

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

December 2021

tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com

MONTHLY MEETING

7:00 PM

Community Hospice
4368 Spyres Way
Modesto, CA 95356

Please join us at our
next meeting on

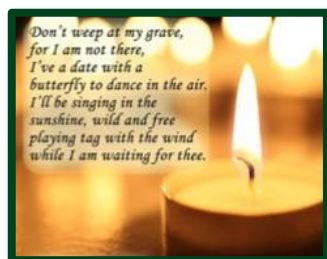
Monday, December 9th

*Please arrive by 6:50 p.m.

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

Upcoming Meetings

January 13th
February 10th
March 10th



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.

2024 Steering Committee

Kris Leitner
Chapter Co-Leader

Suzanne Casity
Chapter Co-Leader

Nelda Anaya
Secretary

Elsie Freeman
Treasurer

Janet Neal
Outreach Coordinator

Open Position
Library

Open Position
Public Relations/Social Media

Kris Leitner
Newsletter Editor

Mike & Suzanne Casity
Website



*If someone you love did not make it on that trip
you can take it for them - with them.*

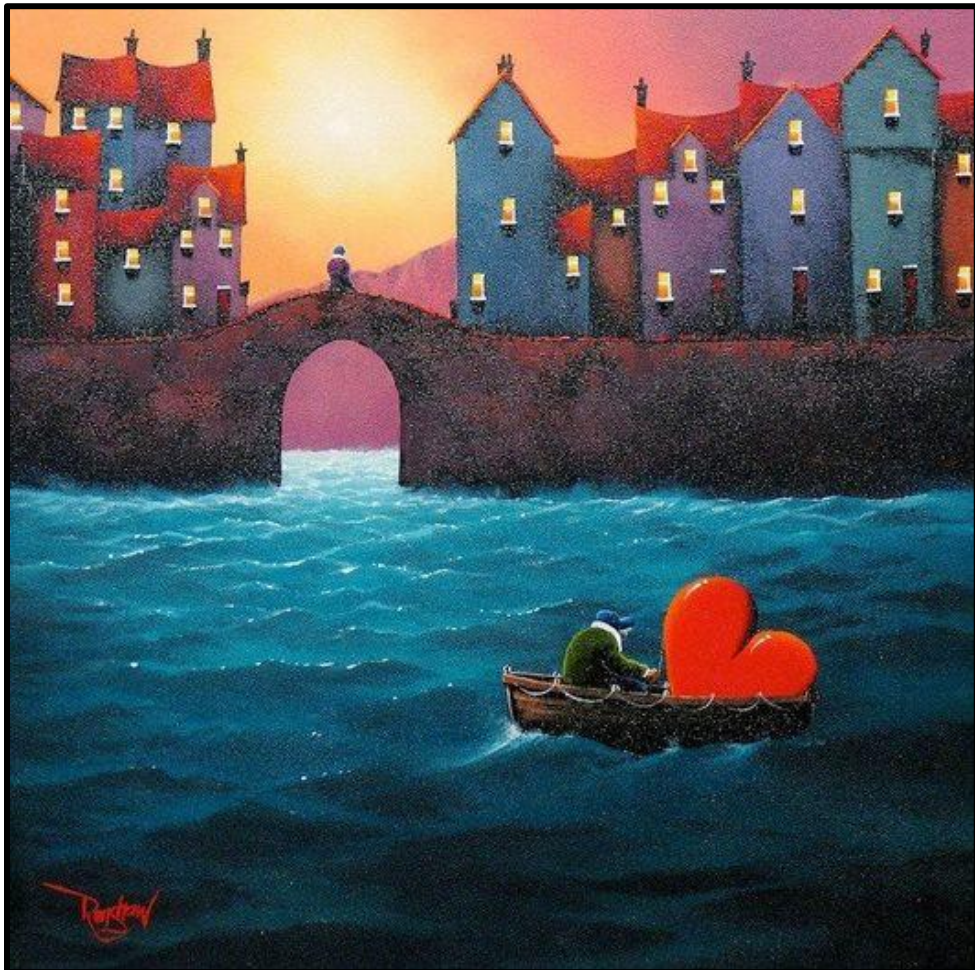
*If someone you love did not witness that milestone
you can show them anytime you like.*

