

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

March 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, March 10th

Please arrive by 6:50 p.m.

We begin promptly

@ 7:00 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings

April 14th

May 12th

June 9th



**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

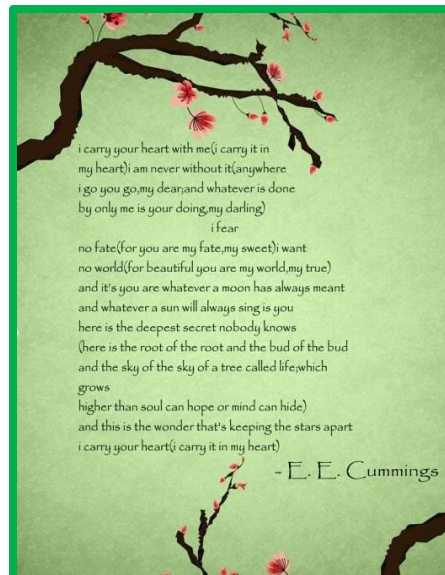
**[Chapter Meeting Locator -
Compassionate Friends](#)**



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.

2025 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/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.

Member Submissions for the Newsletter

If you have found an article, a poem, a saying or a photograph that has given you comfort or offered some healing to your heart, we would love to share it with the chapter. You never know what might help another grieving parent or sibling. What has given you comfort or hope may provide the same for someone else.

Please email your contribution to tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com.

We look forward to hearing from you!

We Need Not Walk Alone

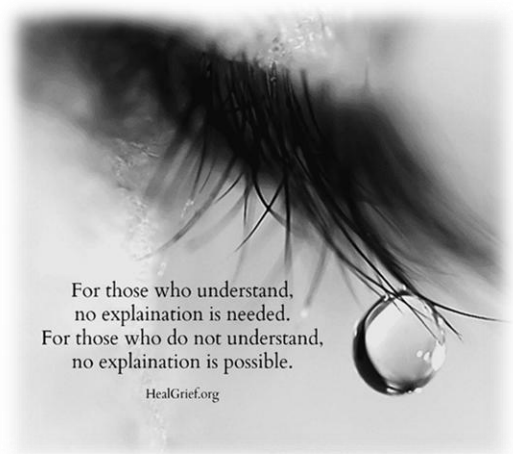


The national magazine of The Compassionate Friends, *We Need Not Walk Alone*, featuring articles by and for parents, siblings, and grandparents who are grieving the death of a child in their family.

Have you written a story or poem you'd like to have considered for publication in *We Need Not Walk Alone*? You don't have to be a professional writer—just someone who has a story to tell that will touch our readers or in some way help them cope with the natural grief process. Please use the form on this page to submit articles. For more details or questions, email Sara Zeigler at sara@compassionatefriends.org

We're also looking for story ideas that can be developed into publication quality articles.

Grief: Coping with the loss of your loved one



For those who understand,
no explanation is needed.
For those who do not understand,
no explanation is possible.

HealGrief.org

Research shows that most people can recover from loss on their own through the passage of time if they have social support and healthy habits.

Coping with the loss of a close friend or family member may be one of the hardest challenges that many of us face. When we lose a spouse, sibling or parent our grief can be particularly intense. Loss is understood as a natural part of life, but we can still be overcome by shock and confusion, leading to prolonged periods of sadness or depression. The sadness typically diminishes in intensity as time passes, but grieving is an important process in order to overcome these feelings and continue to embrace the time you had with your loved one.

Everyone reacts differently to death and employs personal coping mechanisms for grief. Research shows that most people can recover from loss on their own through the passage of time if they have social support and healthy habits. It may take months or a year to come to terms with a loss.

There is no “normal” time period for someone to grieve. Don’t expect to pass through phases of grief either, as research suggests that most people do not go through stages as progressive steps.

If your relationship with the deceased was difficult, this will also add another dimension to the grieving process. It may take some time and thought before you are able to look back on the relationship and adjust to the loss.

Human beings are naturally resilient, considering most of us can endure loss and then continue on with our own lives. But some people may struggle with grief for longer periods of time and feel unable to carry out daily activities. Individuals with severe grief or [complicated grief](#) could benefit from the help of a psychologist or another licensed mental health professional with a specialization in grief.

