

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 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)

The meeting scheduled for
Monday, December, 14th
will be conducted as a
Zoom meeting online

Upcoming Meetings

January 11th

February 8th

March 8th

Visit us on Facebook
The Modesto Area Chapter
of TCF



Find us on Instagram at
Modestoriverbank_tcf



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.



2020 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



*December events and activities
remain cancelled or postponed
until further notice.*



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.

The Worldwide Candlelighting ~ December 13, 2020

Alan Pedersen will share a healing message & music starting at 6:30 p.m. in all U.S. Continental Time Zones

4 Live programs in one night, to celebrate & remember our beautiful children, grandchildren & siblings.

Simply go to the *Angels Across the USA* Facebook page at 6:30 p.m. in your local time zone.

Please bring your candle & join in this special event.



Practical Ideas for Dealing with the Holidays after Child Loss



It cannot be overstated: *holidays are extremely hard after loss.*

Every family gathering highlights the hole where my son **SHOULD** be, but **ISN'T**.

There is no “*right way*” or “*wrong way*” to handle the holidays after losing a child. **For many, there is only survival - especially the very first year.**

These days also stir great internal conflict: I want to enjoy and celebrate my living children and my family still here while missing my son/daughter that isn't.

Emotions run high and are, oh so difficult to manage.

So I'm including some ideas from other bereaved parents on how they've handled the holidays. Many of these suggestions could be adapted for any “special” day of the year.

Not all will appeal to everyone nor will they be appropriate for every family. *But they are a place to start.* (If you have decided to make a **Holiday Journal**, consider printing these ideas to put inside or copying out the ones that might be helpful for you).

Skip it.

- Sounds drastic and it is. But for some families (especially if there are no small children involved) it is absolutely possible (and sometimes healing) to ignore all traditions and trappings associated with Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- You might choose to serve others on these days by volunteering with a local organization offering meals to the homeless or disadvantaged in your community.
- Take a holiday meal to hospital workers, police officers or firemen in your area. You can do it anonymously or in the name of your child.

Consider traveling for the holidays.

- On the first Thanksgiving after my son left us, we shared the weekend with our newly married son and his wife in another state. It was the first time in my life I hadn't spent the holiday with my parents. It was still very hard, but helpful in a way.
- Other families have chosen to rent a cabin or condo and have the same people involved but experience the season in another location. *Most try to choose a place with a natural focus for activity that isn't all about the holiday* - like skiing in the mountains or near a lake or beach.

Change how you do meals.

- If your family traditions always include the same foods in the same house, you might want to eat the holiday meal in a restaurant instead.
- You could swap up the timing of a meal - evening instead of noon or vice-versa.
- Change up the guest list-include a few close friends along with family members (*friends that understand your grief*). Sometimes it helps to have others not so affected by the loss in the mix.
- If you have been the host but don't feel like you can do it this year - definitely consider passing that to someone else. ***And don't feel guilty about it.***
- Include the missing family members at the table in some way. One bereaved mom wrote: *“My niece includes my son and mom at events hosted in her home. She sets a chair aside and places a photo in the seat and a commemorative bow on the chair back.”*
- Don't make certain foods. I make giant plates of cookies but have not made shortbread cookies since my son left us. It was his favorite and one of the few things that tempted him from his strict weight-lifting diet
- Make your child's favorites and enjoy eating them and sharing memories around the table.

Let others do the planning/cooking/communicating.

- Explain to your family that you aren't up to being the one to plan this year's holidays. Let someone else do it. Participate if and when you can.
- Be kind, but stand your ground.

Make new traditions.

- If you go around the table at Thanksgiving saying, *"I'm thankful for..."* - it might not be something you can do this year. That's OK.
- Light a candle for the missing child. You might want to have those present share a favorite memory or you might simply want to have the candle create a silent presence.
- Some families can't bring themselves to use the same Christmas tree they used before loss so they get a new and/or different one. Some don't want a tree at all.
- Some families have a separate tree full of ornaments or memorabilia for their missing child and use the main tree as usual for the rest of the family.
- *"I have a separate tree for my son. It's filled with ornaments that remind us of him. They range from glass ornaments with his favorite candy inside to a Thomas the tank engine ornament. Collecting more ornaments for him as I'm out shopping for others helps me during this very painful time."*
- Some families don't hang any stockings while others hang them all, including the missing child's.
- Another family asks family members and friends to write a note to their son or share a favorite memory of him. They place them in his stocking to be opened and read on Christmas Day.
- *"We asked everyone to do a random act of kindness in memory of our daughter and our friends' son and to email it to us. We printed out all of the emails, put them in her stocking and read them as a family on Christmas morning. It was amazing to hear all of the lives touched as a result, and it took our focus off of our loss."*
- My husband, children (all adults) and I didn't want to receive gifts from extended family the first year. We still gave them, but asked that others refrain or give a donation in our son's name.
- Some families buy gifts that would be appropriate for another child the same age as their missing child (or the age they would be) and give them to another child for Christmas.

