



# 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)

November 2019

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

### Today I Am Thankful

Today I am thankful for tears  
Though an ocean I have cried  
They speak of our connection  
Reminding me that love has not died

Today I am thankful for memories  
They brighten the road of grief  
They remind me of love shared  
And provide a small relief

Today I am thankful for love  
Felt strongly in my soul  
Love continues living forever  
Keeping us together and whole

Today I am thankful for friends  
Those who didn't walk away  
They saw my broken heart  
And chose to sit and stay

Today I am thankful for time  
For moments that were too few  
Through the tears that are shed  
Today I am thankful for YOU

~Tanya Lord

### MONTHLY MEETING

7:00 PM

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

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*Please join us at our  
next meeting on  
Monday, November 11<sup>th</sup>.*

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

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### Upcoming Meetings

December 9<sup>th</sup>  
January 13<sup>th</sup>  
February 10<sup>th</sup>

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### MESSAGE LINE

(209)622-6786

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



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



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



# NOVEMBER EVENTS

## Lunch with the Ladies

Date: Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup>

Time: 1:00 PM

Location: Black Bear Diner – 1703 E Yosemite Avenue, Manteca, CA 95336

To RSVP - call or text Tracey at 209-996-2040 or email [tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com).

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## Saturday Morning Breakfast with the Dads

Save the dates Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> and Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> 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 [chommea@gmail.com](mailto:chommea@gmail.com), or Norm at 209-345-0601 or [nandrews6863@charter.net](mailto:nandrews6863@charter.net), & they'll save a seat for you.



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## 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](mailto:nandrews6863@charter.net).



Saturday, November 9, 2019  
10:00AM – 11:30AM

COMMUNITY HOSPICE  
4368 Spyres Way, Modesto, CA 95356

Registration ends on November 1, 2019



# 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Luncheon Highlights

The Modesto-Riverbank TCF Chapter would like to extend a sincere thank you to Heyam Khacho, Rita's Mom, for allowing us to use her beautiful home & for providing the delicious food for this wonderful event.



# *Loving My Son, After His Death*



I can feel their unasked questions. People wonder how I can still stand, still walk, still laugh. But they don't ask. You can't ask that of a mother who has lost her child. My son, Daniel, died three years ago at the age of 22.

When people ask me, "How... are you?" the pause, the inflection, tells me that's really what they want to know.

I am tempted to tell them that it is I who am lost, not he. I am lost in my search for him, knowing he is nowhere on this earth. And still, it would not surprise me if he were to appear by my side wearing only his jersey boxers eating a snack at the kitchen counter. At times I can almost smell his warm cheesy breath and his still-boyish sweat. But when I look over my shoulder, he is not there.

My mind invents stories. Daniel is not dead; he is lamenting the performance of his fantasy football team with high school buddies while they wait in line for ice cream at Magic Fountain. He is in his dorm room at Stanford, talking deep into the night with his friends. Daniel is lingering with new friends on the rooftop of his investment firm in Boston where he just started working.

"Where are you, Daniel?" I shout the question to the sky when I am strong enough to bear the silence that follows.

"Why did you die?" Even that has no real answer. His doctors think Daniel died of new onset refractory status epilepticus, or Norse, a rare seizure disorder in which healthy people with no history of epilepsy suddenly begin to seize uncontrollably. The majority of patients die or survive with significant brain damage. There is no identified cause or established treatment for Norse. This cloud of uncertainty does not obscure what I know: My child is dead.

The instinct to protect one's offspring runs through mothers of virtually all species. I violated the basic canon of motherhood. I failed to protect my child. That my child is dead while I still live defies the natural order.

I love my husband and our two surviving children, but I couldn't simply transfer my love for Daniel to them. It was for him alone. And so, for the longest time after his death, my love for Daniel bruised me. So unbearable was my occluded heart that I called out to him in desperation one day: "What will I do with my love for you, Daniel?"

My eyes were closed in grief when suddenly I seemed to see him before me, his arms bent and lifted upward in supplication. In my mind's eye, his face was suffused with love and tinged with exasperation, a common look for Daniel.

