



Teenagers and the COVID-19 pandemic

by *Lúcia Helena Assis Abdalla*



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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions had significant effects for young people in Brazil, including those living in the poorest communities. It brought new hardships and reinvigorated old problems that had been lying dormant. This paper describes a series of interventions used to stimulate understanding about what we were all living through and how young people were responding. A co-research project called the Quarantine of Possibilities surveyed young people about what they had been doing during quarantine and their tips to make this time more fun. Their contributions were shared with others on social networks. Taking counselling online opened new possibilities as young people were able to talk about the precious objects that surrounded them in their own homes, and suggested ways to enhance our online conversations through fun activities like choosing and discussing creative background images. As the need to go beyond one-to-one online counselling became apparent, a collective conversation about this collective experience was initiated. Young people enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to share what they had been experiencing and what had supported them. They entered into externalising roleplay with Corona and his gang and penned a collective letter. In addition to opening possibilities for future collective conversations, this experience provided the basis for a set of conversation guidelines for counsellors and others wanting to reflect on the invasion of Corona in our lives.

Key words: *young people; adolescents; COVID-19; pandemic; online counselling; collective narrative practice; therapeutic documents; Brazil*

The arrival of the pandemic

It was Friday 13 March, and my young clients arrived at the office telling me that classes had been cancelled for the next two weeks. The atmosphere was of great joy and celebration: 'Lúcia, have you seen this? Two weeks without classes and we're not on vacation! That's all I asked God for!' The school year had just begun, but the idea of having an extended holiday was extremely attractive for most.

However, as the young people celebrated, their parents seemed surprised, outraged and desperate. Their comments varied, but great dissatisfaction was common among those I met that day: 'That was all I needed! How am I going to work with the children at home?' 'Who are they going to stay with?' 'I think the schools rushed into this decision.' 'Do you think it's really serious, Lúcia?' 'Are you going to continue working at the office?' 'What are we going to do?'

People were scared and I felt as lost as they did. The only thing I thought that day was that I had to stay calm and try to understand all the new measures that were being announced.

That weekend, we were bombarded with information about the new COVID-19 virus, and further safety measures were announced that totally changed our daily lives. The shopping malls were closed, beaches, parks and recreational areas were closed, and the direction to remain in social isolation seemed to frighten everyone. Birthdays, soccer games, weddings, graduations, conferences and trips – everything was being cancelled. In the supermarkets and drugstores you couldn't find hand sanitiser. We heard about what was happening in other countries and wondered what it would be like here in Brazil. It was hard to imagine interacting with people so differently: 'How can I greet people without touching them?' Everyone who called me would talk about a great confusion.

I went into the office for two more days, trying to make the most of online services like Zoom and Skype. At the end of the second day I had flu symptoms and a fever. COVID-19? Who knows! Because there were few test kits and I wasn't in a high-risk group, I received the instruction to follow a double quarantine and was isolated in a room. My main concern was to continue talking online with my clients. I hoped that I'd be okay and that this period would pass quickly.

Skills in dealing with adversity

That week, I spoke with Caio¹, an 11-year-old client. I was surprised by the news he brought to our conversation:

Lúcia! You have no idea what's happening here at home! I couldn't wait to talk to you! My parents are suspected of having the coronavirus, and neither I nor my sister can be with them. They're locked in their bedroom and they only talk to us by cell phone or iPad. I don't know what to do!
(Caio, 11 years)

When I asked Caio what he had been doing to deal with this difficult situation, he told me that he had spent the day playing on the internet, and the only thing he had done differently was to make alcohol gel. 'Make alcohol gel?' 'Yes!' he said. 'Alcohol gel was missing everywhere, and I was very curious to know the recipe. And because I thought this information could be relevant for other people, we decided to make a podcast!' Caio shared an extract of his podcast:

Hi, everybody! Today I have a great tip for you! A lot of people are doing slime today, but it's not slime we're talking about – we're talking about alcohol gel. I'm going to teach you a homemade recipe for making alcohol gel that works super well and I'm using it now. Go to the market and buy alcohol gel to light a barbecue fire – it's 70% alcohol. Then go to the pharmacy and buy colourless hair gel. This is a unique recipe! Take 500ml of the alcohol and six tablespoons of hair gel and mix it all together in a blender.

