The Compassionate Friends

The Modesto Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Families After a Child Dies

A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding & hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

MONTHLY MEETING

7:00 PM

Community Hospice
4368 Spyres Way
Modesto, CA 95356

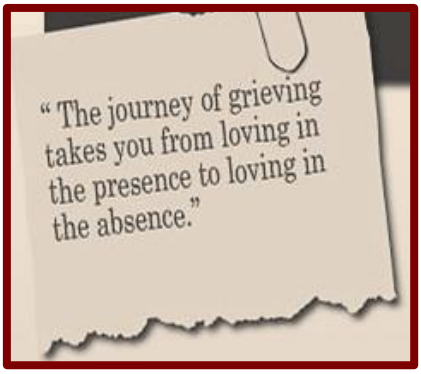
Please join us at our next meeting on

Monday, November 9th

Please arrive by 6:50 p.m.
We begin promptly
@ 7:00 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings

December 14th
January 11th
February 8th



Are you taking a vacation? Visiting family? Moving? Helping someone new to TCF to find a chapter?

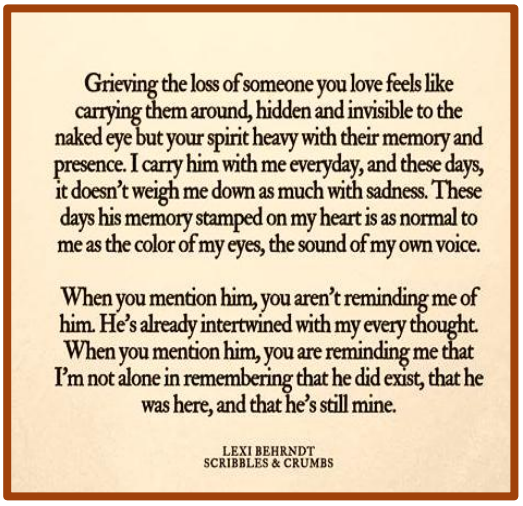
Use the link below to find TCF chapters in other cities and states

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.



MESSAGE LINE

(209)622-6786

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

2026 Steering Committee

Kris Leitner
Chapter Co-Leader

Suzanne Casity
Chapter Co-Leader

Melinda Lansberry
Secretary

Elsie Freeman
Treasurer

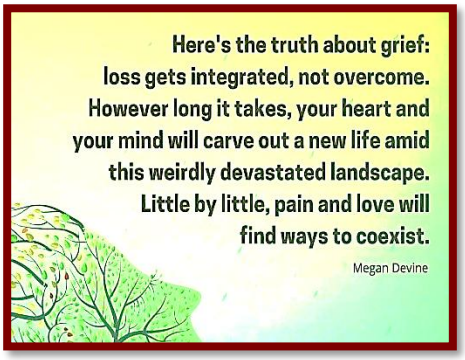
Janet Neal
Outreach Coordinator

Michele Mootz
Hospitality

Lorie Boisse
Public Relations/Media

Kris Leitner
Newsletter Editor

Mike & Suzanne Casity
Website





Please join us for a TCF Dinner at:

George's Steakhouse
1001 Kansas Avenue, Modesto, CA

Thursday, November 12th 2026 at 6:00 pm

As this is a casual social gathering (not a chapter-sponsored event), each person will be responsible for their own meal and beverages.

30th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting
December 13, 2026

Community Hospice of Modesto

4368 Spyres Way
Modesto, Ca
We begin promptly at 7:00 pm

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 13th, 2026 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.

Important Information

We will be presenting a chapter video (slideshow) at the event. We need to begin gathering photos for the presentation. If you would like to include a photo of your child, grandchild or sibling OR if you would like to change the photo that has been previously used PLEASE submit one photo along with the name you would like used to the tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com email address. If you have any questions please contact Kris Leitner at the same email address.

The deadline to submit photos is November 30, 2026.

Love Remains



There is this defining moment in grief…which separates the past from the future. It is this bizarre collision of who you were and who you will become. It is memories and dreams that literally shatter head-on and transform your world forever. And it is where many people get stuck.

The place where you cling to memories because it is all you have left. The place where you are afraid to release those dreams because there is such finality in that. I listened to all the advice. I read the books. And I searched and waited for this overwhelming peace. For life to somehow pick up where I left off in the middle of grief. But it didn't. I was not comforted by photos or remembering the past. There was just this huge and empty void. And this hole in my heart that was impossible to fill.

I spent days numb…simply going through the motions. Everything was falling apart around me because there was no way to go back, yet it was inconceivable to move forward. The ache in my body reminded me every day that my arms were empty. The notion of being a mother on this earth without her child is abstract. In a perfect world, it wouldn't happen.

