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# SunLLLight

## La Leche League South Africa Newsletter

The mission of La Leche League is to help mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information, and education, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother

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## Welcome!

Welcome to SunLLLight, La Leche League South Africa's newsletter!

In this last edition for 2018, we bring you more insight into what LLLSA is all about, meetings, what Leaders do, how we help and how you can become a Leader! We also have the spotlight on Esmé Hough (LLLSA's Area Professional Liaison).

May you travel safely and enjoy a well-deserved rest this festive season!

## HELLLP!

La Leche League South Africa (LLLSA) is a voluntary non-profit, non-sectarian organisation dedicated to providing information, encouragement and support through our unique mother-to-mother support network to families who want to breastfeed their babies.

LLLSA Leaders ([illi.net/southafrica.html](http://illi.net/southafrica.html)) help families one-to-one, by telephone or in person, online via our Facebook group ([at groups/lalecheleaguesouthafrica](https://www.facebook.com/groups/lalecheleaguesouthafrica)) and website ([www.illi.org](http://www.illi.org)), and run monthly series meetings.

LLLSA is active on governmental and NGO level working for the promotion and protection of breastfeeding in South Africa. Our Leaders have been in teams with health professionals facilitating UNICEF-designed Lactation Management training workshops, and our Peer Counselling Programme has already trained MANY volunteers, largely from disadvantaged communi-

ties, to work as breastfeeding counsellors.

A La Leche League Leader (LLLL) is a mother who has successfully breastfed her own child for at least a year, and has been trained by La Leche League International in helping other families breastfeed their babies.

Leader training focuses on learning about the many different aspects of breastfeeding, lactation, child-birth, nutrition, and parenting so that when a mother calls a Leader with questions, the Leader has various suggestions for her to try and to think about. The Leader can consult several resources for more support, such as books, LLL websites, other Leaders, and the Professional Liaison Department.

One of the main goals of a Leader is to provide mothers with information that will

offer options for their situations and questions. Leaders do not tell a mother what to do or advise her to take certain steps, but rather help her work through the problem by giving information so that mother and baby do what is right for them. These mothers will then become empowered to make the choices that work for them and their babies.



## Meet LLLSA's Area Personnel : Esmé Hough, LLLSA's Area Professional Liaison (APL)

The Professional Liaison Department assists La Leche League Leaders in helping mothers to communicate effectively with health professionals and to make informed breastfeeding decisions when breastfeeding is complicated by medical or, in some cases, legal issues. Esmé Hough is La Leche League South Africa's Area Professional Liaison. We interviewed Esmé to help you get to know her better.

Esmé lives in Hondeklipbaai in the Northern Cape. She has a B.Comm degree, is a La Leche League Leader and IBCLC, and currently serves as the Chair of International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners.

Esmé is married to Attie Hough and she has four children and two step children. The oldest is Janne-man, 34 years old and he lives in Hong Kong with his wife and 2 children. Esmé's daughter Marilize is 32 and lives in Vredeloof. Her daughter Mariette is 29 and lives in West Beach, and her son Hendrik (26) lives in Vancouver, Canada.

We asked Esmé how she became involved in La Leche League (LLL) and why she chose to become a Leader. Esmé said when she was pregnant with her first child, she received a booklet with LLL Leaders' numbers and saved it. When her son was 6 weeks old she phoned Rosemary Gauld in order to convince her husband of the time that she just had to feed frequently and did not need to give formula. After another few months of breastfeeding and seeing friends struggle with bad advice (for example, one was told to drink a certain brand-name fizzy

drink to be able to produce milk and the other that she should limit her fluid intake to prevent engorgement), Esmé felt the need to do something to be able to support other breastfeeding mothers. She called the Leader in Paarl and became a Leader in September 1986. Esmé says she still loves working as a LLL Leader.

