

# The Compassionate Friends

*The Modesto Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends*

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)

June 2021

[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 and Morrill Rd)*

*Please join us at our  
next meeting on*

*Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup>*

*\*Please arrive by 6:50 p.m.  
so we may begin promptly  
at 7:00 p.m.\**

## Upcoming Meetings

July 12<sup>th</sup>

August 9<sup>th</sup>

September 13<sup>th</sup>



Are you taking a vacation? Visiting family? Moving?  
Helping someone new to TCF to find a chapter?

*Use the link below to find TCF chapters in other cities and states*

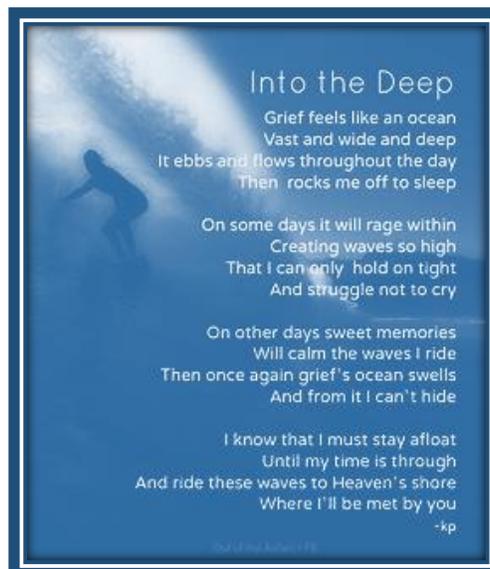
[Chapter Meeting Locator - Compassionate Friends](#)



## Our Mission

*The mission of The Compassionate Friends:*

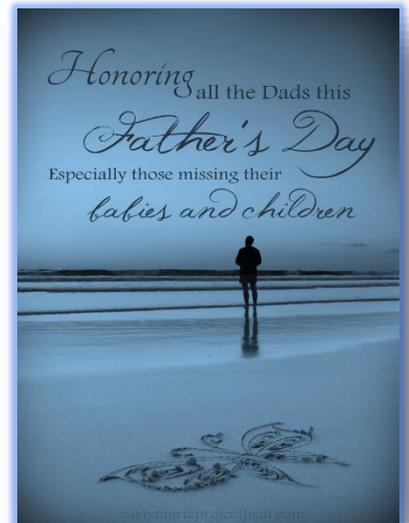
When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister or a grandchild, and helps others better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



## MESSAGE LINE

(209)622-6786

*Please leave a message and  
a steering committee  
member will return your  
call.*



## 2021 Steering Committee

**Tracey Parker**

*Chapter Leader*

**Devon Homme**

*Secretary*

**Elsie Freeman**

*Treasurer*

**Janet Neal**

*Outreach Coordinator*

**Lori Leitner**

*Hospitality & Library*

**Chad Homme**

*Public Relations*

**Kris Leitner**

*Newsletter Editor*

**Mike & Suzanne Casity**

*Website*



## IN-PERSON MEETING FOR JUNE

- The meeting is back to our normal time of 7:00 p.m.
- We will be following COVID-19 mandates by remaining six feet apart & asking all attendees to wear a mask.
- Refreshments *will not* be provided at this meeting.



### 2nd Monthly Meeting

Thursday, June, 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

Please join us for an online meeting.

[TCF June Zoom Meeting](#)

### Sunday Conversations

Sunday, June 27<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m.

A chance for us to just chat!!

[TCF June's Sunday Conversations Meeting](#)



The event is scheduled for July 25, 2021 and will be held at the Swenson Golf Course in Stockton, CA.

*Registration for the event has already begun, please see site information (link below) to sign up.*

*Proceeds for this year's event will be supporting [Agape Villages Foster Family Agency](#) of Manteca, CA.*

There is a new website! By clicking on the link below all information for the event will be provided. Be sure to visit and bookmark the event at [www.kcpgolf.com](http://www.kcpgolf.com)

# The Compassionate Friends 44th National Conference

Presented Virtually ~ July 16, 2021 ~ July 18, 2021

## CHAPTER SPONSORSHIP

In the past our chapter has helped a member attend the conference. This year, as the conference is virtual, we would like to sponsor several members by paying the registration fees. If you are interested in a sponsorship please contact us at: [tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com) or call/text us at: 209-629-6786.



## REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

**Early Bird Registration**  
By June 18<sup>th</sup> - \$80.00

**Regular Registration**  
After June 18<sup>th</sup> - \$95.00

## 44th TCF National Conference - Compassionate Friends

# ♥ 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.

*Norman Rodríguez, in memory of his beloved son, Norman Moses Rodríguez*

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 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 love gift listed in our monthly newsletter? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ (The amount will remain anonymous).