*If someone you love did not get to do their living
you can finish those dreams on their behalf.*

*The beautiful thing about love you see
is that death
need not stop life.*

*If you carry someone
in your heart
you can take them with you
anywhere you like...*

Donna Ashworth





**PLEASE JOIN US
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024
BEGINS PROMPTLY AT 7:00 P.M.**

(Please arrive by 6:50PM to place your photo & find your seat)

**COMMUNITY HOSPICE
4368 SPYRES WAY
MODESTO, CA 95356**

- ❖ Bereaved parents, grandparents, siblings, family & friends are invited to attend.
 - ❖ Please arrive early to pick up your candle.
 - ❖ A display table will be available to share a photo of your loved one.
 - ❖ You are invited to enjoy refreshments before & after the program.

Practical Ideas for Dealing with the Holidays after Child Loss



It cannot be overstated: *holidays are extremely hard after loss.*

Every family gathering highlights the hole where my son **SHOULD** be but **ISN'T**.

There is no “*right way*” or “*wrong way*” to handle the holidays after losing a child. **For many, there is only survival - especially the very first year.**

These days also stir great internal conflict: I want to enjoy and celebrate my living children and my family still here while missing my son/daughter that isn't.

Emotions run high and are, oh so difficult to manage.

So, I'm including some ideas from other bereaved parents on how they've handled the holidays. Many of these suggestions could be adapted for any “special” day of the year.

Not all will appeal to everyone, nor will they be appropriate for every family. *But they are a place to start.* (If you have decided to make a **Holiday Journal**, consider printing these ideas to put inside or copying out the ones that might be helpful for you).

Skip it.

- Sounds drastic and it is. But for some families (especially if there are no small children involved) it is absolutely possible (and sometimes healing) to ignore all traditions and trappings associated with Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- You might choose to serve others on these days by volunteering with a local organization offering meals to the homeless or disadvantaged in your community.
- Take a holiday meal to hospital workers, police officers or firemen in your area. You can do it anonymously or in the name of your child.

Consider traveling for the holidays.

- On the first Thanksgiving after my son left us, we shared the weekend with our newly married son and his wife in another state. It was the first time in my life I hadn't spent the holiday with my parents. It was still very hard, but helpful in a way.
- Other families have chosen to rent a cabin or condo and have the same people involved but experience the season in another location. *Most try to choose a place with a natural focus for activity that isn't all about the holiday* - like skiing in the mountains or near a lake or beach.

Change how you do meals.

- If your family traditions always include the same foods in the same house, you might want to eat the holiday meal in a restaurant instead.
- You could swap up the timing of a meal - evening instead of noon or vice-versa.
- Change up the guest list-include a few close friends along with family members (*friends that understand your grief*). Sometimes it helps to have others not so affected by the loss in the mix.
- If you have been the host but don't feel like you can do it this year - definitely consider passing that to someone else. **And don't feel guilty about it.**
- Include the missing family members at the table in some way. One bereaved mom wrote: *“My niece includes my son and mom at events hosted in her home. She sets a chair aside and places a photo in the seat and a commemorative bow on the chair back.”*
- Don't make certain foods. I make giant plates of cookies but have not made shortbread cookies since my son left us. It was his favorite and one of the few things that tempted him from his strict weight-lifting diet
- Make your child's favorites and enjoy eating them and sharing memories around the table.

Let others do the planning/cooking/communicating.

- Explain to your family that you aren't up to being the one to plan this year's holidays. Let someone else do it. Participate if and when you can.
- Be *kind but* stand your ground.

Make new traditions.

