

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.

www.modestoriverbanktcf.org

July 2026

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, July 13th
Please arrive by 6:50 p.m.
We begin promptly
@ 7:00 p.m.*

Upcoming Meetings

August 10th
September 14th
October 12th

As your grief unfolds, you will find more and more places their absence shouts. I don't mean that as a downer. The truth is, as we live forward, we carry their absence with us. The absence exists because love exists. The only thing time will do is shift the balance, allowing more love to take over that absence, filling in the empty place with its own weight.

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.

Love Came First

You don't move on after loss, but you must move *with*. You must shake hands with grief, welcome her in, for she lives with you now. Pull her a chair at the table and offer her comfort. She is not the monster, you first thought her to be. She is *love*. And she will walk with you now, stay with you now, *peacefully*, if you let her. And on the days when your anger is high, remember why she came, remember who she represents. **Remember.** Grief came to you my friend because love came first. **Love came first.**

Dorcas Schweitzer

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

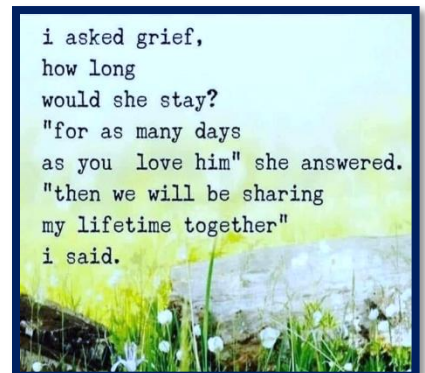
Michele Mootz
Hospitality

Lorie Boisse
Public Relations/Media

Kris Leitner
Newsletter Editor

Mike & Suzanne Casity
Website

i asked grief,
how long
would she stay?
"for as many days
as you love him" she answered.
"then we will be sharing
my lifetime together"
i said.





Chapter Fundraiser

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 on the back!

Our chapter color is purple (pink and blue combined), so the shirts will be available in that color only.

This a fundraising event for the chapter too. We are asking for \$25 per shirt (the cost is approximately \$18 per shirt and the difference will go into the chapter account for upcoming events, functions and activities).

Orders will be taken until July 15th 2026

Please use the attached Venmo QR code to pay for your shirt.

In the "What's this for?" box – please include your first and last name, the number of shirts you're ordering and the size for each shirt (S,M,L,XL,2X or 3X).

If you prefer to pay with cash or check – please respond to the chapter email tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com and we will get your order and preferred method of payment.



venmo



Bereaved Parents Awareness Month is recognized every year in July. It is dedicated to raising awareness about the grief parents go through after the unfortunate loss of a child and the kind of support needed to overcome this unimaginable grief. Bereaved Parents Month is an opportunity for these parents to share their child with the world without fear or condemnation.

It's a chance to post articles, information and personal experiences that can help those outside the circle of child loss understand the ongoing struggle of walking this path.

Managing Grief After Losing a Child

Losing a child, whether anticipated or unexpected, can bring overwhelming pain. The grief that follows the death of a child is likely to feel paralyzing and endless. With time, healthy coping tools, and help from loved ones and professionals, however, the worst parts of grief will eventually pass.

Grief Journey After Losing a Child

There is no time frame for grief, and it doesn't happen in stages or checklists. Grief is experienced uniquely by each person and comes and goes in different ways over time. You can think of grief as a bumpy, winding road that sometimes causes slowdowns and sometimes feels smooth.

The emotions parents experience while grieving the loss of a child vary considerably from person to person. They may also change from one day to the next. Some of the emotions you might experience include:

- Overwhelming sadness
- Feeling like you can't go on
- Feeling guilty or wondering if you could have done something
- Inability to function or complete daily tasks
- Shock or a sensation of numbness
- Confusion
- Anger or rage
- Denial

Grief, especially from losing a child, is not something you get over. Grief ebbs and flows and changes with time. Some days will be very hard and others will be a little easier. Eventually, grief should feel muted and in the background but most likely will be present in one way or another throughout life.

