



**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**  
**Offering friendship and understanding to Bereaved Parents, Siblings and Grandparents**  
**Johannesburg Chapter**  
**January 2017**

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Dear Friends

Traditionally it's holiday time when the country seems to close down for fun and relaxation. It's also festival time – Christmas, Chanukah, Ramadan. Time too for tests and passing, for evaluations and fresh intentions. A wonderful, happy season of goodwill and cheer.

Remember when that's how you felt too. This year's celebrations may be the first without a child or sibling. It won't be pleasant seeing other happy, whole families and be so aware of the gap in yours. Perhaps you're already a veteran and have learned how to mask the emptiness.

It's not only at the New Year that we tend to look ahead and search for our objectives. The distance between us and those goals is so long and sometimes so forbidding. Will we ever reach the end and enjoy success? Or will we fall flat on our back and, like some unlucky little beetle, lie there vainly kicking and trying to regain our balance. Occasionally a kind passer-by will right the insect. Often the efforts of the beetle itself will do the trick.

There's one more lesson to be learnt from another beetle. A persistent creature, the dung beetle industriously builds its environmentally invaluable mounds and certainly puts a new spin on the phrase, "keeping your eye on the ball". Yet the dung beetle fulfils its purpose by going backwards!!

We are so fixated on progress as going forward that we seldom glance back to gauge how much we've actually moved. As grievers we worry that we aren't getting better quickly enough. How often do we pause to realise that we did things today that were impossible last week. Looking ahead can be awesome, checking back brings perspective and a much appreciated pat on the back for victories hard fought and deservedly won.

May the days of this season treat you kindly and touch your pain gently. May the New Year bring you the courage, serenity and wisdom asked for is St Francis' famous prayer.

With love

Taken from the book "A String of Pearls"

Rosemary Dirmeik

## New Year's Resolutions for the Bereaved

By Tanya Lord

This year I resolve to:

- ♥ Not put a time limit on my grief. Loving someone means loving them for my life time whether they are physically present or not.
- ♥ Tell their stories, the happy and the sad, they will live on through me.
- ♥ Encourage others to share memories.
- ♥ Teach others that they cannot "make" me cry, tears are only an external expression of how I am feeling all the time.
- ♥ Understand that crying or otherwise expressing my pain is healthy and normal. "Doing well" means expressing my feelings.
- ♥ Understand that others will not understand my pain and it isn't fair to expect them to do anything but listen.
- ♥ Recognize that asking for help from those that love us is a really a gift that we give to them.
- ♥ Help others, reaching out to others in pain will help me to heal.
- ♥ Do something nice for myself every day.
- ♥ Know that if today I can not do everything that needs to be done, tomorrow is another chance to get it done.
- ♥ Cry when I need to, laugh when I can and to not feel guilty about either one.
- ♥ Let go, bit by bit, of the guilt, regret and anger because I know holding on to these emotions can be so damaging.
- ♥ Take a risk and let others into my life and heart.
- ♥ Take care of my physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- ♥ Reinvest in life a little bit each day...

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The Office will be closed from the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2016 until 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

However, there is always someone available to talk to in an **emergency** if you call the office number...

**And** please remember you can interact with us and other members via our Face Book page over the holiday period.

We would like to thank you for your support this year.

May your God bless you and keep you safe until we meet again.



### New Year Wishes to the Bereaved

To the newly bereaved: We wish you patience – patience with yourselves in the painful weeks, months, even years ahead. To the bereaved siblings: We wish you and your parents a new understanding of each other's needs and the beginnings of good communication. To those who are single parents: We wish you the inner resources we know you will need to cope, often alone with your loss. To those experiencing marital difficulties after the death of your child: We wish you a special willingness and ability to communicate with each other. To those who have suffered the death of more than one child: We wish you the endurance you will need to fight your way back to a meaningful life once again. To those of you who have experienced the death of an only child or of all your children: We offer you our eternal gratitude for serving as such an inspiration to the rest of us. To those of you who are plagued with guilt: We wish you the reassurance that you did the very best you could under the circumstances, and that your child knew that. To those of you who are deeply depressed: We wish you the first steps out of the "Valley of the Shadow". To all mothers, fathers, and those of you unable to cry: We wish you healing tears and the ability to express your grief. To those of you who are exhausted from grieving: We wish you the strength to face just one more hour, just one more day. To all others with special needs that we have not mentioned: We wish you the understanding you need, the assurance that you are not alone, and that you are loved. Sourced from Bereaved Parents of the USA Website <http://www.bpmarion.org/HTMLArticles>

Asking me when a parent will be done with grief in their parenting to a dead child is like asking when a parent will be done with happiness in their parenting to their living children... you cannot expect them to have "closure" on their parenthood. They are still parents. [It would be] like telling someone whose mother died, that they are no longer someone's kid.

