

The Compassionate Friends

The Modesto Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Families 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

April 2025

tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com

MONTHLY MEETING

7:00 PM

Community Hospice
4368 Spyres Way
Modesto, CA 95356

*Please join us at our
next meeting on
Monday, April 14th
Please arrive by 6:50 p.m.
We begin promptly
@ 7:00 p.m.*

Upcoming Meetings

May 12th
June 9th
July 14th

Carrying Them Forward

We carry them in the stories we tell, in the traditions we keep, in the love we share. They live through us, in the kindness we give to others. Their legacy is not just in the past but in every moment we honor their memory.

**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**



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.

Missing you has settled into my bones.
What once was fierce has softened.
Like a constant melody, your name,
pouring through my mind- on repeat.
Your memory, the undercurrent of my days.

- LEXI BEHRNDT -

MESSAGE LINE

(209)622-6786

*Please leave a message and a
steering committee member will
return your call.*

2025 Steering Committee

Suzanne Casity
Chapter Co-Leader

Kris Leitner
Chapter Co-Leader

Melinda Lansberry
Secretary

Elsie Freeman
Treasurer

Janet Neal
Outreach Coordinator

Lorie Boisse
Hospitality

Michele Mootz
Public Relations/Social Media

Kris Leitner
Newsletter Editor

Mike & Suzanne Casity
Website





We are planning to dissolve the chapter library. There will be books available at the chapter meetings each month until April 2025. Also, if you would like to browse through the books we have available, as we cannot bring all of them to the chapter meetings, we will be happy to make arrangements for you to go to Kris's home and view them there. Please contact her through the chapter email, tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com.



Spring 2025 Issue of

"We Need Not Walk Alone"

Click on the photo for link to the webpage

Get a photo button made of your child, grandchild or sibling with our button machine!

Close-up photos usually work the best.

Buttons can be made at 6:30 pm on our meeting nights. Bring an extra copy of a photo that can be cut into a circle 3" in diameter.

OR

You can email a copy of your child's photo to Suzanne at scasity@comcast.net and one will be made for you and brought to the next meeting.

This is a wonderful way to share their sweet faces!!





Our Experience of Grief is Unique as a Fingerprint

For the dead and the living, we must bear witness. ~ *Elie Wiesel*

Each person's grief is as unique as their fingerprint. But what everyone has in common is that no matter how they grieve, they share a need for their grief to be witnessed. That doesn't mean needing someone to try to lessen it or reframe it for them. The need is for someone to be fully present to the magnitude of their loss without trying to point out the silver lining.

This need is hardwired in us, since our emotions bind us to one another, and in those bonds is the key to our survival. From the moment we're born, we realize we're not alone. Our brains are equipped with mirroring neurons, which is why when the mother smiles, the baby smiles back. This continues into adulthood. I remember walking down the street one day and a man said to me, "Howdy." I'm not usually someone who says "Howdy." But I instinctively said back to him, "Howdy!" This is more than copying each other's expressions. It's also about the emotions underlying the expressions. The mirroring neurons enable mother and child to pick up on each other's emotions.

Dr. Edward Tronick is part of a psychology team that made a short video that shows what happens if babies do not feel their emotions reflected and acknowledged by those around them. First, we see a ten-month-old sitting in a high chair, eyes wide and happily fixed on his mother's smiling face. The baby and mother mirror each other as I described above. One laughs, then the other laughs; the baby points and the mother looks in the direction in which he's pointing. But then at the direction of the researchers, the mother turns away, and when she turns back to the baby, she has a blank look on her face. The confused baby does everything to try to get a reaction out of her. He cries and screams in distress. This is an innate reaction, because children know on a subconscious level that they need others for survival. If their survival is dependent on someone who is unable to be truly present for them, they suffer.

The same is true for adults. If they are grieving, they need to feel their grief acknowledged and reflected by others. But in our hyper-busy world, grief has been minimized and sanitized. You get three days off work after a loved one dies and then everyone expects you to carry on like nothing happened. There are fewer and fewer opportunities for those around you to bear witness to your pain, and this can be very isolating.

I was touring in Australia when I met a researcher who told me about the work she was doing to study the way of life in the northern indigenous villages of Australia. One of the villagers told her that the night someone dies, everyone in the village moves a piece of furniture or something else into their yard. The next day, when the bereaved family wakes up and looks outside, they see that *everything has changed* since their loved one died—not just for them but for everyone. That's how these communities witness, and mirror, grief. They are showing in a tangible way that someone's death matters. The loss is made visible.

In this country, too, it was once common for us to come together as a community to bear witness to the grief experienced when a loved one died. But in our current culture, the mourner is made to feel that though his or her own world has been shattered, everyone else's world goes on as if *nothing* has changed. There are too few rituals to commemorate mourning, and too little time allotted to it.

