

# family storytelling, as remembrance

a grandparent is so often the keeper of the family's history, the recipes, the songs, the names of people in old photographs, the story of how the family came to be where it is. when they go, a library closes. but so much of it can still be saved, if we gather it while we can. storytelling is not only remembrance; it is how a person keeps living, passed mouth to mouth, hand to hand.

this can be done at any age, alone or together, in one sitting or slowly over months. there is no wrong way to keep a story.

## WHAT IS WORTH SAVING

the recipes, written down, or cooked alongside the next person who will carry them.

the songs and the sayings, the particular turns of phrase only they used.

the names and faces in old photographs, before no one is left who knows them.

the family stories, how they met, where they came from, the hard years and the happy ones.

#### GENTLE WAYS TO GATHER IT

record the elders while you still can. a phone voice note is enough. ask the oldest people in your family what they remember, and simply let them talk. you will treasure their voice as much as the words.

label the photographs. an afternoon with a box of old pictures and a soft pencil can rescue a hundred names from being lost.

cook the recipes together. make the dish, and let someone younger stand beside you. a recipe is a story you can taste.

write down the small things. not just the big dates, but the ordinary ones, the way they laughed, the chair they sat in, the thing they always said. these are what fade first, and what you will miss most.

make something to keep. a simple book, a shared folder, a recording, something the children, and their children, can open one day and meet the person they came from.

let every feeling have room. gathering the stories can bring laughter and tears in the same hour. that is the work doing exactly what it should.

IF THE DAYS FEEL UNBEARABLE

if you are struggling to carry on, please reach out. you should not have to hold this alone.

SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Group): 0800 567 567

Lifeline South Africa: 0861 322 322

**you are part of how they continue.**

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