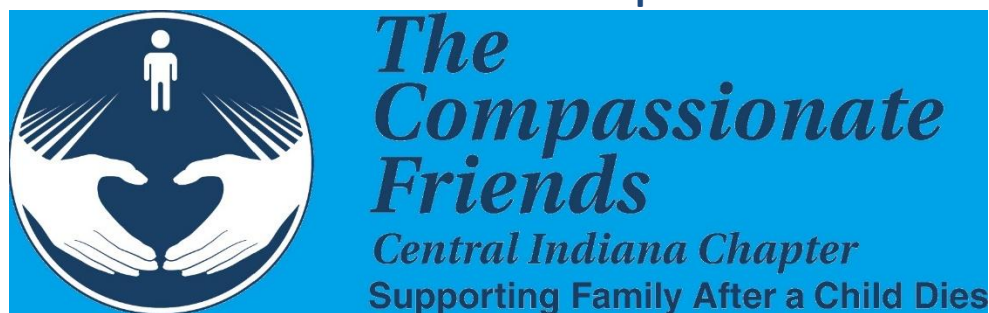


<u>Loved One 's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Adam Miller	Dec 02	Jan 03
Brad Clark	Dec 02	Jul 19
Rory Hankins	Dec 04	Dec 04
Luke Hess	Dec 04	Jun 18
Kevin Yanavich	Dec 04	Nov 21
Iziah Suhre	Dec 05	Sep 19
Chelsea Wheeler	Dec 05	Mar 07
Nicole Michelle Marott	Dec 06	Feb 07
Jeff Perkins	Dec 06	Dec 04
Alaina Dildine	Dec 12	May 16
Jason Matthew Kreutzer	Dec 14	Jan 16
Mike McGarvey	Dec 15	Aug 20
Sarah Battista	Dec 16	Mar 22
Megan	Dec 17	Jul 20
Charlie Noska	Dec 17	Aug 24
Jacob Churchia	Dec 19	Jun 09
Janean Ray	Dec 19	Oct 19
Michael R. LoCicero	Dec 20	Sep 27
August "Joey" Diener V	Dec 20	Mar 07
Kashius Davis	Dec 21	Oct 30
Andreas Gaynor	Dec 21	Jun 21
William B. Jones	Dec 21	Aug 04
Matthew Steven Spivey	Dec 21	Aug 04
David Stewart	Dec 22	Nov 27
Damon Joachim	Dec 29	Jul 26
Henry	Dec 29	Jun 14
McKayla Myers	Dec 30	Nov 18
Mark Christopher Palmer	Dec 29	Jan 26
Dominic Fajardo	Dec 31	Jun 26



<u>Loved One 's Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Angel Date</u>
Nicole Michelle Marotti	Dec 06	Dec 03
Bethany Bozone		Dec 04
Rory Hankins	Dec 04	Dec 04
Abby Scheibelhut	Jun 30	Dec 06
Olivia Feilen	Jan 07	Dec 06
Lindsey Anne Wilkins	Jun 15	Dec 08
Jennifer Maginot	Feb 11	Dec 10
Grant Pearson	Oct 01	Dec 12
Edith Marie Vincent	May 22	Dec 13
Jayden Canada	Jul 15	Dec 14
Michelle Clark	Jun 10	Dec 15
Charles D Jackman	Jul 30	Dec 16
Gabriella Whiting	Feb 01	Dec 18
Brady	Nov 10	Dec 20
Megan Heidelberger	Feb 04	Dec 22
Taylor Shields	Jul 27	Dec 22
Alex Douglas Dampf	Mar 15	Dec 23
Mark Andrew Nadelin	Sep 11	Dec 24
Molly Jayne Day	Sep 06	Dec 28
Elizabeth "Lisa" Watson	Oct 23	Dec 28
Jake Thomas	Oct 24	Dec 29

Central Indiana Chapter



The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are 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 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
Treasurer, April Leo
7133 Nostalgia Lane
Indianapolis, IN 46214
(317) 681 4292
april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org

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