Commemorate your child.

- Some bereaved parents put a Christmas tree with solar powered or battery powered lights on their child's resting place.
- Some parents take family photos and include a large photo of their missing child or a special family memento (*like a stuffed animal or symbol on a shirt*) to represent that child in the pictures.
- Some families give donations in their child's name to organizations that purchase Christmas gifts for needy families or food for families at Thanksgiving.
- In some communities there is a *"Blue Christmas"* ceremony on December 21st each year in which families gather to remember lost loved ones with music, candles and sometimes a devotional message. Some are sponsored by local chapters of The Compassionate Friends. If there is not one in your area, your church may be willing to host one.

Keep the same traditions.

- For some families, keeping everything the same is the most comforting choice. Especially if there are young children involved, it may be the easiest way to go.
- ***But feel free to ask for help.*** If you are not up to shopping for children in the family, make a list, let someone else do it and wrap the presents for you or use an online shopping service (many offer gift wrap).
- Same goes for holiday outings - maybe a good family friend or an extended family member could take the children this year and document it with photos.

Whatever you choose to do or not do, know that there's no wrong way or right way. Be gentle with yourself - this is a hard road. And a long one.

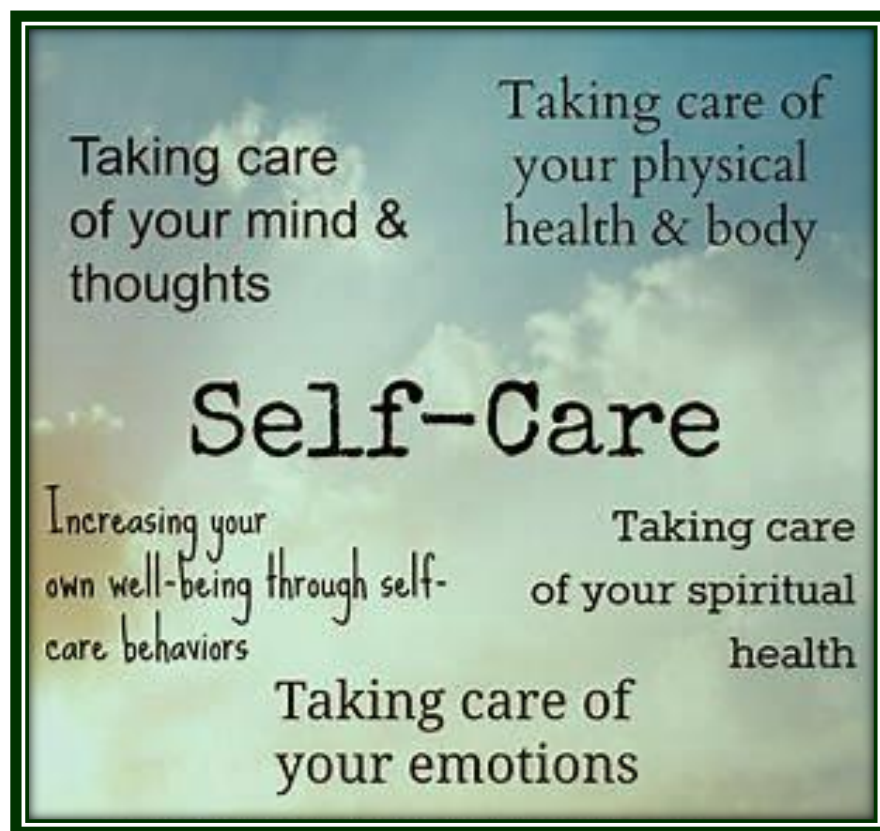
Article by: <https://thelifeididntchoose.com/2016/09/04/>

This article is the fourth in a series on making plans for the holidays after loss. Yes, it's early and no, you might not want to think about them-it's really hard to imagine Thanksgiving and Christmas without the child you love. BUT, the days will come whether we want them to or not. Here's some help to navigate them. Here are links to the other three articles in the series:

[*Grief and Holiday Plans: Working Out the Details*](#)

[*Grief, Holidays and Hard Conversations*](#)

[*Grief and Holidays:What the Bereaved Need From Friends and Family.*](#)



♥ 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 memory of all our beloved children, siblings & grandchildren ...

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](https://www.instagram.com/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.



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 Amazon Smile

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, 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).

How to turn on AmazonSmile in the mobile app

1

Join AmazonSmile

If you are not already an AmazonSmile member, [sign up](#) on your web browser. Simply select your favorite charity to start generating donations, at no cost to you.

2

Get the app

Download or update to the latest version of the Amazon Shopping app on your phone. You can find it in the [App Store](#) for iOS or [Google Play](#) for Android.

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.