Types of Grief

Grief can come in many different forms and the way people experience grief changes over time. Healthcare providers talk about different types of grief, but remember that grief is different for everyone and no one follows a precise pattern of grieving after the loss of a child.

Acute vs. Integrated Grief

Acute grief is the immediate response following a loss. During this time, it's common to be in shock or disbelief and to have a hard time processing the death. The focus tends to be on memories of the person who died, and it can feel all-consuming.

During acute grief, a person's experience tends to be internal, and it's common to avoid other people and normal activities for a while. The circumstances of the death can also impact the severity of the reaction. Death from violence, suicide, and unexpected deaths are often more difficult to cope with.

Although acute grief can be overwhelming and extremely painful, most people are able to move through their bereavement over time. Grieving is not a straightforward path or a series of stages to move through, but a back-and-forth journey that constantly moves between pain and joy, difficulty and positive experiences.

Eventually, the worst parts of grief should ease and allow space for finding enjoyment in life again. As this happens, grief is becoming integrated. This means that, while grief may always be present on some level, it does not control or define the person anymore.¹

Complicated Grief

For some people, intense grief reactions continue for a long time, and grief doesn't become integrated on its own. When grief causes ongoing worry or rumination about the death, or when a person avoids talking or thinking about the death or becomes stuck in experiencing the most painful parts of grief without relief after several months have passed, it's called complicated grief.

For those experiencing complicated grief, it may feel like the acute grief phase is never-ending. It's common to have difficulty moving through grief in a healthy way and finding meaning from the loss, and many people even consider suicide.

Complicated grief is most common in those who have lost a child. In these circumstances, a mental health professional can help with processing the loss and working through complicated grief to be able to confront the death and heal from the pain.³

Help for Parents Grieving the Loss of a Child

For many grieving parents, it's natural to want to isolate from others during bereavement, especially those who bring reminders of the death. It may be painful to answer others' questions, to talk about yourself as a parent who lost a child, and to get through normal daily experiences.

It's also important to look for support while grieving the loss of a child. Whether it's professional help or peer-based, asking for help can be difficult. Yet, seeking support can help you bring meaning to the loss and work through the most difficult parts of bereavement. Try accepting offers for food and other gifts and push yourself to spend time with others in small amounts. Remember to set boundaries where you need them and that on some days it will be easier to spend time with people than on others.

Therapy

Sometimes, it's helpful to speak to a professional to work through the grieving process. When grief does not naturally become integrated over time and remains intensely present and disruptive, a grief therapist can provide the tools to work through the painful memories and experiences of child loss.

Many parents will experience complicated grief while living through a child's death, and it's normal to need support to cope with the loss; the challenges that might come up in relationships with a spouse, family members, and other loved ones; and the interruption to daily life.

To find a grief therapist, look for a licensed mental health professional, such as a counselor, social worker, or psychologist, who has specialized training and experience in grief work. Medical professionals and health insurance providers can provide referrals to mental health professionals, and online provider searches can help narrow down options by various preferences.

Support Groups

Working through child loss can be a lonely experience. Through support groups, grieving parents can come together with others who are coping with similar circumstances. Knowing that others are going through the same pain can bring comfort, and sharing coping strategies to help others can bring a sense of purpose to bereavement.³

There are different types of support groups:

- **Peer-based groups:** These are often run by a peer facilitator who shares a similar experience. The focus of the group is to bring connection and support to each participant.
- **Clinical support groups:** These are run by a mental health professional and are often formed by a therapist creating a group from individual therapy clients. Ask a grief therapist about opportunities for these types of support groups.

Managing Personal Grief

Grieving the loss of a child is extremely hard. One of the most important ways to cope is to take things slowly and not have expectations about how long the painful feelings should last or when grief should be "over."

Grief does not happen as a series of stages to work through or tasks to complete, but as an ongoing presence that moves back and forth between being extremely difficult and muted in the background.