Discussing this development, the atmosphere of the conversation totally changed. We talked a lot about the virus and found out that it was invisible, silent and seemed to want to be part of every human life on this planet. We understood that, on one hand, it seemed to be polite and generous because it liked everyone regardless of their age, sex, ethnicity and social status, and that its favourite moments were when people were physically close. On the other hand, it was scary because it could take people's lives, especially older peoples', which could mean a long time without seeing grandparents, for example.

Our conversation flowed with good humour, but the presence of fear and boredom remained a challenge for Caio. That's when I asked him if he knew what his friends had been doing to fight the boredom. We decided to do a survey of other young people to find

out what they were doing and what tips they might have to make quarantine more fun. And so emerged the Quarantine of Possibilities campaign!

How about promoting a wave of creative ideas to put up with Corona and the quarantine? Think outside the box and be part of the #QUARANTINEOFPOSSIBILITIES

- 1 What has the arrival of Corona made with your life?
- 2 Did Corona have any influence on your habits, wishes, plans and dreams? Which ones?
- 3 Would you be able to describe Corona and his actions in one or more drawings?
- 4 If you could give him a name or a nickname what would it be?
- 5 Have you ever rendered Corona's life complicated? When? How? What have you done?
- 6 What have you been doing to deal with the quarantine?
- 7 What and/or who have been helping you during this hard time?
- 8 What have you learned about yourself that makes you believe you're able to cope with Corona?
- 9 What more have you learned about yourself since Corona's arrival?
- 10 What tips would you give to other people that are dealing with this situation?

SEND YOUR ANSWERS TO THIS E-MAIL: CONTATO@RECICLANDOMENTES.ORG OR CLICK HERE.



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Proceeding with uncertainty

I came out of this meeting very excited about our co-research, but also feeling reflective. I realised that I was experiencing the same fear and vulnerability as many of my clients. We often assist people who have experienced, or are experiencing, trauma, but it is not common for us to be immersed in the same ongoing traumatic situation as our clients. Did this disqualify me from being able to help people?

This was not an individual trauma but a collective one. The situation was not happening only in one community, but at the same time in many communities, cities and countries. Few of us were left untouched. This was extremely unknown and frightening. But, on the other hand, perhaps it presented an unprecedented opportunity to learn from the experiences of others.

I thought that collective narrative practices might help us in the search for ways to face this situation:

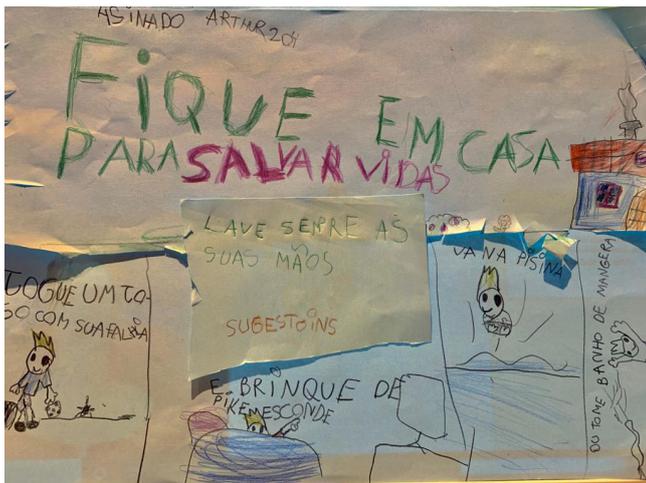
Our first task ... is to develop ways of working that unearth (and then richly describe) the skills and knowledges of those who have experienced trauma and hardship. Our second task is to 'enable contribution' ... People enduring significant hardship are often seen to be requiring 'help', 'healing', 'therapy', or 'psychosocial support', and it is often assumed that this 'help' is to be provided through professional services. But perhaps something quite different is required. Perhaps what is required is for contexts to be created in which individuals and communities who are going through hard times can make contributions to the lives of others who are going through similar difficulties. (Denborough, 2008, pp. 1–4)

