

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

December 2021

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, December 13th

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

Upcoming Meetings

January 10th

February 14th

March 14th



Our Mission

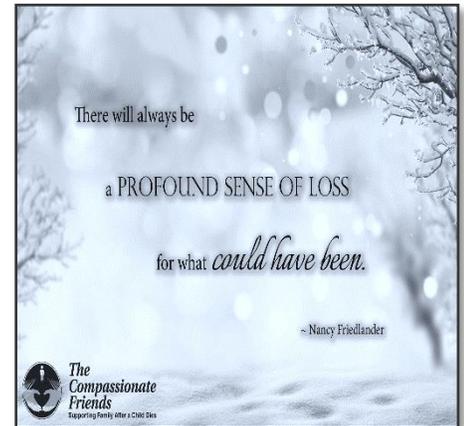
The mission of The Compassionate Friends:

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

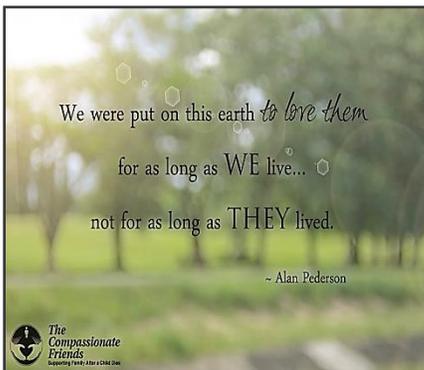
Janet Neal
Outreach Coordinator

Vacant Position
Hospitality & Library

Chad Homme
Public Relations

Kris Leitner
Newsletter Editor

Mike & Suzanne Casity
Website



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](#)





2nd Monthly Meeting

Thursday, December ?? at 7:00 p.m.

Please join us for an online meeting

[Launch Meeting - Zoom](#)



Sunday Conversations

No meeting in the month of December

Wishing you a gentle end of the year

We will resume in January



WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting on the 2nd Sunday in December unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 12th, 2021 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the annual Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL), a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance and has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held, and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died and will never be forgotten.

[Virtual Worldwide Candle Lighting - Compassionate Friends](#)



Offering Help After A Suicide Death

[Friends for Survival Inc. - Suicide Bereavement, Bereavement Support](#)

The group meets, by Zoom, on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

Pre-registration is required @ [Meetings \(friendsforsurvival.org\)](#)

6 Tips for Coping with Grief During the Holidays



*"What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us."
- Helen Keller*

The holidays can be an especially difficult time for those experiencing grief. So many holiday routines and activities revolve around the gathering of family and friends. Yet, bereaved parents may not feel up for celebrating as usual or embracing holiday traditions that they have in the past. Instead of feeling a sense of loss over what the holidays were supposed to be, we can take this as an opportunity to recreate what they will be for our families from now on. The following are tips for enjoying your holidays in the face of grief.

1. Simplify

Don't expect to do everything you have in the past. Pick and choose what you're up for. This will give you the chance to think about which traditions hold real meaning for you and which you have simply observed because of habit or other people's expectations.

Communicate with your family and friends. They will understand if you need to "take a break" from past expectations. Let them know what your plans are and what you might need from them in return.

2. Honor Your Family

You had hopes and expectation for what the holidays would be like. And now things have changed. Acknowledge that loss.

Many holiday traditions, like gift giving, hold special significance for parents and children. It can be hard to think of yourself as a parent when your child has died. Be sure to remember the many gifts you gave your little one while they were with you – and the gifts they gave to you.

3. Make Room for Your Feelings

Slow down and allow yourself time to think about and remember your baby. Talk about your child. Let other people know how you want your child to be talked about and remembered by showing them with your words and actions.

4. Create New Traditions

Holidays mark special milestones in a family's life. Think about how you will remember the life of your child in your family's history and traditions. Change the focus of your celebration. Revisit why you celebrate a particular holiday and what its significance is in your life. This can give traditions and rituals a renewed depth of meaning.