Esmé says she spends her free time reading, gardening and knitting. She says she feels most proud of having been able to sit the IBLCE exam and become an IBCLC and now being Chair of the IBLCE Board of Directors.

We asked Esmé what about

breastfeeding / breast milk amazes her; she answered: "Everything!!"

Esmé says her wish for breastfeeding in South Africa is to see all babies being exclusively breastfed for 6 months. We asked what she would want her tombstone to say. Her reply: "She believed that when the going gets tough, the tough get going."

Thank you Esmé for all the wonderful work you do in support of Breastfeeding!



## What LLL meetings are all about



La Leche League meetings are a wonderful place to get support along your breastfeeding journey.

LLL meetings have led to the development of long-lasting friendships, even when that was not the original purpose of attending.

Meetings are co-ordinated by accredited leaders and can be attended by nursing mothers, grandmothers, female caregivers and pregnant women. Babies and toddlers are expected to accompany their mothers. Occasionally meetings are arranged to accommodate fathers as well.

LLL Leaders are all mothers, who have experienced the highs and lows of breastfeeding. Not everyone has successfully breastfed their first, or second or even third child, but at some point along their personal mothering journeys, they have overcome their own personal challenges, and have successfully breastfed. All LLL Leaders are passionate about helping and supporting other mothers who would like to

embark on this wonderful "mothering through breastfeeding" journey.

We start meetings with a brief round of introductions of ourselves and our little ones and allow everyone a chance to settle in.

Meetings are usually informal, with lots of discussion and sharing of information, under the guidance of a LLL Leader. However, for moms who prefer to just sit back and listen, there is no pressure to talk. Mothers are free to feed their baby, rock their baby, change their baby: whatever the baby needs at the time.

Mothers are invited to raise any questions or concerns they may have. Meetings are a wonderful place to receive information from experienced breastfeeding mothers in a non-judgemental, non-prescriptive manner. No two people at a meeting will have the same parenting style. We encourage mothers to try what they like and leave the rest.

Breastfeeding and mothering often come





with lots of challenges; sometimes, all we need to hear is that someone else is going through the same thing. Attending regular meetings can help one realise what is normal and what requires help. Support and the correct information can prevent or help overcome problems along the way. Questions are encouraged, and mothers can be assured that LLL Leaders provide information that is backed up by scientific research.

Various breastfeeding issues are covered at LLL meetings, including the amazing properties of breastmilk, overcoming early-day challenges, pumping and storing, returning to work, advice for care-givers, starting solids, and the benefits of extended breastfeeding.

Sometimes, a mother will ask, "Why do I need to attend another meeting? You covered everything in today's meeting." Each and every LLL meeting is a unique experience. It is impossible to cover "everything" in one meeting; and the attendance at each meeting is different; each mother comes with her own story, and therefore lights up the meeting in a different way. As one's baby grows, one's breastfeeding journey changes; new concerns will surface, therefore continuing to attend meetings will be beneficial.

Should a mother have a concern that she

wishes to discuss privately, she can chat with the Leader/s before or after the meeting.

Books and pamphlets on breastfeeding are available at the meetings to browse through or borrow.

Some comments from mothers who have attended LLL meetings:

I have received so much knowledge and understanding through the meetings. I thought breast feeding was a mission, but by learning and sharing thoughts, I have learnt to love doing it. My baby will be turning 3 and I still enjoy the closeness of my baby, to touch and look at her when we have our breastfeeding session and then to know how close we are. This closeness I have never experienced with my first child and I will definitely do it over and over again and recommend it to any mom to be; breastfeeding is the Best way. (Chantal Galant)

Meetings have made me realize that even being a mother second time around I don't know everything yet and most of the moms in our meetings go through all the same problems sooner or later. (Amiena Pinas)

I can never put into words what it (LLL meetings) really means to me. Every mom wants the best for their babies. The LLL meetings have empowered and informed me to make the best, evidence supported, choices for myself and my babies. It's not a one-time thing... It changes the way you think and feel about raising your children in all aspects. This is where I get the strength to persevere on the tough days. No mommy should be without this amazing support, whether you choose to breastfeed or not. (Tercia Johnson)

Please visit <https://www.lllusa.org/> for meeting details.