The idea of acknowledging, honouring and sharing the resources and skills that Caio and his friends were facing in that situation seemed a good start. This was the most accessible way I could find to strengthen the young people in the face of so much adversity. Caio, who had started the meeting in anguish, left our conversation with a beautiful smile on his face, full of desire to share our ideas with his friends.

The experience of making a contribution to the lives of others can be the catalyst to reduce the effects (or transform the nature) of the suffering in the person's life. When the hard-won knowledge they have gained through adversity contributes to someone else who is in the midst of similar struggle, this can bring a sense that their suffering has 'not been for nothing' ... This can spark a sense of possibility that can ripple over to other aspects of their life. (Denborough, 2008, p. 3)

Through enabling young people to act collectively to contribute to the lives of others, I hoped that the Quarantine of Possibilities project might start a wave of original and fun ideas in the face of much suffering and adversity. It would also be a way for young people to speak for themselves at a time when television programs and interviews were discussing what young people needed.

Right at the beginning of the research, we realised that when a child invited another child, the take-up rate was much higher. So, we asked a group of children to record a video inviting other children to participate in the campaign. Through this we started to receive many drawings, funny stories and tips, many of which we have shared on social networks.



'Stay at home to save lives', 'play hide and seek': young people's contributions to the Quarantine of Possibilities

taking medication to improve his concentration, but that during the quarantine, the medication no longer seemed to be working. As I listened to her, I thought that if João hadn't been responding to online classes, he might not be interested in online therapy. I put that thought in my pocket and decided to give it a try. We scheduled a meeting and I ended up being surprised by the quality of the session. As I showed interest in what was happening in João's life, he asked me to share his computer screen, and he introduced me to a whole universe of stories about his reality, from what his classes were like to the games he enjoyed the most. At that moment I realised that new ways of working and connecting were emerging, and that online therapy could become a great paradigm-breaking exercise for many therapists. Could it also be used for collective practice?

Collective conversations in communities of need

Besides my clinical work with individual young people, I assist community development projects in partnerships between Recycling Minds² and local NGOs. Rio has a large number of communities in need, with many members of a family living under the same roof, and very little access to clean water. Most of these families could not afford hand sanitiser and had nowhere else to go. We feared for their lives because we knew how difficult it would be for them to follow basic prevention guidelines.

The effects of the coronavirus pandemic and the economic crisis generated by it were further aggravated by a political crisis. This complex scenario exacerbated old problems in our society such as inequalities, injustices and violence. Although everyone was vulnerable to the coronavirus, there were different degrees of vulnerability. People who lived in communities in need, who did not always have the resources to protect themselves with distancing, masks and hand sanitisers, were precisely those who needed to continue working, leaving them much more exposed to the virus.

To contain the number of cases in the poorest communities, there was a spontaneous movement of many companies and people to maintain their employees' salaries so that they could stay at home. The health system organised itself to take care of people who were infected. Many training

Taking counselling online

The need to talk online, rather than in person, didn't seem to be a problem for most of the teens I was meeting with. On the contrary, we gained a lot of intimacy. Because the sessions were held in their rooms, they wanted to show me all the objects that were there. From each picture, doll and favourite item there were many stories. They also gave me tips on how we could enhance our meetings. Creating themed backgrounds became a fun activity, and more and more stories came up to explain the young people's chosen backgrounds, from rock bands, soccer teams, the beach, pets and favourite characters, to political protests against racism and government acts.