"Just love me, Mom," he says.

"But where are you?" I ask.

"I'm here!" he answers with frustration. And then he is gone.

I had not heard his voice since the day before he suddenly fell ill. I spoke to him while he lay unseeing and unmoving in the hospital bed. I told him I loved him. I begged him to speak to me. I begged him to come back to me. He never answered or moved to squeeze my hand. The only flicker from him over his 79 days of hospitalization was a single tear. One day a tear slid from his left eye down his cheek and disappeared beneath his chin.

And now, months after he had died, I felt him before me.

"Just love me, Mom. I'm here!"

His words unleashed a torrent. I fell forward, my tears streaming. I felt breathless with release. I could continue to love him. I would love him in a new way. It was harder to do than I expected. I would see him everywhere, in every full moon, in each brilliant day. My spirits would soar. But there were days when a weight in my heart made each breath shallow and every step an effort.

On the worst days I sit before my laptop and pour out my feelings to the only person who can take in my sorrow and remain unbowed. The keyboard is damp when the final refrain leaves my fingertips: I love you, Daniel, I love you. I miss you. I miss you. And then I press “send.”

Daniel’s friends continue to visit us. It is a pilgrimage of sorts. My heart tightens when I see them. Their presence illuminates our immeasurable loss. His friends reveal to me how much Daniel meant to them. Now there will be a missing groomsman at the wedding and empty air in the place of a steadfast friend. At the end of one visit, a young man asks, “Recognize this sweater?” I don’t. “It’s Daniel’s,” he explains. I suddenly recognize Daniel’s old cotton sweater stretched to fit his friend. The young man folds forward to touch the sleeves of the sweater, hugging himself. He is tall and blond and athletic. He and Daniel were opposites in looks and temperament, best friends since nursery school. He had just returned from Moscow where he was working. “I wear this when I travel,” he says, touching the arm of the sweater again. “It’s so soft.”

I encourage Daniel’s friends to tell me about their work and their plans for the future. At first they are self-conscious, and their voices are tender. They don’t want to hurt me with their future plans when there is no future for Daniel. But as they speak of the things they will do and the places they will go, their excitement breaks free. I smile into the glow of their unlined, earnest faces and I feel my son. I think they feel him too. For a moment we are all reunited.

I will carry this child for the rest of my life. He lives within me, forever a young man of 22. Others will carry him as they move forward in their lives. He will be with them when they look out to the world with compassion, when they act with determination and kindness, when they are brave enough to contemplate all the things in life that remain unknown.

I still search for him, but without desperation. I look for him in others.

My search is lifted by his words: “Just love me. I’m here.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/02/well/family/loving-my-son-after-his-death.html>





# REMINDERS

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. Magnets are also available!!

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

We will be presenting a slide show again this year for the World Wide Candle Lighting Ceremony in December. We need to begin gathering photos for the event. If you would like to include a photo of your child, grandchild or sibling in the slide show presentation, please submit ONE photo, along with their name to [tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com). If you have any questions, please contact Tracey Parker at the email address listed or you can call or text her at (209)622-6786.

**Deadline to submit your photo is November 15, 2019.**

## THE 23<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL WORLD WIDE CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

JOIN US ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2019

7:00 P.M.

COMMUNITY HOSPICE  
4368 SPYRES WAY  
MODESTO, CA 95356

Bereaved parents, grandparents, siblings, family & friends are invited to attend.

Please arrive early to pick up your candle.

A display table will be available to share a photo of your loved one.

You are invited to share refreshments before & after the program.