-Different Kind of Parenting, July-Sept 2004, KotaPress, "From Grief to Parenting"

This page is sponsored by Carren and Ed Emary in loving memory of their beloved son Blayne Hullett.

### Rules for Grievers:

*Y'all get the shortest list. Why? Because you have enough things on your mind without me giving you 10 million other questions to wonder about. If you get nothing else from this list, just know you need to do whatever you can to heal.*

**1. You're crazy... so what?** Even if you are undeniably crazy (which any sane person would be), you have a right not to be around people who make you feel that way. Tell 'em to get lost.

**2. You will get let down.** It will be purely unintentional, but most of the folks we love and care about, aren't great at talking about pain. We don't live in that kind of world. Prepare yourself by knowing, your biggest supports may come from the unlikeliest of places.

**3. Sometimes you will cry in public places.** Screw all those people that tell you to wrap that stuff up. You're human and something important just changed your life.

**4. Being alive is sometimes painful, not comforting.** Promise yourself to live long enough to see a time when you can truly experience joy.

### Rules for Supporters:

*Supporting someone in grief is a sacred rite. If you can accept that, keep reading. If you cannot, pass this list on to someone who can make use of it.*

**1. Text messages don't show care.** They show you have a working cell phone plan. Texts are better than nothing... but not by much. It can sometimes feel antagonistic, as in, "Do I have to fit the complicated feelings of my trauma into the confines of your Android screen?"

**2. You have the capacity to be an amazing person; you do not have the capacity to be an expert on someone else's pain.** You're going to say, "But J Mase, I've been through X, Y, Z." Okay, if that's the case, grab yourself a cookie. But, do not be so wrapped in your own survival needs that you mistake the experiences of others for your own. We all have a different process.

**3. Therapy doesn't get you off the hook.** When my father died, lots of very well-meaning people suggested I seek a therapist. The first person seemed concerned, the 500th got my wrath. Of course I thought about therapy, but finding the right therapist often takes time and is not an overnight cure all. If ever I seemed emotional or "too sad," the "get therapy" line was something friends would retreat to if listening was hard and they couldn't deal with my emotions. We all get it. The sad friend isn't exactly the life of the party. But that kind of approach can make someone feel as if you are pawning them off to the professionals when being a friend starts to feel like too much work. Genuine friendships do take work. If/when someone experiencing grief or trauma is able to or decides to seek mental health care, they will still need friends. They will not magically be healed at dawn — and your willingness to listen shouldn't be dependent on whether or not they have done what YOU deem to be necessary for their healing.

**4. Be sincere about what you can offer.** Grief made my memory sharp. I mean, I can remember what you had for lunch seven months ago type of sharp. So, when folks said, "Tell me if you need anything," while I was grasping at the straws of my sanity, I remembered that. If you don't mean "anything," don't say it. Be honest about what you can do. If you can only provide a phone call every now and again, say that. If you can make dinner a few times say that. The worst thing you can do, is promise something and not deliver to someone who feels like they've lost everything. (Even if you think you know better.) If you mess up or can't fulfil a promise, make sure you acknowledge it and be more realistic about what you can actually accomplish. Sorry, is also a hugely important word.

**5. Being alive isn't always a sign of resilience.** It just means you haven't died yet. We are talking about grief here. I often find that a common sentiment folks want to offer is, "Well at least you're alive." But when you are grieving, being alive hurts. Existing hurts. Most of us expect this feeling is temporary, so we find ways to push through. When someone/something/some-experience you love more than anything else has died, you often can't see the brilliance of being alive. Instead of offering a phrase lost on the hurting, think about ways to encourage small steps of joy. Maybe a movie. Maybe a call. Maybe just saying I love you.