However, in some cases, I doubted that online counselling would work. I received a call from a mother, Maria, saying that her son João, 12, needed psychological care with some urgency because he wasn't able to pay attention to online classes and didn't understand the subjects he was supposed to be studying. Maria explained to me that João was

institutions and fellow therapists offered free individual psychotherapy care for people who were experiencing major difficulties during the pandemic. I recognised the enormous importance of this work, but wondered whether, in view of the number of people who needed assistance and the fact that everyone was being affected by the pandemic, it would not be timely and relevant to create shared conversation spaces to think collectively about this collective experience.

Because this extremely difficult situation might be an ongoing one, I felt that we needed to identify and recognise the ways people were responding, and to illuminate the resources, knowledge and skills they were already putting into practice. If we created a simple and meaningful conversation space to capture the wisdom and creativity already being applied, would young people and community leaders be able to learn from these practices and identify others? Might an online forum work in these communities?

I called Geovana, one of the coordinators of Pastoral do Menor. Pastoral do Menor works in 346 of the 763 slums in Rio de Janeiro. At first, my ideas did not sound very viable to her. However, even though we knew that not all adolescents and young people would have access to the internet to participate in an online meeting, we decided to schedule a test meeting.

I committed to holding this meeting without having the slightest idea about how to do it. However, two previous projects informed my thinking: *Responding to Trauma that is not Past* (Denborough, 2014), and a forum that built on this project, held by David Denborough in May 2017 in Rio de Janeiro. During the Rio event, besides drawing on the work that had been developed by Dulwich Centre Foundation in collaboration with the psychologists of the Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture in Palestine, we were invited to talk with Despair and to write it a letter reflecting on how we had been preserving our dreams in the face of so many difficulties. The psychologists in Palestine demonstrated ways to respond to a trauma that was continuing in the present, and ways to deal with a situation in which the caregiver may be as vulnerable as the one who is cared for. The exercises I experienced at the forum in Rio demonstrated the power of collectively externalising problems, and showed this to be an excellent way to elicit and acknowledge the resources and skills of people experiencing difficulties. Remembering these practices of care, survival and hope was all I needed!

I planned a series of activities that could be facilitated via Zoom for groups of up to 30 participants in a two-hour session. We set a date and invited young people to try out this exercise and tell us if it could work.

Trialling online conversations to think collectively about a collective problem

A group of young people volunteered to try out an online meeting. I facilitated four activities with them:

- sharing what they had been experiencing in recent times
- identifying supports
- interviewing Corona and his gang
- writing a letter to Corona.

What young people had been experiencing

First, adolescents were invited to share what they had been experiencing and how they had been dealing with difficulties.

A lot of people like to talk in person, to have that gesture, hug, kiss. With the lockdown, a lot of people are feeling trapped, feeling needy. There are days in which I've been talking all night with someone just to help, and this situation can cause huge harm to the person, psychologically speaking, especially at home. That's a very negative part of what's happening. (Rodrigo, 17)

There has been a lot of instability in the labour market. As a young apprentice, I'm afraid about whether or not I'll be hired. Even before this situation, we were facing uncertainty about whether or not we would get a job. With this pandemic, our hopes and expectations have vanished. That's my big fear: even if we make it to college, how can we get a job to pay for our education? And will colleges go back to total normality? (Ana Caroline, 17)

Dealing with the fact that I cannot see my grandmother, embrace her. I've always been very close to my grandmother. I'm very affectionate – that's how I am. I'd like to be able to see my friends, go out, because I have a lot of energy. But I try to get the best out of it, you know? Everything is okay! Why am I going to be complaining? It won't do much good. Let's

think, let's reflect, let's take a lesson from all this because at the end of the day, everyone's learning. (Letícia, 16)