Moving on with life

Mourning the loss of a close friend or relative takes time, but research tells us that it can also be the catalyst for a renewed sense of meaning that offers purpose and direction to life.

Grieving individuals may find it helpful to use some of the following strategies to help them process and come to terms with loss:

- **Talk about the death of your loved one** with friends or colleagues in order to help you understand what happened and remember your friend or family member. Avoidance can lead to isolation and will disrupt the healing process with your support systems.
- **Accept your feelings.** You may experience a wide range of emotions from sadness, anger or even exhaustion. All of these feelings are normal and it’s important to recognize when you are feeling this way. If you feel stuck or overwhelmed by these emotions, it may be helpful to talk with a licensed psychologist or other mental health professional who can help you cope with your feelings and find ways to get back on track.
- **Take care of yourself and your family.** Eating healthy foods, exercising and getting plenty of sleep can help your physical and emotional health. The grieving process can take a toll on one’s body. Make sure you check in with your loved ones and that they are taking the necessary healthy steps to maintain their health.
- **Reach out and help others dealing with the loss.** Spending time with loved ones of the deceased can help everyone cope. Whether it’s sharing stories or listening to your loved one’s favorite music, these small efforts can make a big difference to some. Helping others has the added benefit of making you feel better as well.
- **Remember and celebrate the lives of your loved ones.** Anniversaries of a lost loved one can be a difficult time for friends and family, but it can also be a time for remembrance and honoring them. It may be that you decide to collect donations to a favorite charity of the deceased, passing on a family name to a baby or planting a garden in memory. What you choose is up to you, as long as it allows you to honor that unique relationship in a way that feels right to you.

How psychologists can help

Psychologists are trained to help people better handle the fear, guilt or anxiety that can be associated with the death of a loved one. If you need help dealing with your grief or managing a loss, consult with a psychologist or other licensed mental health professional. Psychologists can help people build their resilience and develop strategies to get through their sadness. Practicing psychologists use a variety of evidence-based treatments — most commonly psychotherapy — to help people improve their lives. Psychologists, who have doctoral degrees, receive one of the highest levels of education of any health care professional.

[Grief: Coping with the loss of your loved one \(apa.org\)](#)

This article was adapted from a March 2011 post by Katherine C. Nordal, PhD.

*Our loved ones leave behind a light
That will never dim or fade
It's kept bright by the love we feel
And the memories we made
It can warm us like a candle's glow
And help bring comfort too
And no matter where you go you'll find
It's always close to you
And in the darkest times remember
In our hearts their light is strong
So every time we think of them
Their memory shines on...*

Andrea Jackson





HOW JOY AND GRIEF CAN COEXIST AFTER LOSING A CHILD

I don't believe you "get over" the death of your child. I don't believe you ever "move on" from losses of this magnitude. Those seismic shifts...The unexpected, life-altering twists we didn't plan...Those stay with us. Shape us. Shape how we perceive the world. That doesn't mean life no longer contains joy. The truth is joy and sorrow can coexist. And we can have a meaningful, contented, even "happy" existence while holding both. But we must learn to carry grief, accept that we must, and lead with love.

Grief is big, but love is bigger.

When my daughter, Gwendolyn, was alive this was easy. She was literally the joy I could hold and so on those tough days when my world was spinning out of control, I only had to look at her, follow her remarkable ability to bounce back, or snuggle into her as she slept. After many scares because of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), I literally held her sweet-smelling sweaty hand to my lips and let the tears stain my cheeks as she rested. Joy and sorrow in one space. After Gwendolyn died, with the roaring of death and the anchor of my joy no longer tangible, I grasped for ways to hold both more easily. Our life together let me know I would again, and that was a comfort, but I had to now learn how to carry this entirely new and monstrously big weight of child loss.

Somewhere along the way of processing the death of my child, her debilitating and life-limiting diagnosis, the traumas, the helplessness and losses upon losses that came with all of that, I created in my mind a visual to help me feel less overwhelmed or hung up on the unfairness. I wasn't conscious of it, and it may seem silly, but this mental picture continues to help me focus when spiraling, as grief often does.