**6. Stand strong.** Grieving means I may not always be as patient or giving as I was before dealing with major loss. For you, as a potential support, observing an individual's grief may be a once a week experience. For the bereaved, every interaction may be a question of survival and reliving that situation. People will have promised all kinds of support, and many won't follow through. So, if someone lashes out at you, it may be that they are tired — tired of being let down. It may have nothing to do with you. It can be hard to have hope in others, if most of them are not sticking around. If you are able, be someone who does.

**Follow J Mase III on Twitter:** [www.twitter.com/jmaseiii](http://www.twitter.com/jmaseiii)

**It's so curious: one can resist tears and 'behave' very well in the hardest hours of grief. But then someone makes you a friendly sign behind a window, or one notices that a flower that was in bud only yesterday has suddenly blossomed, or a letter slips from a drawer... and everything collapses. ~Colette**

"In some aspects losing a child is like a wall, but instead of getting over it, you must carry the wall with you, wherever you go, for as long as you live. The wall is immovable. You can't go anywhere until you learn to move the wall. You are just stuck in the same place, forever. You can tug and tug all you want, there are days that the wall will not move. And there are days that it moves ever so slightly. Over time I have realized that in order to move forward, knowing that I must bring this wall with me, that the best way to do so is to metaphorically flood the soil near the wall with water, and have the wall float with me, instead of me having to carry it. Every act of love and kindness turns to water. Water and love can penetrate and move anything. It just takes time. I need to turn my wall into a raft."

— John A Passaro,

### Love Gifts

Given in loving memory of Kerran Yates by Colette Lundberg and Anthony Michael Yates  
Given in loving memory of Blayne Hullett by Carren and Ed Emary  
Given in loving memory of Debbie Els by Pat Smoulders  
Given in loving memory of Rebecca Suttner by Nadine and Marc Suttner  
Given in loving memory of Samantha Alex Stapley by Peter and Jean Jones



### Donations

Norman Wevell Trust  
Haggie Charitable Trust  
JP Rogers

### Barbara Kingsolver, American author and poet

A miscarriage is a natural and common event. All told, probably more women have lost a child from this world than haven't. Most don't mention it, and they go on from day to day as if it hadn't happened, so people imagine a woman in this situation never really knew or loved what she had.

But ask her sometime: how old would your child be now? And she'll know.

### 6 Ways to Survive the Holidays Without Your Child: Angela Miller – A Bed for My Heart

**1). Practice sensational self-care.** Give yourself permission to take good care of you. You deserve it. And you *need* it. Trust me. Treat yourself as you would a physically wounded person with deep, visible, bleeding wounds. Just because emotional wounds are invisible, doesn't make them less debilitating, or less real. Remember that. Remind your loved ones of this too. Treat yourself extra gently this time of year– like the carefully marked packages that read, *Fragile: handle with care*. More than that, be proactive. Have a plan to give yourself the gift of good self-care all season long.

**2). Remove all expectations.** Free yourself to participate in as little or as much holiday hoopla as you'd like. Forget about everyone's expectations, especially yours and people who might not understand your pain. Adjust your expectations to be realistic with what is. Keyword: *realistic*. This year might look much different than last year, so adjust accordingly with what you can handle right now, as you are, in this moment. As hard as it might be, try not to compare what you are able to do this year with anyone else, including past versions of yourself. Yes, I know. So. *painfully. hard*. But try to do it anyway. Be realistic, radically kind, and oh-so-loving with yourself.

**3). Just show up (or not.)** Allow yourself to change locations, holiday traditions or defy social norms. Allow yourself to show up, or not. Here's the thing: nothing is "normal" anymore. Normal died the day your child did. Which means you're now living in the land of defying normal. Anything goes. Give yourself permission to do what you need to do this year, even if it seems "abnormal" or outlandish to yourself or anyone else.

Allow yourself the "5 minute rule," where you decide 5 minutes before an event if you can make it or not. Communicate this with your host beforehand. Thank them for the invitation, and let them know you're not sure if you'll be able to make it, but if you're up to it, you'll be there. That alone might feel liberating and more do-able. Less pressure, and the freedom to honour what you need in that moment.

