

# The Compassionate Friends

## Modesto~Riverbank Chapter

### *Supporting Family After a Child Dies*

**A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.**

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

July 2020

[tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com)

#### MONTHLY MEETING

7:00 PM

Bridge Covenant Church  
2201 Morrill Road  
Riverbank, CA 95367  
(Corner of Oakdale Rd & Morrill Rd)

The meeting scheduled for  
*Monday, July 13<sup>th</sup>*

**Will be conducted as a  
Zoom (online) meeting  
(instructions to follow)**

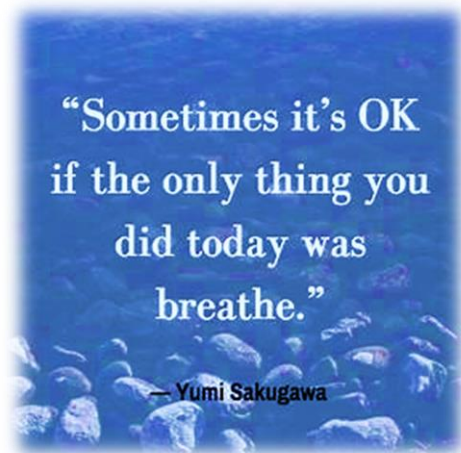
#### Upcoming Meetings

**August 10<sup>th</sup>  
September 14<sup>th</sup>  
October 12<sup>th</sup>**



#### Our Mission

*The mission of The Compassionate Friends:*  
When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.



#### MESSAGE LINE

(209)622-6786

*If you leave a message  
a steering committee member  
will return your call.*

#### 2020 Steering Committee

Tracey Parker – Chapter Leader

Devon Homme – Secretary

Elsie Freeman – Treasurer

Kris Leitner – Newsletter Editor

Janet Neal – Outreach Coordinator

Lori Leitner – Hospitality & Library

Chad Homme – Public Relations

Mike & Suzanne Casity – Website

Visit us on Facebook  
The Modesto-Riverbank  
Area Chapter of TCF



Find us on Instagram at  
[modestoriverbank\\_tcf](https://www.instagram.com/modestoriverbank_tcf)





## **All Chapter events and activities remain cancelled or postponed**

---

WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE TCF'S FIRST VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE - FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2020 TO SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2020

Thank you to all who completed our survey last month requesting feedback about conference alternatives due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. We had over 1,000 responses with overwhelming support for TCF to offer the safer option of a virtual national conference this year. Since that time, we have been working diligently to evaluate the possibility of organizing a virtual conference.

TCF's Virtual Conference will provide an important opportunity for our community to connect in a way that is feasible right now. It also offers the opportunity for many people to attend who may not have been able to do so in the past for a variety of reasons.

The three-day conference will include:

- Keynote Speakers
- 70 plus workshop choices
- Sibling Sunday
- Candle Lighting Ceremony
- Sharing Circles
- Silent Auction
- Entertainment
- Additional regular conference activities that are suitable for a virtual environment

Additional information:

- The conference will take place on a Zoom platform with an online registration system.
- Registration fees for the three-day event will be \$65 per person (early bird registration) and \$85 per person after July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020.
- Information about the TCF Walk to Remember along with more conference details will be shared in the coming weeks.
- Training and orientation will be offered prior to the conference for attendees who may need some extra technology support in order to participate.

Although we would all love to be together in person, we can still connect, support, and gather as a community through a virtual event. We will continue to navigate this new environment we're in and we hope you will join us!

Registration will open soon, and we will make an announcement with a registration link provided when that happens. For now, please save the dates and look forward to connecting virtually with your TCF family through an enriching and inspiring virtual event.

Sincerely,

Shari O'Loughlin

*CEO, The Compassionate Friends*

# *It's Bereaved Parents Month, Here's What We Want You To Know*

By Caila Smith



July is Bereaved Parents Awareness Month, a time to advocate for and raise awareness of one's life after the loss of their child. But we the bereaved still don't feel nearly seen enough.

The efforts bereaved parents use to create a certain level of transparency in our grief goes unnoticed by the general public. You see, our cause is taboo. One that's better off not to dwell on because it's uncomfortable and heartbreaking. It's the kind of cause that's only mentioned when another parent is forced to join the throes of its unfortunate hold. Even then, you're only truly remembered for as long as the funeral.

