



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for inquiring about Brooke's Place for Grieving Young People. Reaching out at a time of grief takes tremendous courage. Enclosed, you will find information about our program, our philosophy, and about what you might expect from a grieving person. If you need anything else, please call.

At Brooke's Place, we provide peer support for young people ages 3-20s and their parent/caregivers. We offer five different 'Program Nights':

Program Nights "A" & "B" meet on Thursday evenings at St. Luke's United Methodist Church  
Program Nights "C" & "D" meet on Monday evenings at St. Luke's United Methodist Church  
Program Nights "E" meet on Tuesday evenings at Westside Church of the Nazarene

Although adults aren't required to attend groups, they must remain in the building while their children are inside.

Please read over the enclosed information. When you are ready, complete and return the *Support Group Intake Questionnaire*. We will call you to schedule an Intake appointment interview when we receive the questionnaire.

*Admission into our program is based upon:*

- *Completing & returning the Support Group Intake Questionnaire.*
  - *Intake appointment interview by one of our Support Group Coordinators.*
- All children/teens, along with an adult caregiver, who are interested in our support groups, need to attend the Intake appointment. During this appointment, the Support Group Coordinator will let you know enrollment or waitlist options.

In the meantime, if you have questions or concerns, feel free to call us at 317.705.9650 or please visit our web site at [www.brookesplace.org](http://www.brookesplace.org).

Again, thank you for your interest in Brooke's Place.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol A. Braden".

Carol A. Braden, LMHC  
Clinical Director of Programs & Services  
[carolbraden@brookesplace.org](mailto:carolbraden@brookesplace.org)

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## **Our Philosophy**

At Brooke's Place, we believe grief is a natural reaction to the death of a loved one. We also believe that -- despite the intense feelings of grief -- children, teens and adults have within them the ability to heal. Each person's grief, however, and each person's grief journey, is unique.

Brooke's Place attempts to create an atmosphere for healing by offering peer support groups and the companionship of trained facilitators. Volunteer facilitators serve as mirrors to participants at Brooke's Place, reflecting back to children, teens, young adults and adults what they are expressing along their healing journeys. No emotions are restricted and no subjects are taboo.

As adults participating at Brooke's Place, you will learn you are not alone. Young people will realize, maybe for the first time, they are not the only kids who had a loved one die. Teenagers and young adults attending will find peers who have shared a similar experience. We hope to envelop your family in the compassion and empathy society sometimes lacks.

At Brooke's Place, you start programs when you are ready, and you stop when you are ready. We hope our program works for you. If it sounds right, please complete the Support Group Intake Questionnaire, return it to us and we will call you to schedule a family interview with one of our Support Group Coordinators.



## Our Program

Brooke's Place for Grieving Young People is a not-for-profit agency. We provide support groups for young people, ages 3-20s, who have experienced the death of a loved one. Peer support groups meet twice a month for 75 minutes. Young people are placed in groups based on age: 3-5, 6-9, 10-12, Teens and Young Adults. Although young people are our primary focus, we realize we cannot help them in isolation. Therefore, adult groups are provided for parents/caregivers and run concurrently to the young person's groups.

Program Nights "A" & "B" meet on Thursday evenings, and Program Nights "C" & "D" meet on Monday evenings at St. Luke's United Methodist Church (100 W. 86<sup>th</sup> St., Indianapolis 46260). Program Night "E" meets on Tuesday evenings at Westside Church of the Nazarene (8610 W. 10<sup>th</sup> St., Indianapolis 46234).

A typical evening at Brooke's Place begins at 6:30 p.m. with a pizza dinner and library time. There is a Monthly Family Contribution of \$30.00. This contribution helps cover the overall costs of providing this service. Families who cannot make this contribution due to financial circumstances WILL NOT be turned away but supported through the "Pay It Forward" Family Sponsorship Program. Dinner ends with a cake and a song for those celebrating a birthday or significant life event.