Laugh when you need to laugh; cry when you need to cry; let yourself wallow if you need to wallow. Don't worry about what anyone else thinks. They're not in survival mode, *you are*. Staying in bed until the holidays pass, or ditching town altogether are all completely acceptable options. Think outside the box, and don't be afraid to do something completely different that shakes up all expectations. And possibly your Great Aunt Bertha. What worked in the past might not work now, and that's perfectly okay. Sometimes a change of scenery is exactly what's needed to survive the holidays without your precious child.

**4). Honour your child in ways that are meaningful to you.** Keyword: *meaningful to you*. Light a candle at your holiday table in loving memory of your precious child. Say your child's name. Ask others to do the same. Acknowledge the glaringly empty chair. Participate in random acts of kindness in loving memory of your precious child gone too soon. Donate your favourite grief book to your local library, church, hospital, grief centre, therapist's office, or to someone who needs it. Volunteer at an orphanage. Volunteer right in your neighbourhood. Or, one of my all-time favourites: donate gifts for children who are the exact same age your child would be.

No matter what you choose to do, spread hope and help others, even if you don't feel like you have much to give. Whatever you give will be multiplied, and it will be *more* than enough. After all, the true gift is in the giving, especially in the midst of deep grief.

**5). Feel your feelings, no matter how messy they are.** Give yourself ample space to feel however you feel, including opposite emotions at the same time. You might feel hopeful and defeated; joyful and sorrowful; happy and sad; grateful and not; angry and peaceful. And all of these emotions might be even more amplified during the holidays. A wise person once told me that being able to hold space for contradictory emotions at the same time is a sign of extraordinary emotional maturity. It's *true*. You're not crazy– even though it may feel like it– you're *extraordinary*. Remind yourself of this often.

Especially every time you feel ripped apart at the seams by your duelling and opposing emotions. It's hard work to continually feel that way. Grief is unpredictable, exhausting, confusing and messy. Do your best to feel all of it until you need a break from feeling. It's ok to take a break and re-set. Deep breathing, chatting with a friend, a brisk walk outside, yoga, exercise, herbal tea, and healthy eating are all good ways to support the emotional toll grief takes on your body during the holidays.

**6). Ask for help.** Whether online, or in person, compassionate, empathetic support saves lives. Period. Having a village of support can often make the difference between surviving or not. I wasn't lucky enough to have a village, but I had one person– and that was somehow enough to keep my head above water. Hopefully you have a village, or at least one dearest one who knows how to offer you compassionate and loving grief support whenever you need it. If you don't have anyone, count *me* in your corner. Seriously.

Everyone needs someone to lean on. There is no worse feeling in the world than feeling utterly and completely alone on your own deserted planet called: *Bereaved Parent*. Do yourself a favour and ask for help, for whatever you need. Be proactive by having your core support "team" at the ready. For whatever might come. Your "team" might be made up of one person, or ten– it doesn't matter. What matters is that a support person will be there when you need him or her most. It might be your spouse, your best friend, or your therapist. Whether you need someone to listen, cry with you, or lie in the ditch of grief with you, have these dear souls ready. As your safety net, your safe place to land, your whispers of hope. It might be the one sure thing that eases your mind and heart this holiday season, in a way nothing else will.

In the words of Sarah Longacre, "Let your support rise up to meet you."

...

Remember, this is not an exhaustive list of ways to survive. These are just some ideas of things that might be helpful to you. Take what is helpful, leave what is not.

I'm no expert, only an expert at trusting my own heart and doing what works for me.

Just like grief, there are no rules for surviving holiday grief. Do what you need to do to survive. Honour your child how you need to, and do what feels best for your fragile, aching heart. You are missing a huge piece of you, so do whatever you need to do to find a sliver of peace.

Remember that no one, no one, *no one* has the exact relationship you do with your precious child. No one will feel the exact same piercing agony, pain and longing you do for your child. Therefore, no one has a right to give you unsolicited advice about how to tend to your soul-deep wounds— this holiday season— or any day of the year.

Throw out well-meaning but unhelpful advice. Throw out any to-do lists that don't work for you.

That's it. Pretty much sums up everything you need to know for surviving the holidays, right?

No.

Probably not, but it's a great reminder to keep things as simple as possible. Realistic. Do-able. If it feels like too much, *listen*. Follow your heart. Let it lead you through this holiday season. Your heart knows exactly what it needs to comfort itself and to prevent further damage and unnecessary bruising.