Grief should unite us. It is a universal experience. If I'm talking to someone with a physical ailment, I can listen and empathize, but I may never have that particular problem. When I'm with someone whose loved one died, however, I know I'll be in their shoes someday and I try to understand what they are feeling. Not to change it—just to acknowledge it fully. I feel privileged when someone shares their pain and grief with me. The act of witnessing someone's vulnerability can bring the person out of isolation if the witnessing is done without judgment.

Too often outsiders who may have the best of intentions will suggest to a bereaved person that it's time to move on, embrace life, and let go of grief. But grief should be a no-judgment zone. Those who understand what you're going through will never judge you or think your grief is out of proportion or too prolonged. Grief is what's going on inside of us, while mourning is what we do on the outside. The internal work of grief is a process, a journey. It does not have prescribed dimensions, and it does not end on a certain date.

When people ask me how long they're going to grieve, I ask them, "How long will your loved one be dead? That's how long. I don't mean you'll be in pain forever. But you will never forget that person, never be able to fill the unique hole that has been left in your heart. There is what I call the one-year myth—we should be done and complete with all grieving in one year. Not remotely true. In the first year of your loss, you're likely to mourn and grieve intensely. After that, your grief will probably fluctuate. It will seem to lessen, then something will trigger it, and you'll find yourself back in the full pain of loss. In time it will hurt less often and with less intensity. But it will always be there."

That's about as specific as I can get in answering the question. As vague as it is, it still doesn't cover all the possibilities. Over many years of grief work, I've come to realize that if I've seen *one* person in grief, I've only seen that *one* person in grief. I can't compare one griever to another, even if they're in the same family. One sister cries a lot and the other one doesn't. One son is vulnerable and raw. The other just wants to move on. Some people are expressive. Others shy away from their feelings. Some have more feelings. Some have less. Some are more productive and practical in their grieving style. They have a "buckle down and move on" mentality. We can mistakenly think that people who show no visible signs of pain should be in a grief group, getting in touch with and sharing their feelings. But if that is not their style in life, it won't be in grief, either. They must experience loss in their own way. Suggesting otherwise will not be helpful to them.

In our modern world, our grief is often witnessed online. When I post quotes about grief on social media, I notice different kinds of responses. If I post hopeful, optimistic quotes about healing, they give hope to many people, but don't resonate with others. Those who are in a dark place aren't ready to hear about hope, often because they're at the beginning of the grieving process and their grief is too acute to allow for any other emotions. They just want the darkness of their grief to be seen and acknowledged. Their tears are evidence of their love, proof that the person who died was someone who mattered deeply. If I post something like, "Today it feels like the pain will

never end,” or “Grief feels like a dark cloud that encompasses the whole sky,” that will resonate with them. It mirrors and validates their feelings, which can be far more consoling than trying to find something positive in the situation.

Some grieve with darkness, some with light, some with both, depending on where they are in the cycle of grief. It would be a mistake to conclude that one is better than the other or that there’s a right way to grieve. There are just different ways to grieve, different feelings evoked by loss. This is also true of our relationship to hope. Hope can be like oxygen to people in grief. For others, however, especially in the early stages, it can feel invalidating. “In my sorrow, how dare you want me to feel hopeful . . . about what? Do you need me to hope to make *you* feel more comfortable?”

Hope has a very close relationship with meaning. In the same way our meaning changes, so does hope. Sometimes when I work with someone stuck in grief, I will say, “It sounds like hope died with your loved one. It seems all is lost.”

Surprisingly they perk up. “Yes, that’s it.”

They feel witnessed. I often say, “A loved one’s death is permanent, and that is so heartbreaking. But I believe your loss of hope can be temporary. Until you can find it, I’ll hold it for you. I have hope for you. I don’t want to invalidate your feelings as they are, but I also don’t want to give death any more power than it already has. Death ends a life, but not our relationship, our love, or our hope.”

Sometimes I meet someone in grief who tells me that a family member or friend said something terrible—which often turns out to be some variation of “time heals all” or “be happy your loved one is at peace now.” Such statements can make the bereaved think that their feelings have not been witnessed. Most of us want to say something helpful, but we may not realize that our timing and delivery are off. If the griever needs to remain in a dark place for a while, then trying to offer some kind of cheer will be very hurtful. We must really *see* the person we are trying to comfort. Loss can become more meaningful—and more bearable—when reflected, and reflected accurately, in another’s eyes.