But our grief extends beyond those immediate moments following the mass destruction of our lives. It's our shadow, if you will, and we wish you could understand us without having to become us. We want you to know...

## 1. We are still "normal."

"When someone sees [a bereaved parent], they look at us like we are broken. Like we 'can't function right,'" Chelsea Fairchild, mother of two, tells Scary Mommy about the passing of her three-year-old son Riley. "We are humans just like everyone else. Just because we struggle with [the] grief of a child, doesn't mean that we are outsiders."

Though we are different, we are still us... just a bit more rusty around the edges for a time. After the initial grieving stages have passed, we still long for our friendships and other relationships to see us through the toughest days ahead. And if they are nowhere to be found when we are ready, it hurts, it's noticed, and it will always be remembered.

*Carrie Stafford, Colorado mother of four, says she feels like others see her differently since the death of her one year old son Bryce. "People view [bereaved parents] as fragile and weak and feel*

*uncomfortable around us. We don't have a contagious disease... we have a broken heart!" she says.*

## 2. Our child(ren) died, but we can't stop living.

The most common phrase acting as a "filler" toward bereaved parents in conversation seems to be, "I can't imagine." It's understandable. And almost always, these words are meant to serve as a good testament to the bereaved parent's strength. But when the topic is dwelt on, when someone continues on their banter about a loss they haven't experienced, but just "could not" live through, what is meant to be taken as comfort can quickly turn into something that is unintentionally hurtful.

Chances are, there was a time when the grieving parent didn't have the slightest clue how they would survive their own child's death when it actually *did* happen to them. They didn't *want* to survive it. They felt *wrong* for surviving it. But they didn't have a choice in the matter, and it's important to recognize that when using filler words such as these. (Better yet, just be there. No filler words are needed.)

There comes a time when even the bereaved parent has to learn how to smile again. And I promise, unless you've been there yourself, you don't know what it took for them to do it. That smile has been *earned* without question.

*Haley Bennett is a mother of two from Indiana who lost her firstborn daughter, Mayleigh, when she was born still at 38 weeks and 5 days. After some time of isolation and feeling frustrated about entering the "real world," Bennett says that she always wound up hearing responses from others such as, "I don't get how you could go through with something so tragic and be the way you are today. I just have to remind them I didn't*

*choose to live like this, and I had to push through it," she says.*

3. We are *constantly* aware our child is gone.

*"Sometimes it really hurts deep down that [Bryce] is forgotten and the harsh reality sets in once again that he should be here to share [everyday moments] with us, but he's not," Stafford says.*

Rest assured, bringing up our deceased child(ren) is not going to suddenly depress us or instantly remind us of their death. We are *so* blatantly aware of their nonexistence in every single moment of our lives. We WANT to talk about our children. That's how we keep them alive.

Bereaved parents have a parental instinct to protect and love their deceased child. To lose a child is to be given a duty of carrying on their legacy, and it's hurtful when the rest of the world fails at merely acknowledging the bereaved parent's child's existence.

*"I wish people would just relax and open up with me and my loss. After all, I'm the one living daily with it, not them," Hartley Geyer, bereaved mother of twin boys Maverick and Milo, tells Scary Mommy.*

4. We might feel trapped in one moment in time.

While everyone else's life moves on after the funeral, for the bereaved parents, their new life is just beginning. For a time, their very being will be consumed by this forever-defining day. Grief brain, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideations and PTSD following the loss of a child are all very real, valid and consuming aftershocks of grief.

Bereaved parents aren't looking for a free pass on all-the-things in life, but be gracious. Going back to work, parenting, or even just day-to-day activities can feel overwhelming in the acute stages of grief and even for extended spurts in the many years to follow. Stafford, an elementary

school teacher in Colorado, says she was "unsure how to function in a world that kept moving forward" after the passing of her son. She felt like her "entire world stopped."

*"Just being around children was a challenge when I wanted to be curled in a ball in my bed forgetting the rest of the world around me existed," she tells Scary Mommy.*

5. Grieving a child lasts forever.

My great-grandmother lost a child to pneumonia at three years old, and my grandma has always said that her mother grieved that baby until the day she died at 96 years old. When I told one of my friends this to hopefully help her understand my grief after my daughter's death, her reply in the form of pure shock was, "Really?! That long?!"