Please RSVP by December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019 to reserve your seat & if you wish to receive an ornament  
[tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com) or call (209)622-6786



# What Death has Taught Me about Living

*We've all heard the story of loss. We're familiar with the stages of grief. Shock, anger, eventual acceptance. But what happens when this isn't just an abstract process? When it's real. What do you do, practically, when someone you love dies? How do you go on?*

*I never thought anything awful would ever happen to someone in my family. It was the kind of thing that happened on TV, in newspapers, to other people. I didn't ever expect to be one of them. I was blissfully unaware of the pain that would come to shape the course of my life.*

*On the day we found out, I was woken by my dad. It was early on a Saturday morning. I heard my mom crying behind him, and immediately knew that whatever he said would be bad. I started crying too. And when he told me that my brother had been killed in an avalanche,*

*I couldn't breathe. The days, and weeks, and months that followed are a blur. I didn't leave my house for almost a month, except to head to Canada to retrieve his remains with my dad. It felt like my whole world had collapsed in on me.*

*But this loss has shaped my life. I am a completely different person than I would've been had this accident never happened. I have not let this tragedy ruin my life, I have found my silver lining... I have learned ten things which help to guide me to a better life. These are the lessons that loss has taught me.*

*1. It's all a matter of perspective. So you lost an important spreadsheet, or you tweeted something that caused a bit of a storm. So what? Let's think about how important it really is. Are you going to die because it happened? No? Ok, move on. It's not worth spending any of your life worrying about. I struggle with this every day, I'm a naturally anxious person. But it's something I work at each day. And I'm so much happier for it. Don't sweat the small stuff, because it really doesn't matter. If it helps, compare the thing that's causing you grief with something that would cause you serious grief... perspective is a beautiful thing.*

*2. Find people who are a light in your life, and hold on to them. After my brother died, it was as if I put some tinted glasses on and saw the whole world differently. Your priorities change; whenever there is some stupid argument or someone is gossiping about someone else, you just don't care. People who are self-centered, ditch them. People who make you feel good, hold on to them. Life is too short to be around people who don't light your fire. Find your tribe, and let them know you appreciate them. I constantly tell my friends and family how much I love them. Tell your people that they light up your life, and you in turn will light up their day.*

*3. Do you know what's even worse than finding yourself somewhere you don't like? Staying there. We've all ended up in situations where we aren't happy. Maybe you hate your job, maybe you're in a bad relationship. Leave it. You have to take control of your happiness, no one else will. I've been there, I know it's scary. Don't be complacent, don't spend your time wishing away your tomorrows. Don't wait for a more convenient moment. Be brave, take a leap. It will all be ok in the end. If it's not ok, it's not the end.*

*4. Remember that thing you'd love to do someday? Do it now. I've watched my peers really stumble on this. Plagued by 'what ifs' and doubts, unable to move forward because they are afraid. We've all heard people shouting 'YOLO' and chastising our safety-minded heads, and we laugh it away because it isn't practical. But what my brother's death has taught me is that you aren't guaranteed a tomorrow, or another year, much less another fifty. So you have a passion you'd like to pursue but you're waiting for the perfect time? What if you spend the next ten years doing something that you hate and then die? You don't want to have wasted your life waiting for the perfect time. There is no perfect time. But there is today, and you can do it now.*

*5. Shine on, and help others to do the same. I used to pretend to be stupid so as not to intimidate those around me, not because I'm some kind of genius, but so I didn't stand out or appear arrogant. That doesn't serve anyone, and it sure as hell didn't serve me. What really serves you, is to be the very best version of yourself. And as you liberate yourself you will unconsciously give others permission to do the same. I found this quote a few months after Evan died, and it has changed my life:*



6. Don't do things that make you unhappy. Sound simple? It's not really. It takes a lot of concentrated effort to say no to and let go of things that aren't helpful to you, but your life genuinely is too short not to. This has been my mantra since the day my brother died. And it's not been easy to follow. I've been in shit places doing things I didn't want to do, and it was easier to stay, but it wasn't helping me and I was unhappy. So I left. I left a relationship that was damaging my confidence, I left a job that was causing me so many tears. And that was scary. Really scary. But you know what? I'm in such a better place now. If you're unhappy, something isn't right. Figure out what it is and get yourself out of there. You owe it to yourself to stop doing things that make you unhappy.