In the early stages of grief, I wasn't sure how I could navigate this life after loss. Nothing can prepare your heart for death. The blow of reality that hits when the waves of shock settle is insufferable. Your old life has vanished and this disorienting new existence is a sub-par comparison. It is irrevocable. And that is the only certainty in this new uncertain world. Death became this vast and infinite hole in my life. Danger was everywhere and fear was engulfing. There was no escape. Was death a cruel punishment or simply a careless happenstance? I found myself living a life of bondage. Trapped in the throes of grief. Exactly where I had intentionally set out not to land. And for all my purposeful efforts, I could not budge. It was a daily battle. And while the struggle internally was taking place… outwardly, I was determined to hold it together. I had children who deserved it. I wanted to teach them resilience. Their life had to remain as normal as possible so that the devastation of death did not consume their future. The evolution of grief is fascinating. And in time, my self-defense mechanism became a desperate search to block out emotion. It was how I coped. If we can't feel pain, we won't hurt. And it worked.

They say "time heals". It doesn't. No one tells you that the pain of death revisits on a whim. Death knows no boundaries. It is an imposing presence that strikes without warning in spite of any healing that has taken place. At any given moment it threatens to uproot your life and spiral you into a deep and unending abyss.

There is a great illusion in grief. A lie that tells us if we just walk through, it will be better on the other side. But the truth is…there is no other side. There is only before and after. There is only with and without. And for the remainder of your life, you will consistently view it like this. You will have to learn to exist in whatever means of survival you can. My marriage fell apart in grief. There were no warning signs. There were no red flags. It just ceased. Ended. Because you can't go back. I could feel life laughing at me. Mocking me. For all the judgments I had once cast. For the deception that I had it all. Grief brings shame. Brokenness. Despair. You will learn to recognize the face of pity. And you will become aware of the game of avoidance that most people play. You will want to run from the silent stares and the downcast eyes that deflect from meeting yours.

There is a balance in grief. A slow dance between letting the pain wash over you and pretending it doesn't hurt. It is a constant back and forth. A one step forward, two steps back process. Keep going. When the pain threatens to bring you to your knees and it hurts to even take one more breath…keep going. Because you cannot get stuck in this plateau. And sometimes it is easier to stay where you are than move where you need to go. There can be no victory in death if you do not allow it. One more day. You live in the moment because if you just get through today…maybe, just maybe, tomorrow will not hurt so much. It is here, in this valley, where your bones are weary and your body is bearing the weight of your suffering, where you can be transformed.

I don't have all the answers, but what I do know is this…life is not worth existing in without hope. Today, when I look back, I can't believe it was me. I can't believe we walked through that. And that we resurfaced. I also can't believe that grief remains. That the pain continues to be an integral part of who you are no matter how long the span of time. But so does love. And love wins. Love always wins.

www.stillstandingmag.com/2019/01/24/love-remains

The Cord

We are connected, my child and I,
by an invisible cord not seen by the eye.

It's not like the cord that connects us 'til birth
This cord can't been seen by any on Earth.

This cord does it's work right from the start.
It binds us together attached to my heart.

I know that it's there though no one can see
The invisible cord from my child to me.

The strength of this cord is hard to describe.
It can't be destroyed, it can't be denied.

It's stronger than any cord man could create.
It withstands the test, can hold any weight.

And though you are gone, though you're not here with me,
The cord is still there, but no one can see.

It pulls at my heart, I am bruised...I am sore,
But this cord is my lifeline as never before.

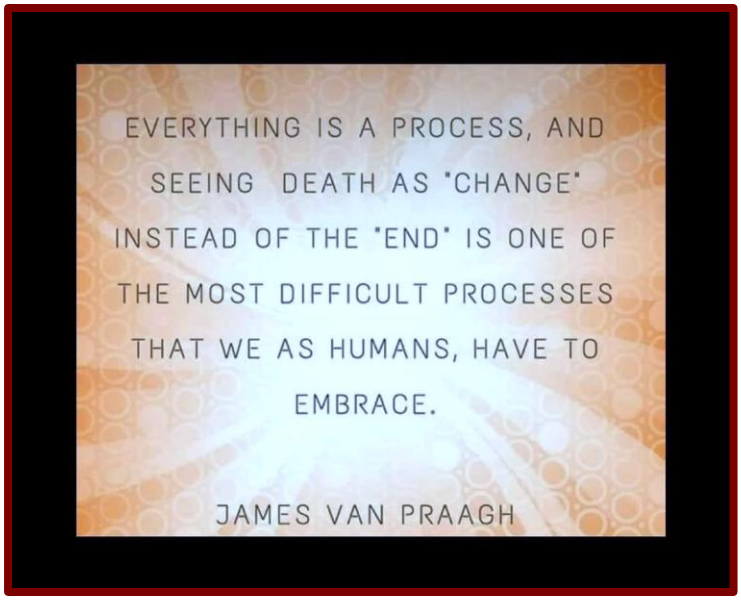
I am thankful that God connects us this way
A mother and child, death can't take it away!

Author Unknown



The Compassionate Friends
Lehigh Valley Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Facebook.com/TCFLehighValley



♥ 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.

Janet Neal, in loving memory of her beloved son, Josh.

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.

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 up 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 hullabaloo. 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 seeing 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

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.**

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.

PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS

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