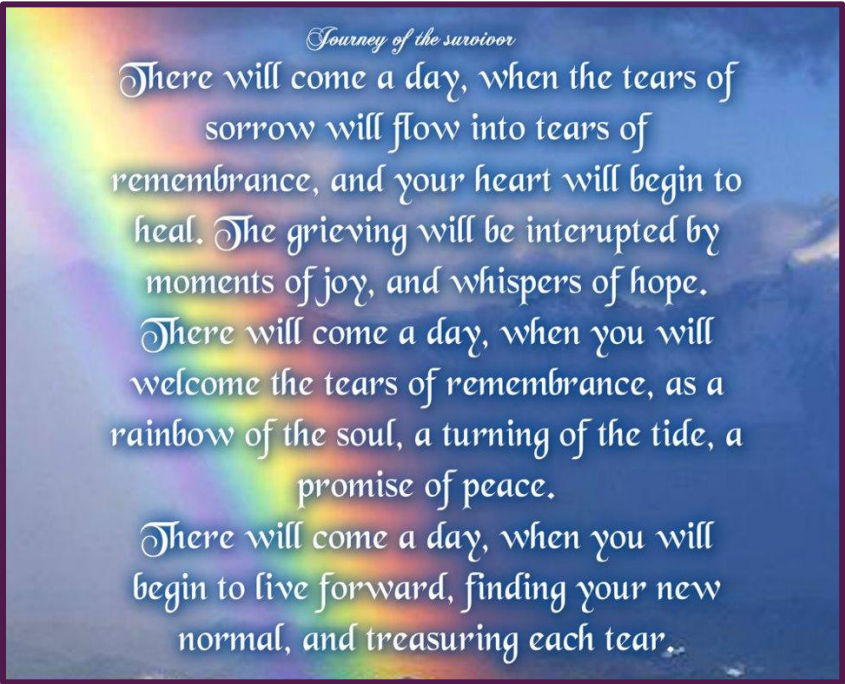
We also have to remember that our own thoughts about the one who died are irrelevant. Maybe we think our friend’s mother was so awful that she wasn’t worth grieving over. Or we know that our sister’s husband had been unfaithful and wonder why she is nonetheless sobbing over his death. What we think has nothing at all to do with the feelings of those who are in grief, and they will not be comforted by hearing us criticize their loved ones as not being deserving of their sorrow.

People who mourn the loss of their pets often comment on how little people understand about their grief. In the months that followed the death of my son, one of my dear friends experienced his own loss. His beloved dog died at the age of 16. When I reached out to him to express my condolences, he was taken aback by my concern. “Your loss is so much worse than mine,” he said. I couldn’t see his tears and think that his loss was any less painful or meaningful than mine. Every loss has meaning, and all losses are to be grieved—and witnessed. I have a rule on pet loss. “If the love is real, the grief is real.” The grief that comes with loss is how we experience the depths of our love, and love takes many forms in this life.

<https://lithub.com>

*So here I am
greeting the robins you send me
counting the feathers you drop
and the rainbows you draw
realizing
there is a new chapter of us
we are not done
it's different
but it is something
and until we meet again
I will make it enough ..
Donna Ashworth*





♥ **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 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.



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



The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us and **everyone who finds us will be helped.**

PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. Please click on the link next to the group you wish to join and answer the screening questions so we can confirm your request. Please note, all three questions need to be answered in order to be approved. If you are on a phone or tablet, you will need to scroll down before hitting "submit." If you are still waiting approval after three days, please message one of the administrators. Join requests to our Facebook groups must be requested personally, therefore when you wish to share the group with someone please pass along the link to the group.

[TCF - Loss of a Child](#)
[TCF - Loss to Miscarriage or Stillbirth](#)
[TCF - Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Loss of an Infant Grandchild](#)
[TCF - Infant and Toddler Loss](#)
[TCF - Loss of a Child 4 -12 Years Old](#)
[TCF - Loss of a Child 13-19 Years Old](#)
[TCF - Loss of an Adult Child](#)
[TCF - Loss of an Only Child/All Your Children](#)
[TCF - Grieving the Loss of a Child as a Single Parent](#)
[TCF - Loss of a Stepchild](#)
[TCF - Loss of a Grandchild](#)
[TCF - Sibs \(for bereaved siblings\)](#)
[TCF - Loss of a LGBTQ+ Child](#)
[TCF - Bereaved LGBTQ Parents with Loss of a Child](#)
[TCF - Multiple Losses](#)
[TCF - Men in Grief](#)
[TCF - Daughterless Mothers](#)
[TCF - Sudden Death](#)
[TCF - Loss to COVID-19 and Other Infectious Diseases](#)
[TCF - Loss to Substance Related Causes](#)
[TCF - Sibling Loss to Substance Related Causes](#)
[TCF - Loss to Suicide](#)
[TCF - Loss to Homicide](#)
[TCF - Loss to a Drunk/Impaired Driver](#)
[TCF - Loss to Cancer](#)
[TCF - Loss of a Child with Special Needs](#)
[TCF - Loss to Long-term Illness](#)
[TCF - Loss after Withdrawing Life Support](#)
[TCF - Loss to Mental Illness](#)
[TCF - Finding Hope for Parents through TCF SIBS](#)
[TCF - Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren](#)
[TCF - Bereaved Parents with Grandchild Visitation Issues](#)
[TCF - Inclusion and Diversity](#)
[TCF - Grieving with Faith and Hope](#)
[TCF - Secular Support](#)
[TCF - Reading Your Way through Grief](#)
[TCF - Crafty Corner](#)