5. Be Generous with Others

Do things that help you feel connected. Spend time with the people you love. Nurture those relationships. Give of your time, talents, and skills. Sharing can lift spirits and ease burdens.

6. Be Generous with Yourself

Expect that you will feel sad sometimes. Or angry. Or alone. These are all appropriate feelings. Don't think of them as being counter-productive. What they really are is an acknowledgement of the intense love you hold for your child. Allow yourself to be happy. There is nothing selfish about celebrating or feeling joy. The capacity for joy is what connects us to each other. It's what the holidays are all about. [6 Tips for Coping with Grief](#)

[During the Holidays - Hand to Hold](#)

7 Things I've Learned Since the Loss of My Child



Child loss is a loss like no other. One often misunderstood by many. If you love a bereaved parent or know someone who does, remember that even his or her “good” days are harder than you could ever imagine. Compassion and love, not advice, are what’s needed. If you’d like an inside look into why the loss of a child is a grief that lasts a lifetime, here is what I’ve learned in my seven years of trekking through the unimaginable.

1). Love never dies.

There will never come a day, hour, minute or second I stop loving or thinking about my son. Just as parents of living children unconditionally love their children always and forever, so do bereaved parents. I want to say and hear his name just the same as non-bereaved parents do. I want to speak about my deceased child as normally and naturally as you talk about your living ones.

We Speak Their Names

I love my child just as much as you love yours— the only difference is mine lives in heaven and talking about him is unfortunately quite taboo in our culture. I hope to change that. Our culture isn’t so great about hearing about children gone too soon, but that doesn’t stop me from saying my son’s name and sharing his love and light everywhere I go. Just because it might make you uncomfortable, doesn’t make him matter any less. My son’s life was cut irreversibly short, but his love lives on forever. And ever.

2). Bereaved parents share an unspeakable bond.

In my seven years of navigating the world as a bereaved parent, I am continually struck by the power of the bond between bereaved parents. Strangers become kindreds in mere seconds— a look, a glance, a knowing of the heart connects us, even if we’ve never met before. No matter our circumstances, who we are, or how different we are, there is no greater bond than the connection between parents who understand the agony of enduring the death of a child. It’s a pain we suffer for a lifetime, and unfortunately, only those who have walked the path of child loss understand the depth and breadth of both the pain and the love we carry.

3). I will grieve for a lifetime.

Period. The end. There is no “moving on,” or “getting over it.” There is no bow, no fix, no solution to my heartache. There is no end to the ways I will grieve and for how long I will grieve. There is no glue for my broken heart, no elixir for my pain, no going back in time. For as long as I breathe, I will grieve and ache and love my son with all my heart and soul.

There will never come a time when I don’t think about who my son would be, what he would look like, and how he would be woven perfectly into the tapestry of my family.

I wish people could understand that grief lasts forever because love endures forever; that the loss of a child is not one finite event, it is a continuous loss that unfolds minute by minute throughout a lifetime. Every missed birthday, holiday, a milestone; should-be back-to-school years and graduations; weddings that will never be, grandchildren that should have been but will never be born— an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered *forever*.

One More Milestone Missed

This is why grief lasts forever. The ripple effect lasts indefinitely. The bleeding never stops.

4). It's a club I can never leave but is full of the most shining souls I've ever known.

This crappy club called child loss is a club I never wanted to join, and one I can never leave, yet is filled with some of the best people I've ever known. And yet we all wish we could jump ship— that we could have met another way— *any* other way but *this*. Alas, these shining souls are the most beautiful, compassionate, grounded, loving, movers, shakers and healers I have ever had the honor of knowing. They are life-changers, game-changers, relentless survivors, and thrivers — warrior moms and dads who redefine the word brave.