I live in a community with my family, with other people. My younger brother, my mother and my father. Now, with the quarantine, we're together every day so we're getting stressed. All the families here in the community are getting stressed. It doesn't mean I don't love them, but we're together all the time. Everybody is stressed because they have to stay home all the time. Because they are not working, having that routine, everybody is nervous. We get stressed with each other and we start arguing. To help me deal with this quarantine, I started to study make-up. I love things related to beauty. I also love talking to my boyfriend, joking with him, staying with him. All this relieves the anxiety of the quarantine. (Dayane, 16)

I'm a very lonely person. My mother spends all day away from home and I stay most of the days alone here. I don't talk to anyone. I don't leave home. This quarantine period is like any other. I never leave my house, either before or after the pandemic. So I started to get a little depressed, sad and needy. As long as my mother is present, I am fine. When she is not at home with me, I get very sad. I feel alone and every time, I don't know if this is normal or not, but I think something is going to happen and will get out of my control. Sometimes I want to cut myself. I think about it every day. I think about doing that. There are other times that I think that my mother will come soon and that I will be fine, that it will pass. (Wellington, 17)

What supports us in difficult times?

The young people were invited to reflect individually, by means of questions, on what sustains and supports them in difficult situations.

- During this period, what do you do to lift your spirits?
- Would you consider what you do to be a practice of hope?
- Would you give this practice a nickname? If so, what would it be?
- Has this practice been important at any other time in your life? If so, when and why?

- Where and from whom did you learn this practice?
- If you have previously lost connection with this practice, how did you reconnect with it?
- What keeps your dreams safe and alive?
- How do you try to help others when they fall?
- What tips about hopes and dreams would you share with someone who is feeling hopeless?
- What are your hopes for our planet?

To collect their answers, we suggested that each person choose the most convenient way to share them: in writing, drawings, images or music.

What I do and should do much more, especially now, is to seek God, because I believe in God, I believe in Jesus Christ and in the word of the Bible. I know in my heart that it's true. The Bible says that when we feel sad, anguished, afflicted, we should read the Bible, pray and talk with the Father who is in Heaven. And I feel that this raises my spirit. It fills my heart with hope, because at this moment, we need hope to keep on living. (Dayane, 16)

I read a lot about social issues. I really like to read about what's happening, how I can help. So I started thinking about what I do to keep my head in place. I live in a community, in the favela, and we have a wonderful view from up here. We see the whole sea, the buildings, the Christ. And I just keep looking at all this, and I see myself small in the midst of all this immensity, you know? A very beautiful view of what God created! Let me admire it so I can get some peace in here. Then I reflect, think, see and try to get better inside so I can help someone. This is basically my self-care. You have to practice self-care regarding your body, because otherwise you freak out. We live in a crazy world where people don't listen to each other anymore, people want to impose the things they think are right. They're not able to say 'Come here, let's talk, exchange ideas'. That's what I'll do after it's all over. It's the capacity to really welcome, see the other, listen and try to put yourself in that person's place, even knowing that you'll never be in that place. (Letícia, 16)

What makes me elevate my spirit is reading. I read the catechism material from the church to understand more about my faith, what I believe,

and I think this has helped me a lot. I pray. Sometimes I listen to a lot of music until my mother arrives home. When she comes home, I feel more comfortable and relieved because I know I won't be alone anymore. (Wellington, 17)

At the end of this process, the adolescents spontaneously shared their reflections on what had impressed them.

Interviewing Corona and his gang

The adolescents were then invited to divide into two groups to stage a press conference with Corona and his gang. One group took on the roles of reporters. They were invited to think of interesting questions for Corona and his friends. The other group became Corona's gang. They were invited to elect the characters/problems they wanted play at the press conference. Corona's gang members included Fear, Anguish, Uncertainty, Panic, Violence, Insomnia, Sadness, Anxiety, Solitude, Stress, Unemployment, Hopelessness, Alcohol, Conflict, and even Death. Through giving voice to Corona, the young people were able to get information about the problems that were disturbing their lives, and they had the opportunity to choose new and different ways to respond to or interact with their problems, perhaps glimpsing a way to minimise the problems' influence in their lives. One thing was for sure, in such a press conference, funny moments were guaranteed!