Written by LLLLeader Doctor Rahmat Bagus,  
Mother of 2 boys and 2 girls  
(ages 15, 12, 8, 4)

## What one can expect with help over the phone

The mother-to-mother approach is the core of our work as La Leche League Leaders.

One-to-one support has evolved into more than face-to-face contact. Messaging applications and online are the first points of contact for many mothers and families. Many have also shared their reluctance to make face-to-face contact, making social media and text a popular communication tool. With this, a mother in need can now access support easily and comfortably both from a Leader and from valuable peer mother-to-mother support. As convenient and necessary as these methods may be, I still encourage mothers to attend live face-to-face meetings. At meetings the connections made with mothers, sharing similar, if not identical challenges, are the ones that ultimately lend the greatest support.

### The basics of one-to-one support

As Leaders, we strive to help and support mothers with their questions, concerns and challenges during their breastfeeding journey. We help a mother feel at ease while sincerely listening and demonstrating genuine interest. This guides us to fulfilling that goal, and as a result, we build a mother's self-confidence and trust in her own mothering instincts.

### Key communication skills

Encouraging tone

Establishing a rapport

Careful listening

Asking questions to clarify

Offering information when asked

Recognizing the mother as the expert of her own baby

### During calls and even during text messaging...

Sometimes the pace of a conversation can be overwhelming and we tend to overlook the most

pressing need. Rushing with suggestions is definitely tempting but often leads to over sharing unnecessary information. I find, often taking a step back and waiting before responding with information helps in recognizing a mother's feelings with empathy which is what is most needed.

Asking open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer encourages more informative responses. The more questions you can have answered, the more specific your response can be. For example: Why do you think your baby isn't getting enough milk? What do you see as the problem? How would you like to see this resolved?

Listening with genuine interest remains the key and a useful tool. Most mothers express the need to have their feelings validated and simply to be heard.

As a Leader, I am most aware of respecting a mother's experience and her choices if they may be different to my own. When we feel empathized with and understood, we are able to accept suggestions more easily than when we are judged or criticised.

Written by Bahia Olivier, LLLL, mother to two daughters; Talya (8) and Layla (5)



## B e c o m i n g   a   m e m b e r

If you feel that La Leche League or an Leader has helped you, please consider becoming a member of LLLSA. It is only R250 annually! Or make a donation to us (in the same account). Every bit helps to make sure that we are still around when your children need breastfeeding help one day. We are all volunteers and we have costs like every other NPO. We need your support!

When paying the R250 membership please pay to

La Leche League South Africa

Bank: Standard Bank

Branch code: Rondebosch, 025009

Account number: 072236124

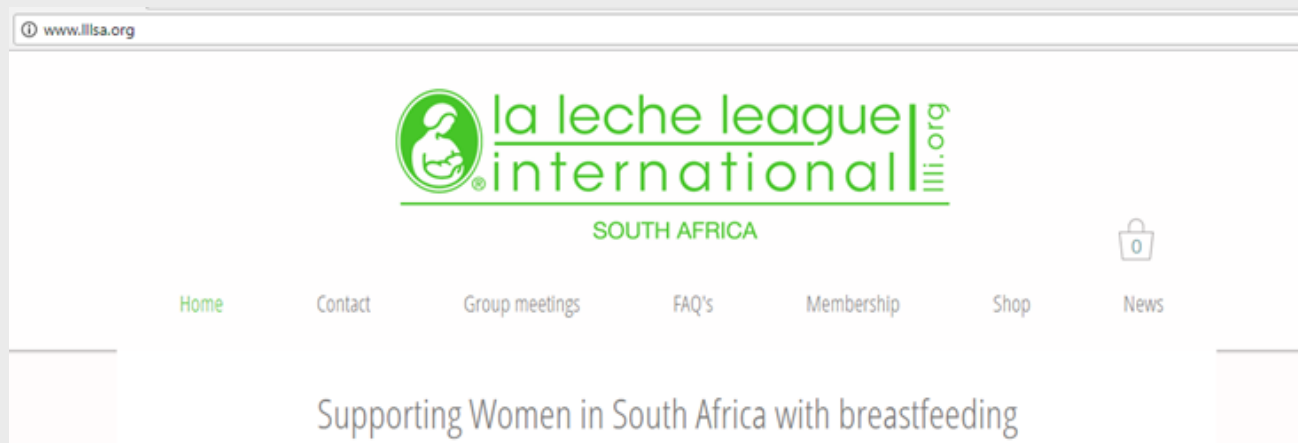
Use group name and "membership" as a reference