Here are some tips to help work through grief:

- **Don't ignore your feelings:** Pay attention to them and allow yourself the time and space to feel your emotions as they happen.
- **Ask for what you need:** Whether it's a meal, help with picking up a child from school, or time off from work, tell people when you need help and accept it when it's offered.
- **Get involved in something:** Find an activity that brings you comfort or joy and commit to it. Be sure not to use activities as a way to ignore your feelings, but as a temporary distraction that reconnects you with other people and positive feelings.
- **Honor your child:** Find ways to bring meaning to your child's death. Some ideas are to make a donation to a charity in their name, volunteer with an organization that reminds you of your child and participate in activities your child enjoyed. Celebrate your child's life with other family members and friends and be sure to ask surviving siblings how they want to honor their sibling's life as well.

Helping Other Children Who Are Grieving

After the loss of a child, it's important to pay attention to the deceased child's siblings. Sibling grief is a type of disenfranchised grief, which means it's not recognized or supported by peers or society. Thus, grieving siblings need a chance to express their feelings, get support, and learn coping strategies. Depending on the age of the child or children, they might need help learning how to process the many feelings that come with bereavement.

It's also important to pay attention to how siblings are grieving because surviving siblings will take on the grief of their parents. As parents grieve, they often give less emotional attention to surviving children. This, in addition to the painful experience of losing a sibling, can affect their health and well-being and have long-term impacts.

For example, research has found that children who lose a sibling are at greater risk for poor academic performance, troubled relationships, substance abuse, and early death.⁵

Managing Grief as a Family

Grief can impact your relationships with other people in your family, including your spouse, your other children, and your child's grandparents. While you are grieving, it is important to both acknowledge the grief of everyone else in the family and to spend time grieving privately. Some of the things you can do as a family include:

- Finding time to grieve together while also giving each other space to grieve alone
- Recognizing and accepting that everyone in the family may not be grieving in the same way
- Establishing family rituals to honor and remember the deceased child
- [Managing Grief After Losing a Child](#)



When the
fireworks
fade you may
still see a **sparkle**
in the sky.

That is my child,
shining bright
with my **love**,
more dazzling than
any firework.

♥ **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 precious children.

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.

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.

The Shape Grief Takes

There is no right or wrong way to grieve,
no map, no timetable etched in stone.

Some days grief spills in tears,
other days it settles quietly
in the corners of the soul,
soft as a shadow, almost invisible to the world.
It may rise as anger, hot, wild, consuming.

It may come as confusion,
or as exhaustion that washes over us like a tide.

Some of us hold memories close,
finding solace in tender recollections.
Others drift toward silence, toward solitude,
where the heart has room to breathe,
to ache, to remember.

Even within one heart,
grief moves in waves.
What feels gentle today
may strike tomorrow with the force of a storm.

One moment we move through the world,
carrying our days almost with ease,
the next, a scent, a song, an empty room recalls
a presence now gone,
and the air fractures.

If we meet ourselves with tenderness,
with patience through the challenging days,
with kindness through the darker ones,
grief becomes not a burden, but a doorway,
not a path to forgetting,
but a way to live again,
with softness, with memory,
and with the quiet strength of a love transformed.

By: Mary Anne Byrne



I'll Meet You There

On the days I miss you most
I'll close my eyes and sleep.

I'll meet you in my dreams
in a moment we can keep.

I'll meet you with a hug
and with things I want to say.

I'll meet you under the sun
or a different place each day.

I'll meet you by the river
or back at our old home.

And at the times I cannot find you
In my dreams i shall still roam.

I'll meet you in the coffee shop
or at your favourite place.

I don't care just where it is
as long as I see your face.

I'll meet you at a park
so you can watch the children play.

You can take their laughter
back to heaven every day.

I'll meet you on each birthday
we no longer get to share.

I don't care just where it is
but I'll meet you there.

I'll meet you in the sunshine
or in the pouring rain.

I will walk through any storm
just to see you again.

I will meet you in my thoughts
a million times a day,

along with every memory
I am lucky to replay.

By: Joanne Boyle

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](#)