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

## *For Fathers, Loss of a Child Carries Special Burdens*



Men go through all kinds of identity changes when they experience the loss of a child, especially a child who is older and has lived long enough to create established memories with his or her father.

A man identifies himself by mainly two things: the job he has and the family he has. When a child is taken away by death, a man suddenly loses the largest, most important part of his identity. A real crises situation has been created, not just for the father, but also for role the father plays with the family. Fathers love to feel needed, and they love to feel like they are the one responsible for the happiness of the entire family.

Men are far less verbal than women by nature, and it makes it much more difficult for family members and friends to understand the changes that are taking place with a father loses a child. He often feels like a failure because he was unable to prevent the death or to fix the death once it took place. This is especially true if the child's life was lost due to an illness.

Fathers often believe their role is to fix things that are broken or in need of repair, and when they cannot fix their child's illness and the end result is death, a father goes through a deep grieving period of feeling tremendous guilt and failure.

A father who loses a child also loses such a large part of his dreams. Fathers don't always openly talk about their dreams of hunting and fishing with their children, or of taking bike rides together, going to ball games together or of tossing a ball in the backyard, but they think about these events all of the time.

Fathers of girls daydream about walking their daughter down the aisle and dancing that first dance at the wedding. They dream about taking care of all of their child's hurts, wiping their tears away, and being called "hero" for all of the ways they show their strength to their son or daughter.

Child loss, in a father's eyes, often represents weakness. Men believe fathers are to be strong and in charge, not at a loss for knowing what to do when death turns life upside down. Child loss is such a helpless feeling, and often this is a foreign emotion for fathers who have been a tower of strength for their children.

What is a father to do? How can a father go on and feel whole once again?

It takes time to work through the pain of loss. It takes a long time to build back a feeling of belonging as a father. It will often take years for a father to be able to reclaim his identity of a father. It will take lots of working through feelings of failure and loss to feel like a man who can always proudly wear the name father.

Take it a day at a time, a step at a time. Begin by telling yourself over and over that you will always be a father. Nothing can change that—not even death. Remind yourself often that some things cannot be fixed by you. Remember often that lost dreams are part of the pain every parent feels when a child dies. It takes a lot of tears and years to work past the milestone markers of such things as dreams of your child playing ball, driving a car, dating, getting married, and having children.

These are not easy dreams to release, but with time you will be able to more vividly remember the times you had with your child than to sorrow over the time you never had. Be patient with yourself. Be kind to yourself. And, when you fall into the emotional pain of feeling like a failure, remind yourself that you will always be a father and nothing can take away that badge of honor, not even death.



"What we once enjoyed  
and deeply loved  
we can never lose,  
for all that we love deeply  
becomes part of us."

~Helen Keller



"May love be what  
you remember  
most."

— DARCIE SIMS



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## Grief Journal Writing Prompts

- 1 THE HARDEST TIME OF DAY IS...
- 2 I'M REALLY MISSING...
- 3 MY SUPPORT SYSTEM INCLUDES...
- 4 I REALLY NEED MORE...
- 5 I'M HAVING A HARD TIME WITH...
- 6 I FIND IT HELPFUL WHEN...
- 7 I FIND IT DIFFICULT WHEN...
- 8 SOME OF MY GRIEF TRIGGERS ARE...
- 9 I AM GRATEFUL FOR...
- 10 MY FAVOURITE MEMORY OF [YOUR LOVED ONE'S NAME] IS...

## 5 Benefits of Grief Journaling

Journaling is an excellent coping method for many reasons. First, it offers you a simple way to cope that requires only a pen and paper (or computer or tablet). Second, it doesn't require you to 'talk it out' if you don't want to. Third, and perhaps most importantly, there are many psychological and physical benefits of grief journaling.

Despite the up-sides to journaling, it's an underutilized coping skill. Even people who think they'd definitely like to write or journal ultimately don't because they're worried they won't be good at it or think they don't have the time. If this is you, you know what we're talking about.

And you know what? We're guilty of the same. We'll admit to spending our fair share on crisp new journals that end up gathering dust on the shelf after only a few entries. Committing to a regular practice is hard, whether that practice is writing, exercise, meditation, art, or anything else.

This kind of routine requires motivation, energy, and dedication — you know, all those things that have been in short supply since you started grieving. Not to mention, writing about painful experiences can be intimidating! The irony, of course, is that regularly engaging in positive practices like journaling can improve things like motivation, outlook, and well-being.

We believe in the therapeutic value of writing, but we also know it can be challenging to integrate the practice in your day-to-day life. So today we want to provide those of you who are unsure or struggling with a little extra motivation for making this practice work. We want to make sure you know *why* this practice can be so beneficial and *why* it's worth your time and effort.