I imagine my grief all piled into a backpack. Mine is filled with loss and pain and trauma and all that circles around grief. Every day I feel its straps on my shoulders and the girth on my back. I don't like it, it certainly isn't fashionable, but I still have to carry it – no matter where I go, no matter who I'm with. I don't get to put it down when there's a holiday or I go on vacation. Maybe someday I will, I don't know. But for now, it comes with me always and I must be the one to carry it. Others can help, but no one can do it for me.

Some days it is dense and feels like lead and I taste the sweat and dust as I heave it along. I curse at the weight and grow weary from the heaviness. On those days I need to rest more. On other days, it's lighter and I hardly notice it's there. And, though I must still carry it, the warmth of it on my skin feels familiar and it moves with me through belly laughs. Some days it can even help propel me forward.

Along the way, I've picked up new tools that have allowed me to set down some of the weight I no longer need, that I have now absorbed. **And the one truth that continues to lighten the load is the weight of grief is nowhere near as big as love.**

I have learned to accept what I must carry. I can't change it entirely. It just is. But it's mine and it's wrapped with courage and grit and kindness and empathy and strength and the most beautiful big love in the world. And it's mine to choose how to grow with it, how to build upon it. Acceptance allows me to carry the pain that exists without judgment – and allows me to laugh and make new memories without judging that either. Acceptance limits the pressure of an expected timeline of healing because grief is never finite, nor neatly packaged in stages we can methodically check off as completed. Acceptance reminds me to give myself grace in the confusion of an expected future taken, a life together no longer. And acceptance has allowed me to let go of resentment and anger.

It takes enormous work to sort through grief and the pain when life doesn't go as planned. And it also takes enormous courage to try. To keep trying when it hurts like hell and feels so dark and lonely. To unearth all the unfairness, the utter helplessness, the anger, and wrestle with all that those big feelings contain. And to do so over and over again as grief ebbs and flows and new triggers bring new facets to process. It's much easier to choose to be resentful for the rest of your life. But resentment, while justified, will never lift us. Resentment will only press our faces down into the mud, making it harder and harder to see anything good... to recognize the gifts of each day... to breathe.

While it may not feel like a choice because what has happened or is happening to us, to our child, to our family... is out of our control, we each get to choose how we carry our grief. Every day we get to choose a new way. What I know for sure is the love we carry in life, we continue to carry in death. For so long I didn't know where to put that love because I used to devour it into Gwendolyn. Without her, I felt so upside down. But I promise you, your love will find a home. The love we carry will find its way in how we love others, in how we treat people, in the good we put into the world. It will surface in a deeper empathy for pain, in a stronger sense of gratitude, in the way we experience the world.

Grief is big, but love is bigger. So how are you going to carry what you must?



♥ 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.

The Stone of Grief

The best way I can describe grieving over a child as the years go by is to say it's similar to carrying a stone in your pocket.

When you walk, the stone brushes against your skin... you feel it.... you always feel it but depending on the way you stand or the way your body moves, the smooth edges might barely graze your body.

Sometimes you lean the wrong way or you turn too quickly and a sharp edge pokes you. Your eyes water and you rub your wound, but you have to keep going because not everyone knows about your stone or if they do, they don't realize it can still bring this much pain.

There are days you are simply happy now, smiling comes easy and you laugh without thinking. You slap your leg during that laughter, and you feel your stone and aren't sure whether you should be laughing still. The stone still hurts.

Once in a while you can't take your hand off that stone. You run it over your fingers and roll it in your palm and are so preoccupied by its weight, you forget things like your car keys and home address. You try to leave it alone, but you just can't.

But most days you can take your hand in and out of your pocket, feel your stone and even smile at its unwavering presence. You've accepted this stone as your own, crossing your hands over it, saying "mine" as children do.

You rest more peacefully than you once did, you've learned to move forward the best you can.

Some days you want to show the world what a beautiful memory you're holding. But most days you twirl it through your fingers, smile and look to the sky.

You squeeze your hands together and hope you are living in a way that honors the missing piece you carry, until your arms are full again.



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](#)