



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

July 2019

tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com

LETTER FROM THE LEADER

Last month, on June 17th, my son, James, was supposed to turn 30 years old. First, I would like to address the fact that my once tiny, sweet baby was born 30 years ago!! That alone seems unbelievable to me. And then, add into it the fact that my beautiful, loving son isn't even here to celebrate, and my heart breaks all over again. I had such a week of events planned in the week prior to the 17th. Each one was designed to honor James' personality and life. My week-long celebration included his friends sharing their favorite photos and stories along with more inspiring events like encouraging people to register as organ donors. I had carefully laid out my daily schedule of posting events, stories, pictures, and reminders. I was pretty excited to spend a whole week celebrating James with the world. And then.....

We have all heard the expression, "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." That is what happened to me and all my carefully planned celebrations. They not only went awry but they went completely sideways. In the course of my week-long schedule of events, my step-daughter was hospitalized with preeclampsia, my niece died suddenly, and my grandson was born by urgent C-section. And, of course, I still had James' actual birthday to contend with. I truly think that I experienced every human emotion that week. And, guess what? I got through it. I made it. It wasn't how or what I planned, but it was beautiful in both its joy and its heartbreak. We had a family dinner with love, laughter, joy, memories, and cake in honor of both my son and my niece and to celebrate our newest member, Wyatt. It was perfect.

That week has taught me so much. None of us ever planned on being on this journey. I never imagined a life where my son was dead. And yet, here I am living that exact life. I am slowly learning that while there is (and always will be) heartbreak and grief, there is also joy and happiness in this unplanned life. I am learning to accept and even to enjoy the happy moments of my life now. I am learning that it is okay to feel both pain and sorrow simultaneously. It has taken five years, countless tears, and a week of erratic, unplanned incidents for me to begin to understand how to find balance between remembering James' death while honoring his life.

Tracey Parker ~ James' Mom



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, July 8th.*

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

Upcoming Meetings

August 12th
September 9th
October 14th

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



EVENTS

Lunch with the Ladies

Date: Sunday, July 21st

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Location: Ralston's Goat 1001 10th St., Modesto, 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, July 6th and Saturday, August 3rd
for breakfast with other bereaved dads in our chapter.

8 am at Perko's in Riverbank, 2120 Patterson Rd, at corner of Oakdale Rd. 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.

5th Tuesday Dinner

July 30th

BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse

3401 Dale Rd., Modesto (in front of Vintage Faire Mall)

6:00 p.m.

You are invited to join us for our first ever 5th Tuesday Dinner! Several times a year, certain months will
have a 5th Tuesday. We will be hosting a dinner for all of our membership to gather for food and fellowship.

It's a wonderful chance to get to know other members and relax with those who "get it".

Please RSVP to Tracey by phone or text 209-996-2040.

MORE EVENTS



*Celebrating the life and memory of
Kristen Perez through the game of golf*

Sunday, July 28, 2019

9AM

www.kristen-casity-perez.com

register for the event on the website

Swenson Park Golf Course

6803 Alexandria Place

Stockton, CA 95207

**ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE GOLF TOURNAMENT WILL BE DONATED TO
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS MODESTO-RIVERBANK, CA CHAPTER.**



Overview of Event

2 MAN SCRAMBLE FORMAT

Scramble format involves 2-person teams where each player on the team hits a tee shot, and then the players decide which shot they like better. The two players then play from that spot. The person who's shot was not taken picks up their ball and moves it to within one club length of the selected spot.

CLOSEST TO THE HOLE AT EVERY PAR 3

Every Par 3 will offer a closest to the hole game, with the winner of each hole, receiving **\$50 gift card** to Dick's Sporting Goods. Buy in is \$5.00 per hole, Max. 2 attempts per hole.

ALL YOU CAN EAT TACOS

Kristen's favorite Taqueria, Taqueria Modesto, will be catering the event. All you can eat tacos starting at **11:00AM to 2:00PM**.

TOURNAMENT MERCHANDISE

Angie Quilon will be selling handcrafted Tournament Merchandise. **Pre-Order** today.

RAFFLE PRIZES

There will be an array of items being raffled off for the event. We can't thank everyone who has donated a raffle prize.

COMPLIMENTARY DRINKS EVERY 3RD HOLE

To keep golfers hydrated, complimentary drinks will be provided every third hole

AND MORE EVENTS



"Deep in the Heart of Hope" is the theme for the regional conference in South Texas. October 4th-6th, bereaved families from across the country will gather in Houston TX. There will be over 25 workshops, sharing sessions and panels to choose from, a Crafty Corner, a Candle Lighting Dinner and a very moving Walk to Remember on Sunday morning! With Ghislaine Thomsen, Maureen Wittels and Alan Pedersen all scheduled to be speakers it promises to be a weekend full of love, support, and compassion. For more information or to register you can visit their website.

www.tcfouthtexasregionalconference.org/tcf--southtexaconference.aspx or visit them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TCFSouthTexasRegionalConference/.

Paint Night at the Casity's



We are so excited that Mike & Suzanne Casity are graciously hosting a paint night!!

