

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

October 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, October 13th

Please arrive by 6:50 p.m.

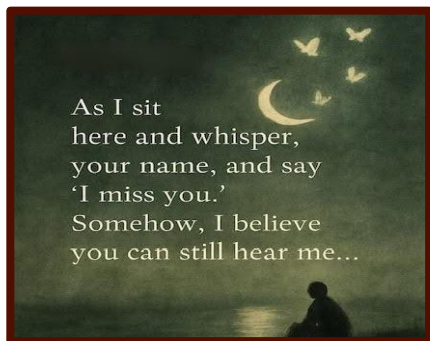
*We begin promptly
@ 7:00 p.m.*

Upcoming Meetings

November 10th

December 8th

January 12th



**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*

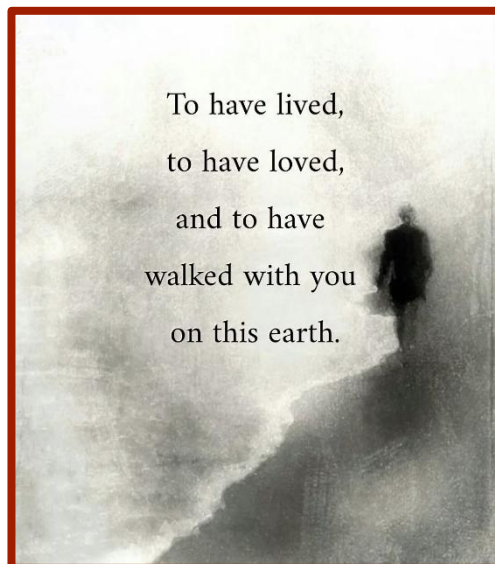
**Chapter Meeting Locator -
Compassionate Friends**



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

Suzanne Casity
Chapter Co-Leader

Kris Leitner
Chapter Co-Leader

Melinda Lansberry
Secretary

Elsie Freeman
Treasurer

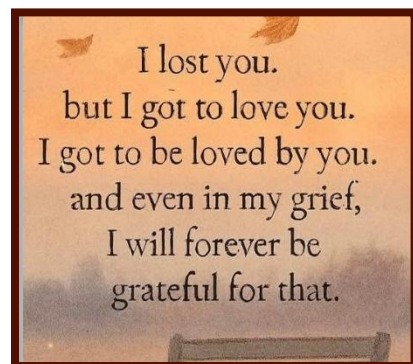
Janet Neal
Outreach Coordinator

Michele Mootz
Hospitality

Lorie Boisse
Public Relations/Media

Kris Leitner
Newsletter Editor

Mike & Suzanne Casity
Website





Event Details

Date: 10/04/2025

Location: Modesto Jr College

West Campus

Modesto, CA

Registration: 9:00 am

Event Time: 10:00 am



For more information contact:

Contact Name: Barbara Pearce Chiesa/Jori Martinez

Contact Phone: 209-918-4599/209-200-6979

Contact Email: chiesa3@aol.com/msjori89@gmail.com



Click on the "Out of the Darkness" picture and it will take you directly to the Modesto Walk page.



December 14, 2025

World Wide Candle Lighting Event

**Community Hospice
4368 Spyres Way
Modesto, CA**

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 14th, 2025 at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

If you are new to the group and would like to add your child's photo to our chapter slide show, that is presented during the event, please email your photo to: tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com

♥ 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

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 Loss on Your Birthday



Birthdays are typically seen as days of joy, occasions to celebrate life, love, and milestones. But for those coping with the loss of someone dear, birthdays can carry a bittersweet weight. The day that once symbolized happiness can now feel incomplete, as the absence of a loved one becomes especially pronounced.

I lost my daughter Elena when she was twenty-two months old in December of 2023. Since then, I have struggled to celebrate holidays and special occasions. I struggled to accept the reality of a life without her in it. Birthdays, in particular, have been hard. What used to be a day of joy often reminds me of the life we lost together.

If you find yourself navigating grief on your birthday, know that you are not alone. Many people struggle with the mixed emotions of missing someone while being reminded that life, in all its beauty and pain, continues on.

Coping with loss on your birthday is about finding a balance between remembrance, self-compassion, and allowing others to celebrate you.

Creating Space for Remembrance

For me, birthdays begin not with balloons and cake but with quiet reflection. I visit Elena at the cemetery, bring flowers, clean her marker, and spend time reading to her. This simple ritual helps me feel a sense of connection to her on a day I so badly want her close to me.

Rituals like this remind us that grief does not disappear on special days. It simply changes form. By giving space to remember, we also open space for the parts of the day that can still hold joy. Adjusting to life without Elena has been more than a struggle. It has also been a sign of healing, a way to slowly find my footing in a world that feels alien without her.

Keeping It Simple

Choosing simplicity is a great way to let your family support you, without it being overwhelming. For example, after visiting Elena, I usually share a quiet dinner with close family. Though no part of me wants to celebrate, I feel a sense of comfort being together with people who love me.