### Reason #1: Writing About Your Experiences Combats Avoidance

Journaling about grief requires you to take a closer look at your grief-related memories and experiences rather than avoiding them. When we talk about avoidance in regards to grief, we are usually referring to experiential avoidance. Experiential avoidance is an attempt to block out, reduce or change unpleasant thoughts, emotions or bodily sensations.

Grievors deal with a barrage of traumatic memories, painful emotions, logistical issues, secondary losses, and so on. It's no surprise that many people choose to avoid grief-related triggers, people, places, and things in an effort to achieve some semblance of 'normalcy.'

Though small amounts of avoidance can give you a break from your grief, chronic experiential avoidance can cause larger problems. Painful memories and emotions often don't go away on their own, so if you actively avoid them in an ongoing way, they stick around *and* you never learn to cope with them.

The fact of the matter is, certain memories and emotions may never go away – period – so it's important to learn how to function in a healthy way even in the presence of your grief. Further, avoiding potentially triggering thoughts about your loved one can prevent you from having a meaningful and ongoing relationship with their memory.

## Reason #2: Physical Health Benefits of Journaling

Research conducted by James W. Pennebaker and Joshua M. Smyth found that when people write about difficult and traumatic experiences, they sometimes reach a “letting go” state. They found that in this state participants actually experienced changes in their writing style, voice, and pace as they let out intense details around their difficult or traumatic experiences.

When they researched the deeper physiological implications of this, they found something interesting. When people went through a letting go experience while writing about their pain or trauma, their physical stress responses (things like heart rate and blood pressure) went way up. When they measured those things after people finished writing, their numbers dropped to lower than they had been to start and they stayed there.

These findings have been replicated in follow-up physiological studies, including one where people who had heart attacks were split into two groups – one group who wrote their thoughts and feelings about the experience of having the heart attack and one group who wrote about neutral topics.

The group who wrote about their feelings around the heart attack needed less prescribed medications, had fewer cardiac symptoms, and lower diastolic blood pressure than the group who didn’t write about the experience and was still the case five months later. Crazy, right?

Another study worked with individuals with asthma or rheumatoid arthritis who were split into two groups. One group was asked to write about the most traumatic experience of their life and the other to write about something neutral and benign. The results? The group who had asthma and wrote about a traumatic event had statistically significant improvements in lung function, those with arthritis had statistically significant improvements in joint health, whereas the control group didn’t see these benefits.

What is even more interesting is how dramatic the improvements were. People reported functional improvements that were on par with what would be expected when taking a new medication. Studies like this have now been repeated with those suffering from numerous other illnesses with similar results.

## Reason #3: Mental Health Benefits of Journaling

Interestingly, the research on journaling and mental health outcomes is limited as compared to journaling and physical outcomes. Luckily the research that does exist confirms what you might have guessed: writing helps. Writing has been found to reduce symptoms of depression as well as anxiety.

## Reason #4: Better Sleep

For many reasons, grief can impact your sleep pattern. Some people find they sleep too much; some people find they sleep too little; some people find they lay awake at night staring at their ceiling thinking about all their fears, anxieties, worries, sadness’s, the empty space beside them in the bed...you get the picture.

Research has found that writing or talking about worries, concerns, or other difficult thoughts before going to bed can reduce ruminative thoughts, help people fall asleep quicker, and improve the quality of sleep. And, though this probably goes without saying, better sleep equals improvements in overall functioning.

## Reason #5: Writing is Beneficial for those Seeking Constructive Ways to Cope with Grief

In initial studies on grief and writing, researchers found something interesting: writing didn’t seem to help! It didn’t hurt, but it wasn’t helpful either. This really didn’t jive with existing research which indicated that writing helped those struggling with difficult or traumatic experiences. Why would grief and loss be any different?

When the researchers decided to take a closer look at the data they found that the participants in their study had not been seeking grief help or support at the time of their participation. So researchers conducted new studies, this time with individuals who had lost a loved one *and* who were looking for support in coping with their grief. The results of these studies showed that interventions like expressive writing were helpful for those who were grieving and looking for constructive ways to cope with their grief.

Check out our closed Facebook page, The Modesto Area of TCF. Make a request to join the page and 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.

#### OUR 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.



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: [scacity@comcast.net](mailto:scacity@comcast.net)

Support our chapter by using  
*Amazon Smile*

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

(click on the link above for further information).

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1

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2

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3

#### Turn on AmazonSmile

Open the app and find 'Settings' in the main menu (≡). Tap on 'AmazonSmile' and follow the on-screen instructions to turn on AmazonSmile on your phone.