

Pandemic as an opportunity to consciously raise

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“We are a species that is sensitive to love and depends on it to live. This means that love provokes vital changes in us: it helps us to grow, transforms us, drives us to evolution” (Amanda Céspedes in Educate the emotions, educate for life).

While this time has had its complexities and lows, it can also be seen as a great opportunity. I know that it is difficult to understand it this way, even more so when our families have had to adapt and work from home, with the kids running around us and our attention being drawn to the thousand tasks that we did not perceive before; because now cleaning, cooking, washing, teaching almost always fall on one person or two in the best scenarios.

That is why today family co-responsibility resonates strongly, which maintains a close relationship with domestic work. However, this type of work is not only oriented towards domestic tasks, but also incorporates the upbringing and education of our daughters and sons (Maganto, Etxeberria y Porcel, 2010).

In this regard, the document "Co-responsibility and active parenthood in times of pandemic" of the United Nations Children's Fund states

"(...) coordination between father and mother in all matters relating to the care of children and their needs are essential. According to data collected by Chile Crece Contigo on parenting in times of COVID-19, in families where there was better coordination in the couple, greater patience and less exposure to conflict were noted". (UNICEF, 2020, p.2)



In addition, to these new living conditions, parental burnout is added, which corresponds to a syndrome that affects mothers and fathers due to their prolonged exposure to excessive stress. Which results in an imbalance between personal resources and stressors, such as elements of the context, economic issues or lack of support networks (Pariente, 2020).

Due to the pandemic, families -and especially mothers- have felt physically and emotionally drained. Such a situation is verified in the latest study of The Rebellion of the Body (2020), where it indicates that women-mothers feel even more pressured by what is expected of them in this quarantine.



This phenomenon is also noted in the research "It is not love, it is unpaid work. An analysis of the work of women in Chile today" by Fundación Sol, which showed the following antecedents before the pandemic began

"(...) employed women work, on average, 41 hours a week in unpaid work. That is, one more working day per week, compared to 19.9 hours for men. Unemployed and inactive women work 49.8 and 43.6 hours, respectively, in comparison with the 24.4 and 17.8 hours used by men. This proves a female double-shift and a marked sexual division of labor in a plainly invisible productive and reproductive area". (2020, p.7)



And why is the information raised earlier important?

Because different stressful situations affect the well-being of families and could result in mistreatment or verbal and physical violence towards girls, boys, adolescents and young people, if members are not aware or do not recognize what they are living and feeling in these moments.

So, how is it possible to think of this period of confinement as an opportunity to consciously raise our daughters and sons? My proposal constitutes an invitation, -and as my friend coach Tita Brunel says, it is about centering the camera towards ourselves-, as if it were a selfie that allows us to look at ourself carefully.

This process is based on three steps that may seem simple at first glance, but that may involve more work than we suppose:

1. Recognize and question where you put the focus of your priorities.

2. Take some time for yourself and look at yourself introspectively, that is, review your personal history, your childhood, observe your inner girl or boy to heal (yourself).

3. Take action, if possible ask for help or participate in a tribe.

For the first step, **recognize and question where you put the focus of your priorities**, it is important to look at your day to day, that is, within the sea of daily tasks, are you giving yourself some time to be with yourself? Or are you filling up with occupations that only take you away from yourself? Why do you want to fill the void with these things? Why aren't you giving space for reflection and introspection in your life?

Laura Gutman (2016) enlightens us with the following explanation:

“(..) the only thing that matters is understanding ourselves more and understanding the logic of our actions, our grudges, our fear or our rigidity. If we are looking for balance outside of ourselves, we will never find it, at most we will find allies, but that is something else” (p.19).

So if we focus on the outside world, nothing will change, if we hold other people accountable for our mistakes, we are focusing in the wrong place. Here the important thing is to go towards our inner world, the invitation is to look at ourselves, review ourselves or question ourselves, all with a single purpose, to understand ourselves with our lights and shadows. It is about reconnecting (us) with what we want and with what we do not want. To move forward with greater security in life -and more fully in the upbringing and education of our daughters and sons-.

