

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

January 2020

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, January 13th*

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

Upcoming Meetings

February 10th

March 9th

April 13th



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.

Once we choose

HOPE

anything is possible

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)



New Year's Resolutions for the Bereaved

By Tanya Lord

This year I resolve to:

- ♥ Not put a time limit on my grief. Loving someone means loving them for my life time whether they are physically present or not.
- ♥ Tell their stories, the happy and the sad, they will live on through me.
- ♥ Encourage others to share memories.
- ♥ Teach others that they cannot "make" me cry, tears are only an external expression of how I am feeling all the time.
- ♥ Understand that crying or otherwise expressing my pain is healthy and normal. "Doing well" means expressing my feelings.
- ♥ Understand that others will not understand my pain and it isn't fair to expect them to do anything but listen.
- ♥ Recognize that asking for help from those that love us is a really a gift that we give to them.
- ♥ Help others, reaching out to others in pain will help me to heal.
- ♥ Do something nice for myself every day.
- ♥ Know that if today I can not do everything that needs to be done, tomorrow is another chance to get it done.
- ♥ Cry when I need to, laugh when I can and to not feel guilty about either one.
- ♥ Let go, bit by bit, of the guilt, regret and anger because I know holding on to these emotions can be so damaging.
- ♥ Take a risk and let others into my life and heart.
- ♥ Take care of my physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- ♥ Reinvest in life a little bit each day...



JANUARY

EVENTS

Lunch with the Ladies



Date: Sunday ~ January 19, 2020

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Location: Red Robin Gourmet Burgers and Brews

2367 Claribel Rd., Riverbank, CA

To RSVP - call or text Tracey at 209-996-2040 or email tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com.

Saturday Morning Breakfast with the Dads

Save the dates Saturday, January 4th and Saturday, February 1st for breakfast with other bereaved dads in our chapter.

8 am at Perko's in Salida - 4642 Kiernan Avenue

Confirm with Chad at 209-338-8496 or chomme@gmail.com, or Norm at 209-345-0601 or nandrews6863@charter.net, & they'll save a seat for you.



Suicide Loss Support Group

7 pm at the Sutter Health Education Center
in the back of McHenry Village, suite B.

The group meets the third Monday of each month.

For more information, contact Norm at 209 345-0601
or at nandrews6863@charter.net

The Emotional Reality of Grief



Society tends to believe that grief makes you sad. If only grief was this simple. If you have lost someone you love, you should be prepared for the reality that grief will drag you through a huge expanse of emotions – from the raw, debilitating, and shocking wound of your immediate loss to the long-term feelings of loneliness, isolation and longing for your loved one that never quite go away. You may also be caught off guard when your emotions change rapidly, intensifying and then retreating again, only to reemerge when you least expect them.

Most grievers are vulnerable when exposed to all of these complex emotions. Not only are you confused by what you are going through, but others around you don't understand either. All of these feelings may combine to make you feel as if you are losing your mind. It is important to know that you are not losing your mind – you are grieving. And at times it feels as if you are fighting for your very survival.

The emotions you undergo during grief will possibly be the most painful and confusing experiences you will ever have. Grief can leave a path of destruction so wide and overwhelming that it feels as if you will never recover. However, by understanding the grief process and the emotional fallout that can occur, you can be better prepared to deal with your pain.

Emotions of Grief:

- Shock
- Guilt
- Anger
- Irritability
- Rage
- Despair
- Regret
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Denial
- Skepticism

- Resentment
- Yearning
- Sadness
- Worry
- Isolation
- Self-Pity
- Envy
- Fear
- Hopelessness

These are just a few of the negative feelings you may experience. The actual scope of what is possible is almost endless. If these feelings are not acknowledged and eventually worked through, they can pull you down into the quicksand of grief, each one like a weight attached to your ankle.

Many times we try to push these emotions aside because they are not “acceptable” ways of coping, and because others are uncomfortable around our emotions. But...regardless of what is expected of us grievers from society, these emotions are inescapable, and we cannot change or ignore our feelings about the loss of our loved one, all we can do is try to move through them. Don't let society make you feel ashamed or guilty about what you are going through.

While grief has universal aspects, it tends to be a very isolating and subjective experience. The truth is that the grief experience is quite personal. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. There are no emotions that are better or worse to feel. Each of us will deal with the loss of our loved one differently. But we can be prepared for the possibility that our grief will not look the way that either we or society expects.

Grief is a process that cannot be hurried or brushed aside. These emotions must be felt and processed so that we can eventually move to a place in life where we are finally able to live with our loss. To a place where our pain becomes at least bearable.

How Do I Process My Emotions?

- **Do not push your emotions aside.** Your emotions are trying to help you heal your broken heart. Feel them. Listen to them. Let them help you to move forward and accept that your life will be different. You will be different. This is the sad and brutal truth of grief and loss.
- **As you work through your emotions, hang onto the love and the positive memories.** Eventually it is the love you shared, and holding onto those memories, that will be the healing balm for your heart. Allow the negative emotions to move through you, but hang onto the positive memories and the love.
- **Healing your heart doesn't mean that you will forget your loved one, or that the love you shared is over. This love is yours forever. Love cannot be lost.**
- **Realize that a part of your heart will always be wounded.** This is a non-negotiable part of grief. Even years later, decades later, you will always mourn the loss of your loved one. But you will discover that love and loss can walk side by side in your life, and that you can experience joy in life again. Finding this joy is something your loved one would want for you. Keep working through your emotions and you will eventually come across that joy again.

By: Rhonda O'Neill Mother, Grief Survivor, Pediatric RN, and Author of the book, The Other Side of Complicated Grief.