Send an email with proof of payment and your details (name and phone number) to the membership secretary at [lll.memberships@gmail.com](mailto:lll.memberships@gmail.com)

As a member of La Leche League, you are entitled to the following benefits:

- ⇒ a copy of the latest edition of La Leche League SA's recently launched newsletter - SunLLLight
- ⇒ access to as many group meetings as you like all over the world
- ⇒ having your local Leader on speed dial ;-)
- ⇒ discounts on books (like *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*) and other items for sale at your group (discounts offered may vary per group)
- ⇒ discounts to attend LLL conferences and workshops in SA

La Leche League South Africa (LLLSA) recently launched its very-own website to be found at [www.lllsa.org](http://www.lllsa.org). Here parents can find contact details for a leader near them, information on group meetings and a host of frequently asked questions, apply for LLLSA membership and shop online. There is also a "news" section where newsletters can be downloaded. ENJOY!



## WHAT LLL Leaders DO and can DO

*Helen Gray, from London, ponders on the fact that although LLL Leaders receive no financial reward in exchange for giving their time to help mothers breastfeed, they do get paid in a multitude of skills, experience, and job satisfaction.*

Well, we don't get paid, that is for sure.

But, in fact, being a volunteer also gives us a freedom to do something we are passionate about, without leaving our children behind. (How many jobs allow that?) In addition, we are constantly learning, along with doing incredibly rewarding and fulfilling work. Surveys show that many mothers would like to spend some time at home with their children or work part-time to spend more time with their families. Leadership is a wonderful opportunity for many mothers.

I recently heard it said that LLL leadership is "giving something for nothing. It doesn't lead anywhere." I disagree! One of the wonderful things about LLL is that there is so much scope for personal growth within the organization. While it is recommended that new Leaders concentrate on leading their Groups for the first year, to gain experience and confidence, after that the sky is quite literally the limit.

There are so many skills involved in leading an LLL Group, for example, speaking in public by leading discussions every month. Before my first meeting, I was up until 2 am to write note cards for every possible tricky situation. Yet now, if a co-Leader cancels at the last minute, I can lead a meeting at the drop of a hat. I can even stand up at a conference or a Chapter meeting and speak to an audience of mothers, health professionals, and managers.

In addition, Leaders gain excellent organizational skills, such as handling finances, fundraising, helping mothers become an LLL Leader in the Group, and much more! There are many different roles within LLL, so there is truly something for everyone. Leaders can take on:

- ⇒ research, writing, and editing roles with LLL publications
- ⇒ roles in the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD)
- ⇒ research into breastfeeding
- ⇒ specialized counselling in the Professional Liaison Department (PLD)
- ⇒ mentoring and supporting Leaders in an administrative position
- ⇒ management, strategy, and finances as a member of the local administrative team.

And then there are all those jobs repeated at the level of Area Network or Affiliate, and again at a global level! We have representatives to the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, to the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, and to the Baby Feeding Law Group (great for WHO Code followers).