Trust your own broken, beating heart.



### **Why I'll Never Have Baby #3 September 22, 2016 by Rachel Lewis**

I'd heard the question a million times before — and a million times since.

But as I stood there with a stranger, making small talk as I treated her hands to a sea salt scrub, she asked an innocent question I myself used to ask all the time. Today — her inquiry blindsided me.

As she waited for my answer, she naively scrubbed the oil and salt all over her hands, completely oblivious to my struggle. I internally broke out into a sweat, faltering for an answer and hoping she didn't notice my hesitation.

"One," I stuttered out. "I have one child." *Liar* . . . My conscience screamed. *You had two. Why didn't you tell her you had two?*

This should be the easiest question to answer, right? Except — it wasn't.

Scrub, scrub, rinse. Scrub, scrub, rinse.

I finished helping all of the guests with their spa hand treatment, and I never asked a single one of them how many kids they had.

Because now I knew how hard that was to answer.

No — not just hard to answer. Impossible to answer.

Three weeks before this conversation, I had lost our little, much-wanted baby due to an ectopic pregnancy. I knew our baby was early, sure. But try telling my heart that. All my heart knew was that a new little baby was growing in me — a baby I loved — and now that child was gone. And I had no idea how to make an account of her existence, her value, her inherent worth to others. To strangers. And how could I — when I didn't even count her in the line-up of my children?

Not telling the stranger about my baby felt like I was failing her. And yet at the same time, it also felt like this stranger didn't need to be privy to the deep grief I was feeling. She didn't need to know how hard it was for me to pry myself out of bed to make it to that event, and how I was barely holding myself together in front of her.

It's been almost five years since that conversation. The one that has changed almost every conversation I've had with strangers. My situation hasn't gotten any less complicated — if anything, it has gotten more complicated. But I have learned the power of a safe, predetermined answer. "*We currently have one child . . .*" (Or two or three, depending on where we were at in our fostering/adoptive process.)

And I learned the safe questions to ask when meeting a stranger at my networking events. "Tell me a little about yourself" or "Tell me a bit about your family . . ."

They are open-ended — so they can say as little or as much as they wanted. If they want to disclose how many kids they have in their home, or if they were married they could. But if they want to answer in such a way that I would have no idea that they wanted to be a mom more than anything, but couldn't get pregnant, I'd be clueless about their struggle with infertility. If they wanted to mention their daughter or son in heaven they could — or they couldn't. If they didn't want to have to explain that they were married for 20 years and recently divorced, they wouldn't have to. Disclosure could be up to them.

This system has worked for me for the past five years. Until we got unmistakably pregnant yet again. For as long as I could, I hid my burgeoning belly under loose tunics while out in public. I'm used to being the one eyeing the pregnant stranger in the grocery store, jealous of her swollen abdomen, resenting my four years of trying and five losses. I'm not used to *being* the pregnant one in the grocery store, inadvertently triggering anyone around her who was dealing with loss or infertility. And so I hid in flowy shirts and loose dresses. For as long as I could. Until the day came that no matter what I wore, my belly was obvious.

In my blatantly fertile state, the dreaded question resurfaced, only a little different this time . . .

"Is this your first?" Of course, this time it was only asked to me when I was out and about solo. And still, I didn't know at first how to respond. If I simply said no, they'd ask how many children I have.

The easy answer would be, "This will be baby #3." An easy answer . . . but also a *lie*.

I have had one live birth, five losses, one adoption, one foster child I consider my son but is no longer in my arms, and one baby on the way. To be true? "Number nine," I would have to say. This is baby number nine. Except, I only have 2 kids in my arms.

But no matter how hard I try to convince myself otherwise, I can't bring myself to say, "This is baby #3." So I've settled for: "We have two girls at home." It is a safe answer. Enough info to let them know this baby isn't my first. But not so much that they would ask about my complicated history.

I can't count my kids. I don't even want to try. And if I'm really honest, I'd tell you I'm tired of being asked to. The truth is — my history is complicated. But it's not just me. Families today in general are complicated. Dang complicated.

\*There's infertility.

\*There are embryos you transferred in IVF that didn't make it.

\*There's early miscarriage, late miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant death.

\*There's, "My kids, your kids, and our kids" in blended families.

\*There are children you fostered forever, loved as your own, and had to return.