Exhausted by Grief? Ideas & Tips to Help You Sleep

While there are many signs and symptoms of grieving there is one that seems every griever has in common - difficulty sleeping. This can mean having trouble falling asleep, or being able to fall asleep but then waking up in the middle of the night and being unable to go back to sleep. It's an especially frustrating symptom as a lack of sleep only serves to contribute to the weariness a griever is already feeling.

Grief is an exhausting process. A person who has lost a loved one will find their every waking moment filled with thoughts about their loss. It can be in the form of questions....could I have done more? Or tried harder? Or saw a different doctor or sought treatment sooner? Or, what if I never let him leave the house that night? Should I have tried harder to get her to stop smoking? Or take better care of herself? Should I have seen the signs that he was doing so poorly?

Mixed in with the questions from the past, are the future worries. What comes next? Where will I go from here? How am I supposed to go on? How can I go to work and take care of the rest of my family now? Who is going to take care of me?

And finally, sleep can elude the griever as they find themselves consumed with the sights and sounds encountered leading up to their loved one's death. Reliving what their loved one looked like in their final days, the sounds of their breathing or of their suffering. If the loss wasn't following a long illness, the trauma can come from remembering the phone call that came, or the atmosphere of the hospital when they were told the news.

While these thoughts and worries exhaust the griever all day long, the night brings no respite. In fact, the quiet and lack of other distractions can mean that many people find themselves staring at a dark ceiling each night, as their body begs for sleep but their thoughts won't allow it. Problem is, a good night's sleep is a crucial part of our well-being, and as the mind and body try to heal from grief it is even more important. And yet, it is often overlooked as an important part of what it takes to help a griever begin to feel themselves again and move forward. While so often after the loss of a loved one we can feel helpless, getting a good night sleep is actually within reach and something we can control (with patience and practice).

Some tangible tips and help for sleeping below:

Set a nighttime routine. Our bodies crave routine, and nothing can throw us off balance and out of sync like a traumatic life event. Making a plan for sleep that starts well before we head into the bedroom can be an important part of getting back on track. Eat light and healthy dinners that are less likely to cause upset stomach or indigestion. Make time for a relaxing activity - reading if you can find the focus for it, taking a walk with a pet or a friend, or watching an old movie or show that is relaxing and enjoyable (avoiding sad and stressful news channels if possible). Dim the lights and change into comfortable clothes. Try a bath or drink a cup of tea. You may find that now you need lights on and/or music or "noise" as you go to sleep. If it's a change from your sleep

routine before, don't fight it. Do whatever it is you need to do to feel comfortable right now.

Try breathing exercises. So let's say you've done all the above, you're finally in bed and you still can't sleep. What your brain needs at this point in the day is a distraction from the circulating thoughts and emotion. Start by reminding yourself that you can always return to the thoughts and the worries in the morning, but right now, what you need is sleep. Try a yoga or meditation class to learn more about breathing for relaxation, or research the following techniques online: 4 - 7 - 8 breathing, Complete Breathing, Ujjayi, or Alternate Nostril Breathing (that last one is a personal favorite). You can also look into Guided Meditation or Guided Imagery. While not a breathing exercise, exactly, it is a relaxation technique that should allow for quiet and controlled breathing. The internet is filled with guided imagery exercises, most of them including relaxing music and peaceful images. A quick search on YouTube yields almost 45,000 results, and they're all free to use. Try a few and see what, if any, works for you. Bottom line, there is one thing that each of these techniques has in common: they offer a distraction. Because what your mind needs to be able to find restful sleep at sad and stressful times is a vacation from its own thoughts. Whatever technique you try, remember that it is serving simply to distract you from these circle of thoughts long enough to allow you to fall asleep.

Recognize when more help is needed. There may be times where a shift in routine or attempt at a relaxation exercise simply isn't enough. If that's the case? It's okay, and you're certainly not alone. Talk to your family doctor for ideas of what may help. Look into individual counseling. Perhaps one who incorporates relaxation techniques as a way of helping you cope. For many, the "sights and sounds of grief" can leave behind a trauma similar to PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Look for a counselor who specializes in helping a person heal post-trauma. Some techniques to research include EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and Prolonged Exposure Therapy. Recognize that some of the repetition of these sights and sounds is simply your brain's way of trying to come to grips with what's happened as it's still trying to process all that it's seen.

In the end it comes down to being patient with yourself (and your thoughts). If you say you're someone that can't do it - that you've tried this before and it's never worked - keep trying. Quieting and calming the noise in our own mind is more challenging and takes more practice than preparing to run a marathon. Don't expect to be able to run 26 miles the first time out. And don't expect to be able to still your racing thoughts with ease. Know that the images and the worries will try to make their way in, and that you will need to work to put them aside as you attempt to relax and fall asleep. Like so many other parts of the grieving process it takes work and it takes practice, but it is something that can be achieved. Time is not a healer on its own, but time does serve to help move us further away from the traumatic event. And with time, we may find the solace and respite of sleep can return to us once again. Author: Karyn Arnold, founder of Grief in Common

Book of the Month



This month's spotlight book is:



Please take full advantage of our chapter library. We have a nice selection of books to choose from. The library is available before and after the monthly meeting.

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 A. Rodriguez in Loving Memory of his beloved son, Norman Moses

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 deductible



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.**

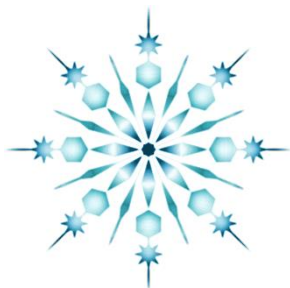
**Join us on our Instagram
account page. You can find us at -
*modestoriverbankarea_tcf.***

*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 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



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!!

A beautiful spirit
endures
Through many transformations
A perseverance of the soul
The colors of our lives do not fade
But grow *brighter* with every
changing season

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