Please join us on Saturday, August 10th at 6:00 p.m. @ 1567 Parkview St., Manteca, CA while we eat, paint and bond! Mike has promised us some delicious barbeque with the side dishes by our Steering Committee members.

Lorie Avila, a local artist will be instructing us as we paint a butterfly scene on canvas.

The cost is \$25 per which will include all the supplies you need.

To reserve your spot please RSVP to Tracey by phone or text at 209-996-2040 no later than Monday, August 5th.



What it means to ‘Change your relationship with grief’



www.whatsyourgrief.com

There are things that you get over in life. For example a cold, your first breakup, or an argument with a good friend. More often than not, these things happen, they cause temporary misery, maybe you learn from it, and then you let bygones be bygones. Many experiences follow a similar pattern and with good reason. There are things we can and should leave in the past for the benefit of everyone, just imagine how much pain and negativity we'd all carry around if we could never forget and move on.

That said, it is a mistake to think that *all painful experiences* can and should be gotten over. There are times when such a shift simply isn't possible – people can't always change the way they think, feel, and behave simply because they want to. It's common to think that, in these instances, one can go to therapy or take medication and be cured of these problems, but many people who've experienced things like serious hardship, trauma, addiction, and psychological disorder will tell you that healing isn't about putting these experiences in the past, rather it's about changing their relationship to the related thoughts, memories, behaviors, and emotions that exist in the present.

There are also times when 'getting over' something or 'forgetting' isn't even desirable, such as getting over or forgetting about a deceased loved one and their ongoing absence. Still, many people mistakenly think that grief is something that can and should end at some point. Those who understand grief in hindsight may think this is a foolish mistake, but I would argue it's common and understandable considering how little people know about grief before experiencing it. Especially those who live in societies where people are quick to believe that grief runs a linear and finite course and, as a consequence, encourage grieving people to push forward and let the woes of the past disappear like water under the bridge.

The reality of grief is that it often stays with you until the day you, yourself, die. For those who think of grief as being all negative emotion, I can see where this may seem unmanageable, but rest assured the impact of grief changes over time. As you change your relationship with grief – by changing how you respond to, cope with, and conceptualize grief – you will likely also find hope and healing. If you think about it, grief is one instance where there is a strong benefit to accepting its ongoing presence in your life because doing so creates more room for comfort, positive memories, and an ongoing connection with the person who died.

Below is how the author of this article felt her relationship with grief changed over time. Perhaps as we begin to move forward through our own grief it would be beneficial to break down our process, as the author has, and think about the progress we are making.

At first I tried to outrun, wait out, hide from, and ignore grief



Eventually, I realized my grief wasn't going anywhere so I could either run from it forever or give in and experience it. Once the cloud of grief consumed me, it was hard to see or feel anything else. This sucked (but only slightly more than the running).



In the early days of grief, it felt like all the light had been drained from the world and everything was dark. But as the fog of acute grief thinned, a little bit of light crept in and things started to look a little less scary and a little more manageable.



I grew less intimidated by my grief and increasingly confident in my ability to handle its ups, downs, twists, and turns. Once I was able to look grief head on, I realized it's made up of both good things and bad. Grief grows from the same seeds as love so after someone dies, one seldom exists without the other.



Over time my relationship with grief has changed. I see it now as something as nuanced, complex, and beautiful as my relationships with those who have died. Though its ongoing presence is sometimes challenging, I embrace it because it's a source of love and connection with those who have died.





Reminders

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

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!!

We are excited to announce that we are currently taking orders for our very own chapter t-shirts! With the words "Forever in Our Hearts" inside a stylized heart on the front and the TCF logo surrounded by our chapter name we believe that they are a great way to honor our loved ones while promoting our chapter and the TCF message.

The shirts are \$15.72 (with an additional charge for 2x & 3x sizes). We offer both purple and royal blue colors in men's and women's styles. You may choose to have them shipped directly to you (with a minimum of \$4.99 for shipping) or you can have them shipped to our chapter for free. Shirts shipped to our chapter will be handed out at our August chapter meeting.

Orders close on July 9th. <https://www.customink.com/g/gas0-00bv-u0q4>



COPING WITH LOSING A CHILD

The difference between fathers and mothers dealing with grief



I write this at the risk of promoting stereotypes but I think it is important to discuss differences in how fathers and mothers tend to grieve. This discussion will certainly not completely apply to any particular couple but I hope there is enough useful information to help fathers and mothers better understand and support each other. I will use the terms “husband” and “wife” while acknowledging that these terms do not necessarily apply to all parental units.

In our culture women tend to form close relationships with other women, and these relationships are typically excellent sources of support during challenging times. Women usually expect to be able to share their joys and their sorrows with their close friends and family members. When a child dies, it is normal for a mother to turn to her support system for comfort.

Sometimes it is hard for a husband to understand why his wife needs to talk about the death so much. It might seem to him that talking with her friends and family about the death only makes his wife more upset. Men sometimes wonder why women seem to dwell on what happened instead of moving on.