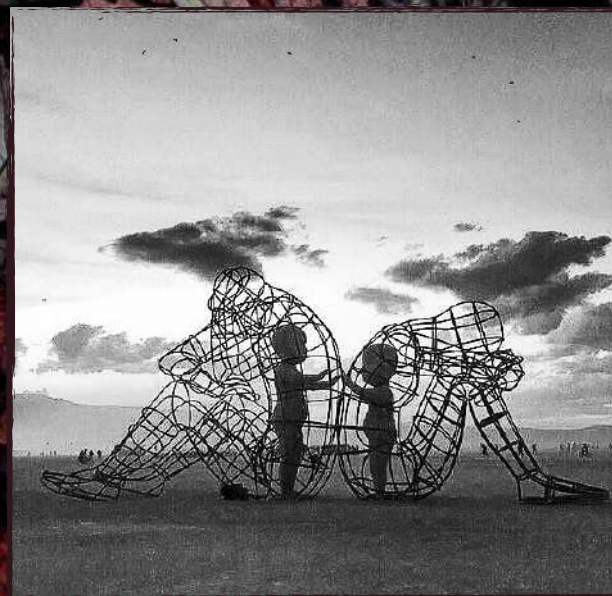


At the same time, this pandemic forces us to stop the life we led, and in some cases, requires us to confine ourselves at home. This situation allows us to observe how we are living, and especially how we are nurturing and supporting our girls, boys, adolescents and young people. The step of sitting down to reflect on what and how we live, who we are and where we are going, is the starting point to raise how we really want to do it - and not only from certain learned patterns. Therefore, the invitation consists of **looking deeply at ourselves, trying to review our private and intimate world, our own childhood, until we reach our inner girl or boy to heal (ourselves).**

In fact, Daniel Siegel and Mary Hartzell (2012) in their book "Being Conscious Parents", explain that building a greater knowledge of ourselves as mothers and fathers will contribute to the integral development of our daughters and sons. Therefore, stopping to look at our own childhood will allow us to heal, repair and (re)connect with our roles and functions during motherhood and fatherhood. This is often difficult, even bringing doubts and sadness. However, if we do it with our higher consciousness, we will understand that reliving such memories is not to harm, exact revenge or plunge us into misery. Rather, it is about constituting ourselves in the best versions of ourselves. Which will bring multiple benefits to our ways of existing, living with, raising and educating the next generations.

In fact, I invite you to stop and look at the situation as if you were in front of a mirror when you get angry about something with your daughter or son. So think about why am I angry, where does that anger come from? How do I really want to act? Maybe that way you will be able to (re)connect with more empathetic, respectful and loving forms of communication.

Finally, the third step: **Take action, if possible ask for help or participate in a tribe**, has to do with mobilizing or taking action, giving us the opportunity to recognize the power that company has. Once we have contained our inner girl or boy, -once we have questioned our logic of action by focusing on our inner world- it is necessary to act accordingly.



It is likely that, for the second and third step, we need other people to accompany, guide or orient us, sometimes, it will be convenient to talk with a friend, health professional, holistic therapist or share with a group with affinities and common interests. The important thing is to be accompanied during this process because there will be difficult moments and we will need help so that what has been kept in the unconscious becomes conscious.

Today more than ever, we need a tribe, even if it is virtual, to provide us with spaces for emotional containment and authentic listening. A tribe that sustains us and encourages us to continue giving the best version of ourselves for those little eyes that daily rest on our pupils. Because today at home it is like that, the looks of our girls, boys, adolescents and young people are on what we are, say and do... and when did we have this tremendous opportunity? Why did we stop having it?

About the importance of a virtual tribe, I leave the invitation to be part of "Confident Mom", a digital community supporting mothers, fathers, caregivers and those who are preparing to assume these roles. This tribe provides quality information, -with easy and warm words-, regarding motherhood, fatherhood, upbringing and education, so that we have the possibility of making conscious and informed decisions. A judgment-free community that grew out of my own experience as a mother of twins and has expanded into a Facebook group, Instagram, website, podcast, and weekly radio show. And

that, in addition, it has developed the Accompanying Program "Moms Mentors" in order to help prevent postpartum depression that not only affects the quality of life of the mother, but also the well-being of their daughters, sons and family.



Finally, I make the call to project the behaviors of girls, boys, adolescents and young people in the short, medium and long term. If today we want their skills, knowledge and attitudes to last over time, we must be more aware of our words and actions, because whether we want to or not, we are an example, a model for them.

And if we are telecommuting, it is very likely that their eyes are fixed on our actions. For the rest, we know that looking at ourselves introspectively brings *i m m e a s u r a b l e* consequences because we will be delivering socio-emotional strategies to

our daughters and sons so that they consciously raise and educate our granddaughters and grandsons out of love.

“The mechanisms that help one or the other may be different, but it is necessary to connect with oneself in order to know them and adopt an active search for the path of happiness for ourselves and for our sons and daughters.” (Milicic, 2019, p.20)

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