The truth of the matter is, the bereaved parent will grieve for as long as we live.

*"I'm never going to be done grieving because my love for my son Bryce is SO BIG and my connection SO DEEP." — Stafford.*

*"I live every single day with the pain of my son's death. Every day I wake up with a broken heart that doesn't seem to heal." — Fairchild.*

*"I will grieve my children for the rest of my life. I will always wonder who they would have been. What they would look like. Who they would grow up to be. I will ALWAYS grieve my babies." — Geyer.*

*"Grief NEVER goes away. There are good days and bad days and on the bad days they are like waves drowning you in an ocean." — Brown.*

So, yes, bereaved parents *really* do and will grieve for "that long."

<https://www.scarymommy.com>

## Chapter Phone Tree



If you are struggling and need to talk, we are here for you. We have set up a phone tree and someone is available day or night. You can call or text us at (209)622-6786 and one of the Steering Committee will get back to you as soon as possible. You may also reach someone through the email address, [tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com), or on our private Facebook page, which you can find by searching for *The Modesto-Riverbank Area Chapter of TCF*.

If you would like to be a part of our phone tree and be available for other members, please contact us through one of the above mentioned methods and we will add your name and number to our list.

---

## ♥ LOVE GIFTS ♥

Love gifts can be made in memory of your child, sibling or grandchild in any amount. Donations received are used for our annual Candle Lighting Program each December, for sending our monthly newsletter via US mail and for community outreach. We are here to reach out to other bereaved families who may not be aware we are here to lend our support after the death of a child. Please send your tax-deductible donation to the PO Box below.

*Pearl Lomas* in memory of her beloved daughter, *Michelle Dominguez*

If you wish to make a Love Gift donation, please fill out the information below and send with a check to:

The Compassionate Friends  
Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter  
PO Box 578713  
Modesto, CA 95357

☐ Child, ☐ Sibling or ☐ Grandchild \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_ Date of Passing\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Donation amount\_\_\_\_\_

Your Name\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone\_\_\_\_\_ Your email address\_\_\_\_\_

Your address\_\_\_\_\_ City\_\_\_\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Would you like your gift listed in our monthly newsletter in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling?

The amount will remain anonymous Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

The Compassionate Friends is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax deduct





Thank you 7-Eleven stores at  
2500 Geer Rd., Turlock, CA and  
3225 McHenry Ave., Modesto, CA for  
sponsoring our monthly  
newsletter!!

---

**Check out our closed Facebook  
page, Modesto-Riverbank Area  
Chapter of TCF. Make a request to  
join the page & an Administrator  
will approve your request.**

---

**Join us on our Instagram  
account page. You can find us at -  
*modestoriverbankarea\_tcf.***

---

**Our Steering Committee wants to  
provide the best possible support to  
each of our TCF Chapter members and  
friends. Please contact a member of the  
Steering Committee with any concerns  
you have or any ideas about how our  
Chapter can be of support to you and  
others. We're also available if you'd like  
to talk about your child or some aspect  
of the challenges of your bereavement  
journey. You can reach us by email at:  
[tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com) or by  
phone at 209-622-6786 or on Facebook.**

---



Visit our website for  
information and to  
stay up to date on  
chapter events.

**[www.modestoriverbanktcf.org](http://www.modestoriverbanktcf.org)**

---

Please remember to send in  
your child's photo so that it can  
be added to the new  
TCF Modesto-Riverbank  
website. Send photos to:  
[scasity@comcast.net](mailto:scasity@comcast.net)

You can still get photo button made of your  
child, grandchild or sibling with our new  
button machine! Buttons can be made at  
6:30 pm on our meeting nights. Bring an  
extra copy of a photo or a photocopy of it  
that can be cut into a circle 3" in diameter.  
Close-up photos usually work the best. You  
may bring a graphic design instead of a  
photo, if you wish. This will be a wonderful  
way to get acquainted with each other's  
children! Magnets are also available!!

---

Support our chapter by using

Amazon Smile

**[smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)**

AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support  
your favorite charitable organization every time  
you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at  
[smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the exact same low  
prices, vast selection and convenient shopping  
experience as Amazon.com, with the added  
benefit that Amazon will donate 0.5% of your  
eligible purchases to the charitable organization  
of your choice. You can choose from over one  
million organizations to support. (click on the  
link above for further information).

---