Simplicity does not mean the day is less meaningful. Sometimes the smallest traditions, such as lighting a candle on a cupcake, sharing a favorite meal, or saying a prayer for the year ahead, carry more significance than grand gestures.

Accepting That It Is Normal to Struggle

It is important to acknowledge that you may not feel like celebrating at all, and that is normal. Grief changes the way we view milestones, and birthdays are no exception. You may feel sadness, guilt, or even resentment toward the idea of celebration.

But it is also okay to let those who love you celebrate you. Family and friends want to show you that your life is valuable and worth honoring. Letting them express their love does not diminish your grief. It adds another layer of support. Sometimes, allowing others to care for you is its own form of healing.

Practical Ways to Cope

Here are some ideas that may help:

Give yourself permission to feel. If tears come, let them. If laughter surfaces, embrace it. Both are natural parts of grief.

Set boundaries. It is okay to decline invitations or say no to traditions that feel too heavy this year.

Honor your loved one. Share stories, visit a special place, or dedicate a moment of silence in their memory.

Lean on your support system. Allow friends and family to be there for you, even if you prefer quiet company over big gestures.

Create new birthday traditions. I set a place at the table for Elena. Including her memory in small ways helps keep her presence woven into the day.

Practice self-care. Journal, treat yourself to something small, or take a class for something you've always wanted to try. Your emotional well-being matters.

Embracing Both Grief and Celebration

Grief does not erase your right to joy. Even on the hardest birthdays, you are allowed to celebrate the gift of your life while honoring the memory of someone you have lost. The two truths, missing them and being loved yourself, can exist side by side.

Over time, birthdays may feel less like painful reminders and more like spaces where you carry both grief and gratitude. The absence of your loved one will always be felt, but so will the presence of those who stand by you.

Final Thoughts

Coping with loss on your birthday is deeply personal, and there is no single right way to do it. It is a day that holds both joy and sorrow, memory and hope. What matters most is giving yourself permission to honor your grief while also allowing yourself to be celebrated.

Some years you may want the day to be quiet and reflective, while other years you may feel ready for laughter and connection. Both are valid. There is no right way to move through a birthday after loss, only the way that feels gentle and true to you.

Even in the absence of Elena, my life still carries meaning. I am still here, still loved, and still worthy of joy. Let those who care for you remind you of that. A birthday after loss is not just about what is missing. It is also about the love that continues, both in memory and in the people who surround you today.

By: Milan Lopes Franco

Coping with Loss on Your Birthday | by Milan Lopes Franco | Sep, 2025 | Medium

Our instincts tell us to run from pain.
But what if, in the case of grief,
our instincts are wrong?
After all, the reason it hurts so badly is
because we love them so much.
The pain is from love.
If we look at it that way, the pain can
be understood not as a bad thing,
but as a beautiful tribute.
The love and the pain are now forever entwined.

- Colin Campbell, *Ruby and Hart's Dad*



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*A bereaved parent will miss every birthday,
holiday, milestone, and life's success to be shared.
Some weddings will never be;
a mother and father's pride and excitement
seeing their child grow and flourish are gone –
an entire generation of people are irrevocably altered.
Missing the future is why grief lasts forever.
The ripple effect lasts forever.*

- Ronald Ross



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Autumn and Grief

When autumn arrives, grief stirs within us. There's something about the shifting light, the crisp air, cool evenings and falling leaves — they remind us of change, of endings and of the precious people we've had to release. If grief rises within you this season, may you know you are not alone.



Autumn feels like resplendence braided with ache:

- the trees blaze with color even as they let go. *May we learn from the trees, who show us the sacred art of letting go — not all at once, not without beauty, but in their own time and their own way.*
- the air carries both sharpness and sweetness. *Grief, like the Fall air, can be both refreshing and sharp — awakening memories, stirring change, allowing reflection and nudging us toward acceptance.*
- the world around us whispers that nothing stays the same and that truth can sometimes feel tender, heavy and unbearable. *May you see that endings, though painful, can hold their own kind of radiance. Autumn reminds us that decline is not without brilliance and that grief is not without love.*

The longer Autumn nights give us permission to rest. Rest the body, the heart and the soul. We all need gentleness and time to consider and process. This season is not only about endings — it's about trust. Trusting that:

- what is released is not gone forever.
- what is bare will one day be renewed.
- the soul knows how to carry both sorrow and hope at the same time.
- just as autumn folds into winter and winter eventually yields to spring, grief too will shift. It may not disappear, but it transforms, it teaches, it deepens us into a fuller knowing of love.

And may we remember that all things move in cycles. Grief moves like the seasons in:

Summer — it blazes, raw and inescapable.

Spring — small shoots of hope and joy emerge through the sorrow.

Winter — it slows and silences, asking for patience and reflection.

Autumn — it softens, letting go with grace while carrying memory like a warm cloak.

As the Autumn leaves fall and with them the air shifts, may we feel held by the earth beneath us, the wind around us and the eternal turning that reminds us: *love does not end. What was once cherished still lives within us. Always.*

~ Kris Leitner (original work)

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](#)