Reporter: Corona, why did you come here to this planet?

Corona: I didn't come to this planet, I was born here and I'm struggling to survive in this world. But, of all the countries that I have known, I just love Brazil the most – I'm pumping here! I quickly became very popular! Here people are warm, and they really enjoy parties and things like that. And they can't live without a hug! Not to mention that I have had the full support from the Brazilian president. So, I can only thank them! I was well received and I'm feeling very comfortable here!

Reporter: And why haven't you wanted to be intimate with our president yet?

Corona: This is a matter of time!

Reporter: What makes you happy?

Corona: I love it when people think I don't exist and there are a lot of people in the same place! Events, parties, weddings, beaches, football games. I love parties and I love the night life!

Reporter: Tell us a little more about your main intentions.

Corona: I want to be everywhere, in all nations. And I don't discriminate – I really mean everywhere.

Reporter: What do you think of detergent and alcohol gel?

Corona: Ah, please can we move on to another question?

Reporter: Anxiety, why did you decide to be friends with Corona?

Anxiety: Guys, have you seen a better opportunity in life for me? I love people who want to control things and life. Then when an opportunity like this arises, in which everyone does not know what will happen in the future, I start to be fully present.

Reporter: Violence, how about you? Why did you decide to be more present now?

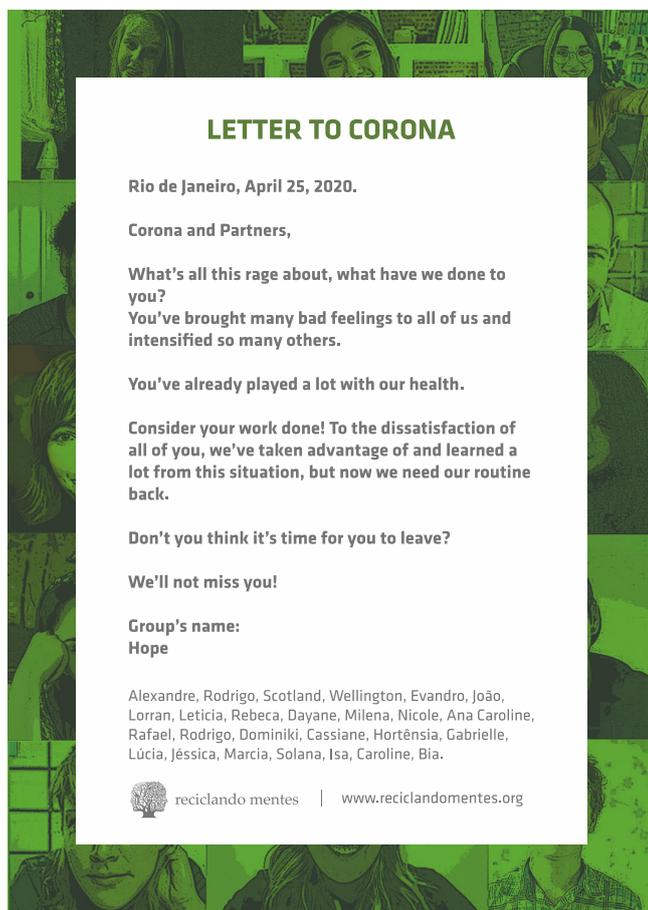
Violence: I live with people who feel wronged, unhappy, disoriented, then I convince them that this is the only way to improve something, to regain their dignity. This is a very important moment for me, I've managed to increase my followers significantly.

Externalising the coronavirus, and the problems it had been creating in people's lives, was a way of responding to the many invitations for people experiencing difficulties to see themselves as the problem. 'If you see yourself as the problem, there's not much you can do except maybe act against yourself ... When this occurs, people often feel divided from each other at precisely the times that those relationships are most needed' (White, 1998, pp. 219–220). Separating the problem from a person or community creates space for people to renegotiate their relationship with the problem or take action to resist it.