\*There are failed adoptions.

\*There's the step-child you raised, then lost access to when you divorced.

\*There are the children you are taking care of for others, but have no legal rights to.

\*There are children you are estranged from.

\*There's the apparently "childless" mom who has had to say good-bye to every one of her kids.

\*There are a million ways to count our kids — the ones in our arms and the ones in our hearts.

And so I'm making a public plea to all you well-intentioned lovely strangers who are trying so desperately to be polite and follow the example of millions before you. When you encounter a mom, or a woman you think might be a mom, and you feel the urge to say something . . . don't ask her to count her kids.

If you are just passing by, and feel you must say something, a simple "You have a lovely family" will do just fine.

And if you need to start a conversation, the best way to go would be, "So — tell me a little about you . . ." That way, she can tell you as little . . . or as much . . . as she wants.

**Silicone Bangles** - These are available from the office with "The Compassionate Friends – In Loving Memory" printed on them for R25.



<https://www.payfast.co.za/donate/go/thecompassionatefriends>

Please consider donating a love gift  
to The Compassionate Friends.

**Keep In Touch: how to maintain relationships after a death** <http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/how-to-maintain-relationships-after-a-death/>

Keeping in touch after a death isn't easy. You're grieving. They're grieving. Emotions are complex, sometimes the death had brought out conflict and unpleasant feelings. Sometimes you just don't have the energy to call anyone or plan anything (other than maybe for a pizza to be delivered). Yet, ultimately that day comes that you come up for air and realize months (or years) have passed and you have lost touch with people who were important to you, or to your loved one. Or, on the flip side, maybe you try to maintain a relationship, but for whatever reason they don't reciprocate. In either case, the pain of this 'secondary loss' kicks in. You realize that you have not only lost you loved one who died, but you have lost your relationship with their family or friends as well. If you are feeling this sort of pain, you should check out [our post on secondary loss](#).

So, what can you do? First and foremost, keep in mind the old serenity prayer: "God grant me (I seek) the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference". The following are things you can do to try to maintain relationships after a death, but keep in mind that, if the other person does not reciprocate, you can't control that. Do your best, but at some point you may have to accept that there are relationships that will be lost, even if only temporarily.

Alright, now for the concrete suggestions on how to stay in touch after a death:

**Plan a monthly dinner.** You could do it at home (pot luck style, to make it easy) or go to restaurants your love one loved.

**Make use of technology.** Keep in touch via email, social media, and texting. You may not be up for conversations or dinners early on, but a quick note can let people know you want to keep up a connection and are thinking of them, even if you aren't ready to get together in person.

**Make plans for holidays.** The first holiday after a loss can be confusing, especially if the person who died was key in planning and bringing people together for holidays. Reach out to family members early to let them know you want to carry on with the same tradition, despite the loss.

**Create a memorial website or Facebook page.** This may not seem like 'staying in touch' but it is actually a great way to create a central place where all come to post comments, memories, photos, videos or share grief struggles.

**Make plans for birthdays, anniversaries, and deathiversaries.** These can all be tough days and, if you have lost touch with friends or family, you may feel especially alone and isolated. Don't let these days creep up on you. Instead, reach out to friends and family in advance to let them know you want to spend the day with them.

**Make a list of all the things you did together with friends and family before the death.** It may be Sunday dinners, holidays, vacations, or just visits here and there. Whatever it is, make plans for how you will continue those traditions. It may mean stepping into a new role as 'planner' if the person you lost was the one who always made the plans.

**Make a list of the people you want to stay in touch with.** This seems silly, but sometimes in our grief we are so self-focused that two years passes and we suddenly realize the good friend of our spouse, or our child's college roommate, or our mom's cousin has fallen totally off our radar. Having a list can help you remember the people you want to keep a connection with at a time in life when it is hard to remember anything!

**Plan a new tradition.** Be it for your loved one's birthday or around any other day, plan something you will hold every year in memory where you will invite the friends and co-workers of the person who died. If everyone knows it will happen every year, they can block the day. Even if time passes and you lose touch of some of those more distant friends of your loved one, you will still have this set time to connect with them at least once a year.