Groups begin at 7 p.m. with an "opening circle" for introductions and an opportunity to tell the story of the person who died. During groups, young people may participate in writing, drawing or creating crafts as tools to express their grief work, but at Brooke's Place, the children lead. If they want to sit out, they are allowed. If they need to release physical energy, they may visit "The Volcano Room" to punch a pillow, tear up a telephone book or squeeze popping bubbles. Another room to express their grief is called "The Expression Room." In this room our young people may draw whatever they want. Everyone comes together at the end for a closing circle and song at 8:15pm.

If you are interested, please complete and return the Support Group Intake Questionnaire and we will call you to schedule a family interview with one of our Support Group Coordinators.



## **The Grieving Child**

Children and adults grieve differently, but some adults are surprised to see just how different a child's grief looks. While adults are somber and may need to cry or talk, children often need to release physical energy by running or screaming or punching a pillow. While adults may have difficulty stopping the intense feelings of grief, children may be just the opposite. Children mourn in what has been called "grief bursts," where they express intense emotion - - sobbing, screaming or hitting - - and 10 minutes later, they are laughing and playing with friends.

Adults often mistake children's laughter and play after a loss for not caring or feeling, or worse, for not having loved the person who died. This simply isn't true. Children "dose" their feelings of grief, letting in only what they can handle, a little at a time, until the complete reality seeps in. This process can persist through several developmental stages.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wolfelt, A.D. (1996). Healing the Bereaved Child. Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press.



## Thoughts and Behaviors of the Grieving Young Adult

- Will mom/dad/family be okay?
- Will I be next? Concern for own mortality.
- Retells events of the deceased's illness and death.
- Maybe I should move back home—they need me to take care of them now.
- Will I have to drop out of school or quit my job?
- Dreams of deceased.
- Feels as though the deceased is with them in some way.
- Now I won't get to know mom/dad/brother/sister as an adult, grow old together.
- Who am I without my loved one in my life?
- May seek out someone who has experienced death and form relationship.
- I feel so alone.
- What kind of relationship will I have with surviving family members?
- I don't feel connected, can't go home—it's not the same.
- I can't concentrate—can't make classes or go to work.
- Bursts into tears and retreats.
- May present without emotion regarding the loss.
- I feel angry, guilty, hopeless (or any of the grief reactions).
- I miss their phone calls, emails, snail-mail, the communication.
- I miss their support and encouragement.
- I'm not ready to grow up, to be the next generation, only child.
- We were best friends, now we won't share in life rituals and passages, marriage, family rearing, career, etc.
- I can't ask for help. I don't want them to worry about me.
- I feel numb.
- I feel unable to carry on with normal activities.



## Preparing Your Child to Return to School Following the Death of a Loved One

**1. Talk to your child.** Help them understand how difficult it is to return to school and yet while it is hard you will assist them until they feel more comfortable. Tell them, "We will make it through this together."

**2. Reassure your child.** Give them instructions on how they may reach you during the day and permission to call you when they need encouragement. Tell them where you will be while they are at school. Your child is learning about mortality issues. With this concern for your well being they need to know that you are safe and in familiar surroundings. At first they may need to phone you frequently but over time they will adjust. Be patient with this process and do not force it along.

**3. Talk to your child's principal, teacher and counselor.** Give clear information about the death and what understandings the child has about those details. Determine a plan for emotional safety with their teacher. Teens may be resistant to this step but for their well being it is imperative that they have a plan of action.

This plan should include permission for your child to leave the classroom if necessary and go directly to a safer place. Children are easily embarrassed by their "grief bursts" and need to establish control. Through a prearranged signal with their teacher your child will understand they have permission to leave the classroom, go to the nurse or counselor's office. Learning to manage emotions in appropriate manners increases self-esteem. Leaving emotional reactions unaddressed teaches the child that being resistant, unresponsive and acting out is the acceptable way to get attention or removal from the classroom.