A collective letter to Corona

A collective document interweaves the skills and knowledge of people who have dealt with particular adversities or difficulties (Denborough, 2008, p. 32). Every document is aimed at two audiences: those who have contributed to its preparation and others with similar experiences (Denborough, 2008, p. 37). Reading a collective document out loud can create a feeling of unity, since it involves not only acknowledgment of common suffering, but also a recognition of skills, knowledge, values and stories of support (Denborough, 2008, p. 41). They witness both trauma and survival.

With the problems externalised and following the lighter and more entertaining process of the press conference, the last exercise invited the young people to write a collective letter to Corona and his gang, summarising everything that had been discussed during the meeting.



Collective letter to Corona and its partners

A moment of reflection at the end of the meeting

We wanted to get as much feedback as possible from the young people about the effectiveness of this activity, so everyone was invited to share how they were feeling and to answer two questions:

- What messages would you like to send to other people who are facing the same adversity as you?
- After all we've talked about, what actions do you feel encouraged to implement in your life, in your family, with your friends and/or in your community?

Here are some of their responses:

I really enjoyed participating because I've come to see that there are other people who share the same thoughts as me and this is very important. I know that I can keep my ideas and speech. That it's not just something from my head, this importance of staying healthy and being careful ... If everyone unites, if all the groups unite, we will be stronger ... I learnt to observe more and to discern and this meeting was wonderful for that, to confirm that this is the right way. (Ana Caroline, 17)

The dynamic was very good because it always led us to reflections, ideas and to go back, visit other places, to get to know each other more, to know more about things. It's clear that we can't hold hands right now because COVID is with us, unfortunately, but we can connect, being at home, having these meetings to get to know each other more, to know a lot more. Let's talk! This movement is very beautiful. It shows our strong humanitarian side and we have to continue. And yes, I will come back, I loved it, really, thank you very much. (Leticia, 16)

I recycled my feeling of being in a group, in therapy, of sharing. It was very nice to know that we are not alone, and so it was good to have left a little of that, to have seen other people, with other thoughts, with the same problems or different problems. So it was very nice, it was very good for me. (Carol, 17)

Learning from this experience and next steps

At the end of the meeting, the emotion was contagious! Even those who had started the activity very quietly were now speaking more freely, smiling and even managing to joke a little bit. We were three-and-a-half hours into our two-hour meeting and nobody wanted to disconnect. It was like people were saying goodbye

and at the same time 'let's talk just a little bit more'! The young people honoured each other with a lot of spontaneity. It was a beautiful closing ceremony. Everyone valued our interest in their stories. Hearing these testimonies led me to believe that I was on a good path, but that there was still much to be done.

Despite a feeling of accomplishment about the meeting, Wellington's testimony stayed with me.

I stay most of the days alone here. I don't talk to anyone. I don't leave home. This quarantine period is like any other. I never leave my house, either before or after the pandemic. So I started to get a little depressed, sad and needy. As long as my mother is present I am fine. When she is not at home with me I get very sad. I feel alone and every time, I don't know if this is normal or not, but I think something is going to happen and will get out of my control. Sometimes I want to cut myself. I think about it every day, I think about doing that. There are other times that I think that my mother will come soon and that I will be fine, that it will pass. (Wellington, 17)

This sounded like a cry for help. Wellington repeated many times that he did not speak to anyone before the pandemic or during it. But for some reason he had chosen to share this pain with the group. I was concerned about the way I had responded to him at first:

Thank you, Wellington, for sharing with us a story where anguish seems to want to dominate our thoughts and faith seems to be the best way to deal with this situation. I'm happy to know that faith has always been at your side, and I'm thinking that perhaps faith might also help other people who suffer from the presence of distressing thoughts in their lives.

I didn't know what to say and do at that moment, so I tried to welcome him and value the resource he was using to deal with that pain. But after the meeting, I kept asking myself how I could help him in a more effective way. I thought about how many young people might be living a similar situation. Perhaps we would have to create ways to continue this conversation.