7. Find your thing, and do it. How often have you been told to simply "Do what you love"? I know, it can sound like a load of hallelujah. But let me tell you a secret... it's really not. My friend Matt often says "What's your tennis ball?" What is the thing that, like a dog chasing a tennis ball for hours on end, gets you excited? What could you pursue for hours and hours on end? Maybe it's playing the piano, or working with children, or maybe you really love doing DIY, or amateur dramatics. Find your thing and do it, it doesn't even have to be your job. But if you chase that thing you love, opportunities will follow. They say it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert in something. So do what you love and see where you get to, at least you'll enjoy it along the way. Make time for yourself to do what you love, one day you'll be thanking yourself for having done so.

8. Create serendipity for yourself. We all love those serendipitous moments, when you seem to be in the right place at the right time. It seems like luck, but you can create your own luck. Surround yourself with people who push you to do more, to be better, and who you come alive with. Put yourself out there, do something that scares you every month, you will be astounded by the opportunities you create for yourself. Don't wait for luck to come along and push you into something exciting, because it may never happen. Go out there and create some serendipity for yourself. The only reason I now have the privilege to work at Escape the City is because I put myself out there. Why not do something today that pushes you out of your comfort zone? You never know what might come of it.

9. Give, give, and give some more. When I was a kid I frequently heard my parents claim they preferred giving to receiving gifts. I couldn't believe it, what could be better than getting presents from someone else? But there was something to their logic, and now I get it. Nothing gives me so much pleasure as to see someone else being joyful because of something I've done for them. We all have so much to give to others: time, money, knowledge, advice. It's so easy now to share a little of yourself with those who need it, and it makes life so much fuller. I volunteer for Young Enterprise, helping 16–17 year olds to learn enterprise skills, and each week I walk away beaming. I've also put myself forward to work with St John's Ambulance service, so that like my brother (a former EMT & Firefighter), I can be a lifeline for those in need. Unconvinced about volunteering? If you don't want to give to strangers, why not give to people you know who might need a listening ear or a helping hand? It will enrich not only your life, but the lives of those you love.

10. Don't be too hard on yourself. Living in an ever-connected world doesn't help our self-confidence. Never before have we been so acutely aware of the amazing adventures and jobs that our peers are undertaking. FOMO has officially been accepted into the national vocabulary, it's widely accepted and dampening our chances at being happy with our lot. I have a friend who is off to Colombia for three months on an adventure of a lifetime, I see my peers starting up businesses and taking year-long sabbaticals, and it's hard not to beat myself up thinking that I'm not being brave enough. Don't be too hard on yourself, set your own definition of success, it's personal. Take small steps, they'll lead you to big brave changes in the direction where you want to be.



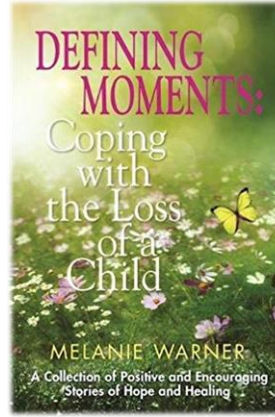
Remember to be grateful, you're alive. We all have so much to be grateful for, no matter what has happened in our lives. I have so much to be grateful for. I feel the pain of my brother's death so often that sometimes it's really hard to keep it up, to feel positive and to move forward. But I am grateful for the time we had together as children, I am grateful for the last time I saw him when I gave him a bear hug and told him I loved him 35 times. I am so grateful for that. And I am grateful for my silver lining, for these ten lessons that I have learned in life so far, that have led me to the beautifully complicated and chaotic life I have. We can all find something in our not-so-great times that we can be grateful for... a lesson learned, a new friend, a newfound strength. Don't forget how powerful that is. Written by: Skye Robertson/ <https://byrslf.com>



# Book of the Month



**This month's spotlight book is:**



**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.

*In Loving Memory of all our beloved children*

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.**

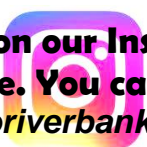


### Our Mission

#### *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.

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



### 2019 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*

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  
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chapter events.

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