On the other hand, women frequently share with me that it seems as if their husbands are not grieving. Women tend to view not talking about the child as abnormal, and maybe even a sign that the father does not care as much as the mother. Men’s tendency to “stay busy” following a child’s death is also viewed in a negative way by many women.



I have talked with many mothers and fathers following the death of a child, and I have developed a view of how the genders typically cope with the death of a child. Mothers usually have a deep need to remember in obvious ways, and so they talk about the child and everything that happened. They watch videos, make scrapbooks, hang pictures, and they talk a lot. Mothers are more open with their grief, and therefore their pain and functional limitations are usually quite obvious.



In our society, men are expected to fix things and when a child dies, a father is confronted with the reality that this is not something he can fix. Not only is his child gone, but typically his wife is in deep and obvious pain and he is helpless to fix that. Conditioned to “do something”, it is completely understandable to me that many men retreat from their wife’s grief into their work, where they can actually accomplish something most days.

Something else that I have observed over the past few years is the profound loneliness of a bereaved father. Men are not usually allowed the privilege of close friendships the way women are in our society, and so often men rely on their wives for their primary source of emotional support. When a couple loses a child, the wife turns to her friends/family while the husband is faced with the loss of his child AND his primary support system – his wife. This is nobody’s fault but it is very often a reality.

Mothers and fathers may express their grief in different ways, but I am convinced that expression (or lack thereof) is not an indicator of depth of grief. Men and women both suffer profoundly and deeply when they lose a child, even if their grieving looks different.

Differences in grief do not have to drive couples apart. The first thing that can help is to remember that it is perfectly normal for people to express grief in different ways. Second, it is also normal to cope with grief in different ways, and we certainly see this in every couple that loses a child. Judging another person’s grief is not helpful or loving, and so mothers and fathers need to aim for acceptance with each other. Third, it is very important not to use grief as a measure of love. A parent whose grief is more private did not love that child any less simply because s/he is not as open with feelings.



In addition to being gentle and accepting of our partner’s grief experience, couples can support each other by actively working on their relationship. A child’s legacy should not be the destruction of his/her parents’ relationship and so it is a tribute to the child you both love to work on the relationship. Think back to a time when your relationship was happy – what did you do together? What did you talk about? Make a list and then start doing those things from a happier time.

The death of a child is a big strain on a relationship but it does not mean a marriage or relationship is doomed to failure! Understanding and respecting differences in the expression of grief is important and so is making time for the relationship. Take that other parent – the one your sweet child loved so much – and do something kind and loving in honor of your child.

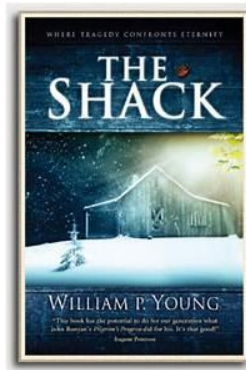
Sometimes relationships need help, and that is certainly available. Marriage counselors can help couples find a smoother path again. If a counselor seems like a good idea, be prepared to shop around for one that seems compatible with you and your spouse. Also, look for one that has experience both with couples and also with grief.

There are wide variations of normal grief in both men and women. Differences in the expression of grief and coping should not be seen as a problem, but simply as differences. Children’s memories are honored when we continue to love, respect and support the other parent through the difficult – but shared – loss of that child.

<https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/child/couples-and-grief/>

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.

Roni Edgmon in loving memory of her son Ryan Anthony Edgmon

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.

IF THERE'S ONE THING I LEARNED ABOUT GRIEF,
IT'S THAT IT ALWAYS SURPRISES ME. DISAPPEARING
ONE MINUTE, RETURNING WITH A
VENGEANCE ANOTHER. SOMETIMES IT SURFACES
IN TEARS, OTHER IN ANGER AND APOLOGIES. I
DON'T UNDERSTAND... THE SMALLEST TRIGGER, A
SIMILAR LAUGH, A SONG, A PLACE YOU DRIVE BY..
AND IN AN INSTANT IT FEELS LIKE YOU ARE FLUNG
INTO A TIME MACHINE TRANSPORTED BACK TO
THAT MOMENT WHEN THE TIME STOOD STILL AND
THEY WERE STANDING NEXT TO YOU.

-SKY N.



Thank you 7- Eleven stores at
2500 Geer Rd., Turlock, CA and
3225 McHenry Ave., Modesto, CA
for sponsoring our monthly
newsletter!!



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.

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 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

The Mountain.

lessonslearnedinlife.com

If the mountain seems too big today
then climb a hill instead.
If the morning brings you sadness
it's ok to stay in bed.
If the day ahead weighs heavy
and your plans feel like a curse,
there's no shame in rearranging,
don't make yourself feel worse.
If a shower stings like needles
and a bath feels like you'll drown,
if you haven't washed your hair for days,
don't throw away your crown.
A day is not a lifetime
a rest is not defeat,
don't think of it as failure,
just a quiet, kind retreat.
It's ok to take a moment
from an anxious, fractured mind,
the world will not stop turning
while you get realigned.
The mountain will still be there
when you want to try again,
you can climb it in your own time,
just love yourself til then.
— Laura Ding-Edwards



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. It's a great way to keep in touch between chapter meetings and activities.