Every day loss parents move mountains in honor of their children gone too soon. They start movements, change laws, and spearhead crusades of tireless activism. Why? In the hope that even just one parent could be spared from joining *the club*. If you've ever wondered who some of the most significant world changers are, hang out with a few bereaved parents and watch how they live, see what they do in a day, a week, a lifetime. Watch how they alchemize their grief into a force to be reckoned with, watch how they turn tragedy into transformation, loss into a legacy.

Love is the most powerful force on earth, and the love between a bereaved parent and his/her child is a life force to behold. Get to know a bereaved parent. You'll be thankful you did.

5). The empty chair/room/space never becomes less empty.

Empty chair, empty room, space in every family picture. Empty, vacant, forever gone. Empty spaces that should be full, everywhere we go. There is and will always be a missing space in our lives, our families, a forever-hole-in-our-hearts. Time does not make the area less empty. Neither do platitudes, clichés or well-wishes for us to “move on,” or “stop dwelling,” from well-intentioned friends or family. Nothing does. No matter how you look at it, empty is still empty. Missing is still missing. The problem is nothing can fill it.

Minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after heartbreaking year space remains. No matter how much time has passed.

Burying the Grief

The space of our missing child(ren) lasts a lifetime. And so we rightfully miss them forever. Help us by holding the scope of that truth for us.

6). *No matter how long it's been, holidays never become easier without my son.*

Never, ever. Have you ever wondered why *every* holiday season is like torture for a bereaved parent? Even if it's been 5, 10, or 25 years later? It's because they really, indeed are horrific. Imagine if you had to live every holiday without one or more of your precious children.

Imagine how that might feel for you. It would be easier to lose an arm, a leg or two— *anything*— than to live without your flesh and blood, without the beat of your heart. Almost anything would be easier than living without one or more of your precious children. That is why holidays are *always and forever* hard for bereaved parents. Don't wonder why or even try to understand. Know you don't have to understand to be a supportive presence. Consider supporting and loving some bereaved parents this holiday season. It will be the best gift you could ever give them.

7). *Because I know deep sorrow, I also know unspeakable joy.*

Though I will grieve the death of my son forever and then some, it does not mean my life is lacking happiness and joy. Quite the contrary. It is not either/or; it's both/and. Grief and joy can and do coexist.

My life is more precious now. I live from a deeper place. I love deeper still. Because I grieve, I also know joy like no other. The joy I experience now is far more profound and more intense than the joy I experienced before my loss. Such is the alchemy of grief.

Because I've clawed my way from the depths of unimaginable pain, suffering, and sorrow, again and again— when the joy comes, however, and whenever it does— it is a joy that reverberates through every pore of my skin and every bone in my body. I feel all of it, deeply. I embrace and thank every blessed morsel of it. My life now is more rich and vibrant and full, not despite my loss, but *because* of it.

In grief, there are gifts, sometimes many. These gifts don't in any way make it all “worth” it, but I am grateful beyond words for every gift that comes my way. I bow my head to each one and say *thank you, thank you, thank you*. Because there is nothing— and I mean absolutely nothing— I take for granted.

Living life in this way gives me greater joy than I've ever known possible. I have my son to thank for that. Being his mom is the best gift I've ever been given. Even death can't take that away.

What will I do this **holiday** season?

weep for you. *Miss you.*

Be **kind** to a stranger because of our love.

Invoke your **name** so others will honor you.

Stand in awe at the **beauty** of all you are.

Meditate on your life and death.

Carry you in my heart wherever I journey.

Show mercy to *children* and animals.

Ask for your *forgiveness*. And presence.

unfold your love into the world.
Remember. Your. Beauty.

Dr. Joanne Cacciatore



Little dove I love you so
but I know you had to go.
So spread your wings
and fly my love,
soar above the world my dove.
Paint the sky in indigo,
let your graceful colors flow,
and I'll search the sky
for your rainbow.

Christy Ann Martine

♥ 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, grandchildren & siblings

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 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.

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 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, 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.



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

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

www.modestoriverbanktcf.org

Support our chapter by using
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(click on the link above for further information).

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, 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.

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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.