**NOTE:** Teach your school administrators and faculty about how children grieve differently from adults. Remember that children take breaks from grief and appear to be "going on with their lives." Often when playing and laughing they appear to not be thinking about the death. Children contain and express their grief in different way; therefore they may react more strongly to disappointments (low grades, reprimands or playground injuries), crying inconsolably or louder for long periods of time. When your child reacts to their loss we call this a "grief burst." This is normal behavior and may be a pattern for months and years following the death and can be overwhelming at times for those caring for your child. As children learn to manage their grief the deep emotional pain lessens.

**4. Be patient.** Children have difficulty concentrating and focusing on schoolwork following the death of a loved one. There is no magic timetable to determine when your child will have more energy to devote to the rigors of academics. Some children improve after 3 months while many more are still experiencing difficulty 1-2 years after the death. This is normal just as it is for adults who have trouble finding a new routine at work or in their daily lives.

Many daily triggers remind children that their loved ones are dead. Often classroom work and subject matter, conversations or playground activities serve as painful reminders sending a child plummeting with these thoughts and memories. Listen carefully to what your child is telling you about their school day.

**5. Teach your child about your grief.** When you do not cry in front of your child or share with them how difficult your day has been they feel isolated in their grief. They make false assumptions about your love for the person who died and often get mixed signals about normal grief reactions. This is a difficult time for all family members and rarely will all the family be sad at the same time. Use this as a positive way to reach out for support or to open yourself to assist another. The pain will not be this intense forever; patient encouragement and support will promote healing.

**6. Young adults and college age need support.** While young people are eagerly establishing a place for themselves, in the adult world often away from home, it can also be a very painful and difficult process. Fears and worries intensify when your child is not home or around familiar faces. Some common thoughts and questions are: not feeling as connected to family and friends; increased loneliness; wondering if my loved ones will be okay while I'm away; trouble concentrating or going to classes or work. Be sure to establish a routine of initiating contact with your young adult. Expect this to be a one-way communication for a while. They will appreciate your encouragement.

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



# Support Group Intake Questionnaire

**\*After filling out this form, please fax or mail it to Brooke's Place.**

Child/children coming to Brooke's Place:

Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Current medications/allergies:
_____	___ / ___ / ___	M / F	_____
_____	___ / ___ / ___	M / F	_____
_____	___ / ___ / ___	M / F	_____
_____	___ / ___ / ___	M / F	_____

Do you/your child(ren) have any medical condition(s)? (If so, please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Adult/s with whom the child/children are now living:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ Relationship to the child \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ Relationship to the child \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 County \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone (H): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (Cell): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (W): \_\_\_\_\_

Which phone number do you prefer we call? \_\_\_\_\_  
*Placing your phone numbers and email address on this form gives Brooke's Place permission to leave you a voicemail or email message.*

If child is not living with joint custodial parent, please list their information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to the child \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY PLEASE CONTACT: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
(someone other than the custodial parent)

Race: \_\_\_\_\_ Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's parent's are/were:  single  married  divorced  widowed  separated *How long separated/divorced?* \_\_\_\_\_

Family's Gross Annual Household Income:

- under \$15,000     \$15,001 - \$20,000     \$20,001 - \$25,000     \$25,001 - \$30,000     \$30,001 - \$35,000
- \$35,001 - \$40,000     \$40,001 - \$45,000     \$45,001 - \$50,000     \$50,001 - \$55,000     \$55,001 - \$60,000
- \$60,001 - \$65,000     \$65,001 - \$70,000     \$70,001 - \$75,000     \$75,001 - \$80,000     \$80,001 - \$85,000
- \$85,001 - \$90,000     \$90,001 - \$95,000     \$95,001 - \$100,000     over \$100,001

If over \$100,001, please list family's annual income: \_\_\_\_\_

Were parents living together at the time of death?  Yes  No

Please answer these questions about the person who died:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ This death was:  sudden  unexpected  
 Date of Birth: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ Cause:  illness (cause) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Death: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ If prolonged illness, indicate length: \_\_\_\_\_  
 accident (type) \_\_\_\_\_  
 suicide     homicide