**As Nike has taught us, Just Do It.** Sometimes the hardest part is taking the initiative to pick up the phone or to send the email when you are grieving and have no motivation at all. Pick the day that you will make a couple calls or send a couple emails to initiate contact or make plans and (this is the important part) actually follow through. Tell one of your friends which day you plan to make the call and then ask them to check in with you to make sure you really did it. We all need a little accountability sometimes.

Now, you may be thinking, I have let waay too much time pass. It is too late now to re-establish the relationship.

Guess what, it is never too late! Reconnecting with someone you miss or regret losing touch with is a good thing, whether it was 3 months ago, 3 years ago, or 3 decades ago.

**Reach out and let the person know you regret not being in better touch.** Chances are they may have similar regrets.

**Let them know why you are reaching out now.** There may be many reasons, and they may be obvious, but it will help to give the person context for where you are now in your life, grief, etc and why you want to get back in contact.

**Write an email 'template'.** Okay, this sounds really lame, but if you have lost touch with a lot of people over the years it may seem overwhelming to send multiple emails or make multiple calls. If you have a template email to work off of, just making small changes for each person you send it too, it may feel a little less overwhelming.

**Plan something simple – coffee, dinner, a beer, whatever.** Just get something on the books!

**Don't be scared to talk about your loved one.** This is probably the connection you have to each other, and it is absolutely okay for that person to remain a part of your relationship.

**Please apply for your My School/Village/Planet Cards before you start your Christmas Shopping –...THANK YOU. Please apply for your card today.**

**Thank you.....** Thank you to the people who pay their subs –

**Thank you.....** Thank you to the people who pay a monthly debit order to TCF

**Thank you.....** Thank you to the people who bring cakes and eats to the meetings

**Thank you.....** Thank you to the people who have paid donations and love gifts

**Thank you.....** Thank you to all our "MY SCHOOL/My Village card holders

**The Compassionate Friends Johannesburg Chapter**  
**Support Groups, Meetings and Events, for Bereaved Parents, Siblings and Grandparents**  
**January/February 2017**

Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup> February at 10:00 – 12.00	Coffee and Sharing Meeting at 11 Andre Street, President Ridge, Randburg (above The Brightwater Commons)	Facilitator: Gladys Gagliardi 011-787-7876 or 084- 500-5440
Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup> February 14h00 for 14h30	Monthly Meeting at TCF 122 Athol Street, Highlands North.	Speaker: Joanna Kleovoulou Clinical Psychologist – Self Care – 011 4406322
Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup> February 2017 14h00	Lenasia Coffee and Sharing Meeting please contact Roseline for address.	Facilitator: Roseline Ananmalay 084-556-4616

**Support**

Isabel Ferreira: 082-335-8593	Elise Barnes 083 267 9465
Maureen Conway: 011-802-2805 or 082-452-4490 (Siblings)	Roseline Ananmalay: 084-556-4616
Jabu Mpungose: 063 077 2331	Coralie Deas 083-524-7016
Kate Shand 082 884 4085	
Marcel Hugli 082 724 5670 (Mr)	

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

We are a Charity Organization and our aim is to help bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents cope with their loss. Our services are free of charge for the first year. (Starting from the first time you made contact with us at TCF). Thereafter if you would like to continue participating in our activities, we ask for a fee (Subscription) of R250 per annum

You can also sponsor a page in our Newsletter at R100 per page or R50 per half page.

A LOVE GIFT can be any amount of money you would like to donate in memory of your child.

We are looking forward to your participation in putting together our Newsletters by writing your own story. Send your story to TCF at the beginning of the month and we will do our best to publish it. We would like to support you in your grief journey. Writing brings healing.

Contact the office to set up an appointment with any of our Counsellors for one-to-one sessions.

If you know of any organization (schools, hospitals, work places) that would benefit from our services at TCF, please inform them about our work. Often people do not know what to say or do or how they can help someone who has lost a child or a sibling. Our contact details are in the Newsletter.

**BANKING DETAILS: The Compassionate Friends, First National Bank – Balfour Park,  
Branch Code: 212217; Account No: 50360007395**

You can now donate to The Compassionate Friends via this link. Please remember all donations to TCF are tax deductible. Please let us know if you require a tax certificate. We are now also BEE Compliant. <https://www.payfast.co.za/donate/go/thecompassionatefriends>

**NB: Please remember to put your name (and what you are paying for) as a reference when you deposit money into TCF's account**