Through my clinical practice I had become aware of many stories of great suffering. The pandemic had disrupted many plans and brought great uncertainty about the future. This has been extremely distressing for some young people. Some complained that they

couldn't stop eating. Others that they couldn't stop exercising, playing video games or checking social networks. And there were those who didn't want to do anything, or just wanted to sleep to see whether that would make time pass more quickly.

Lúcia, I've always been thin. They even think I suffer from anorexia. I just wanted to occupy my day because I didn't have so much else to do, so I started doing gymnastics to help pass the time, you know? And I lost even more weight. The problem is that everything is too boring, so to distract me I don't stop doing exercises! (Giovana, 13)

Lúcia, the other day my father said that he would end up taking me to a hospital if I continued like this. But it seems that I'm in Egypt and the seven plagues are happening. And I'm always waiting for the next one. Moses managed to escape by opening the sea, so I think: what will I have to do to get out of this situation? (Anne, 17)

I'm feeling really stuck, you know? So I spend all my time on the social networks and I don't feel better, I feel even worse. (Sarah, 16)

It's been very difficult! Even if good things have happened, it feels like nothing's going to end. I'm so discouraged. I just feel like crying and the worst part is that I'm full of school activities to do and I just don't do them. It feels like I don't have the strength for anything, and I end up feeling useless at the end of every day for not doing what I should have done. There are so many things going on and I just want them to be over soon. (Ana, 16)

With all these stories in my mind, especially Wellington's, I realised how important it was to get young people to reflect on the effects of the coronavirus. It seemed as if the virus had invaded our lives, and from that invasion, old problems that had been dormant reappeared and gained power, or new problems appeared, making the situation even more difficult and troubled.

The conversations had in the collective online meeting had been useful, but I needed to find ways to structure conversations to address different contexts and needs:

- How could we stimulate comprehension about what we were living through and how people were responding, recognising the resources and ideas available in the community?

- What questions could be useful both in a therapeutic process and for individual reflection?
- How could we develop a reflective exercise that would also help the many organisations that need to assist people without being able to hold in-person meetings?

In response to all of these questions, we prepared guidelines for a conversation called 'Dealing with the invasion of corona in our lives', to be used by Recycling Minds agents, by therapists wanting to enrich their reflections and conversations with their clients, and by people who want to use this narrative methodology for a moment of self-reflection. The conversation guidelines are similar to those that structured our online discussion. They end with:

What do you think about remembering other stories of resilience in your life in order to illuminate resources, values and abilities that perhaps are not so apparent to you at this moment?

Have you or has someone you know ever created problems for Corona? If so, what have you and/or the other person done?

Have you ever managed to turn the tables and master Corona? What helped you at that time?

What stories would you like to hear about you and Corona in a few years?

In an online event held on 1 July 2020, David Denborough offered some precious considerations about working with adolescents and young people:

We can invite young people to make contributions that can help other young people like them.

We can ask them how they are supporting themselves during this time of pandemic. We can think of ways to document these testimonies and, of course, we need to be guided by them.

It's time to build partnerships, especially with organisations that work with young people for young people.

I hope that the stories shared here will inspire not only those who are interested in working with adolescents, but also adolescents themselves, and anyone who wants to have contact with different perceptions of life and who values the possibility of conversations between different worlds. I am enormously grateful to all the adolescents with whom I have talked, who have given me the opportunity to broaden and enrich my ways of understanding and being in the world, and who have enabled me to write this paper based on their stories.

The pandemic continues in Brazil and around the world, and the need to explore ways in which the knowledge, dreams and hopes of adolescents and young people can be preserved and shared continues to be of vital importance for us to assure them a more dignified future.

Notes

1. Testimonies and the identities of their authors have been included with their authorisation.
2. More information about Recycling Minds is available at www.reciclandomentos.org

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