- If you go around the table at Thanksgiving saying, "I'm thankful for..." - it might not be something you can do this year. That's OK.
- Light a candle for the missing child. You might want to have those present share a favorite memory or you might simply want to have the candle create a silent presence.
- Some families can't bring themselves to use the same Christmas tree they used before loss, so they get a new and/or different one. Some don't want a tree at all.
- Some families have a separate tree full of ornaments or memorabilia for their missing child and use the main tree as usual for the rest of the family.
- *"I have a separate tree for my son. It's filled with ornaments that remind us of him. They range from glass ornaments with his favorite candy inside to a Thomas the tank engine ornament. Collecting more ornaments for him as I'm out shopping for others helps me during this very painful time."*
- Some families don't hang any stockings while others hang them all, including the missing child's.
- Another family asks family members and friends to write a note to their son or share a favorite memory of him. They place them in his stocking to be opened and read on Christmas Day.
- *"We asked everyone to do a random act of kindness in memory of our daughter and our friends' son and to email it to us. We printed out all the emails, put them in her stocking and read them as a family on Christmas morning. It was amazing to hear all the lives touched as a result, and it took our focus off of our loss."*
- My husband, children (all adults) and I didn't want to receive gifts from extended family the first year. We still gave them but asked that others refrain or give a donation in our son's name.
- Some families buy gifts that would be appropriate for another child the same age as their missing child (or the age they would be) and give them to another child for Christmas.

Commemorate your child.

- Some bereaved parents put a Christmas tree with solar powered or battery powered lights on their child's resting place.
- Some parents take family photos and include a large photo of their missing child or a special family memento (*like a stuffed animal or symbol on a shirt*) to represent that child in the pictures.
- Some families give donations in their child's name to organizations that purchase Christmas gifts for needy families or food for families at Thanksgiving.
- In some communities there is a "Blue Christmas" ceremony on December 21st each year in which families gather to remember lost loved ones with music, candles and sometimes a devotional message. Some are sponsored by local chapters of The Compassionate Friends. If there is not one in your area, your church may be willing to host one.

Keep the same traditions.

- For some families, keeping everything the same is the most comforting choice. Especially if there are young children involved, it may be the easiest way to go.
- **But feel free to ask for help.** If you are not up to shopping for children in the family, make a list, let someone else do it and wrap the presents for you or use an online shopping service (many offer gift wrap).
- Same goes for holiday outings - maybe a good family friend or an extended family member could take the children this year and document it with photos.

Whatever you choose to do or not do, know that there's no wrong way or right way. Be gentle with yourself - this is a hard road. And a long one.

Article by: <https://thelifeididntchoose.com/2016/09/04/>

This article is the fourth in a series on making plans for the holidays after loss. Yes, it's early and no, you might not want to think about them-it's really hard to imagine Thanksgiving and Christmas without the child you love. BUT, the days will come whether we want them to or not. Here's some help to navigate them. Here are links to the other three articles in the series:

[Grief and Holiday Plans: Working Out the Details](#)

[Grief, Holidays and Hard Conversations](#)

[Grief and Holidays:What the Bereaved Need From Friends and Family.](#)

IN THE DEEPEST PARTS OF MY HEART...

There you are

♥ 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 Neal.

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.

LOSS

The festive season,
'the most wonderful time of the year'.
But if you are missing a face at your table,
it can be the hardest time of all.

How to feel merry, how to feel bright,
when your world has lost its light?
How to carry on, continue the traditions,
When the person who made it all worthwhile is not there?

How to face the music, the dancing,
the cheering and the reflection of a year gone by,
when the pain is already suffocating on an ordinary day?

You just try. It is all you can do my friend

You try very hard, to imagine
what the person would tell you,
and if you listen closely
you will hear it in their voice.

What would they want you to do?
Retreat?
Isolate?
Or take their favorite songs
and their funny stories
and their little festive habits
and share it with your loves?

In their honor. Now that they cannot.

I think we can all agree,
it is what they would wish for you.
I think we can also agree,
that they would want you to feel as loved,
As you once did when they were here.

They would want you to feel their love still.

They are trying very hard to make you feel it.

It hasn't gone away.

And you need that love now more than ever,
and everyone around you needs it too.

So, feel their love, say their name,
Bring them back to your festive table,
Even if it takes all of your courage and heart.

It is the only way.

~ Donna Ashworth



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](#)