We have Leaders in LLL South-Africa who have served in the LLL International Area Network (South-Africa is part of the International Area Network together with Africa Asia and the Middle East) and the LLLI Leader Accreditation Department and who have even been on the LLLI Board of Directors. Many of our administrators are closely involved in international work.

I love that a young teenage mother, who left school at 16, could not only find support for her passion for mothering, but became confident enough to lead an LLL Group, edited the national magazine for years, issued press releases including being interviewed on national media, joined her national LLL administrative team, and became chair, representing LLL at an international level. And all while raising a large family with many children.

Talk about experience and career progression! Thank you La Leche League for giving us all these skills so generously.



Juliet and her beautiful family

Adapted with permission for South Africa by Juliet Matthee La Leche League Leader, mother of Karl-Otto 19, Anja 16 and Sané 13, living in Cape Town

*Originally from the USA, Helen Gray is a La Leche League Leader in London, UK, where she and her husband Julian live with their three teenaged children. Helen is an IBCLC and joint coordinator of the UK working group of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTI). She represents LLL Great Britain on the Baby Feeding Law Group which works to implement the WHO International Code into UK and European law. Helen tweets as @HelenGrayIBCLC*



## Thinking about leadership ?

It's not every day that we meet a mom we think would enjoy working as a La Leche League Leader and thrive on the challenges that being a Leader brings; it's not every day that a mom asks us about LLL leadership. It's exciting when it happens, but sometimes difficult to remember the steps we must take to move forward.

So, what should we do first? Share with the interested mother the document *Thinking about La Leche League Leadership*. This describes the application process, so a mom knows what to expect. It gives an overview of what La Leche League does and the philosophy concepts which guide the organisation; the responsibilities which come with La Leche League leadership and the prerequisites a mother must meet before she can be considered for leadership.

If the interested mother has easy access to the internet, you could suggest she explores the section *Get Involved* on La Leche League International's website: [www.llli.org](http://www.llli.org). There she will find masses of information on becoming a Leader. She may find it helpful to go through the FAQs before reading the two sections that precede them.

After she's had a good look at *Thinking about La Leche League Leadership?* And / or *Get Involved*, the mom may have many questions. Arrange to get together to discuss them. As you chat, go through the prerequisites for leadership and make sure she meets them. Then talk about the ten philosophy concepts: these really are the roots of La Leche League. Notice how comfortable your interested mother is with the concepts, and whether they are a part of her personal mothering philosophy. If she disagrees with any philosophy concept, explore her concerns. A discussion with you could help her understand why La Leche League considers the concept important and decide that she does support it.

Your interested mother meets the prerequisites and agrees with the philosophy concepts. You write a Leader Recommendation, consulting with your co-Leaders to make sure they support the

application. You give the mom an *Application for Leadership* form to complete and return to you.

Now what? There's some finance involved. If not already a La Leche League member, the mother must show her support for LLL by taking out membership. She will need her own copy of *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* as it's a reference book she will use often, both during her training and in her work as a Leader. She needs to pay a R100 Leader Applicant fee to La Leche League South Africa's account with Standard Bank, Rondebosch (account details are in your LLL South Africa Directory) and send you proof of payment.

It's time to add the Leader Accreditation Department to the equation. Email me: [vickyreynell@gmail.com](mailto:vickyreynell@gmail.com) to tell me you have a Leader Applicant, and send me

Your Leader Recommendation (form available from me if you don't have it already)

The mother's Application for Accreditation (form available from me, ditto) and

Proof of payment of her Leader Applicant fee

When I have received these I can process the application. A member of the Leader Accreditation Department will work with the mother throughout her training period, and you will be involved too. You are the person who knows this mother best. You have walked beside her on the first part of her leadership journey; she will need you until she reaches its end.

Written by Vicky  
Reynell, Coordinator  
of Leader Accreditation  
for LLL South Africa,  
mom to Donald,  
Edward and twins Ben  
and Alex

