



Fala aí checklist:

Peer conversations recognising practices of care, hope and solidarity
in times of loss and difficulty

by Lúcia Helena Abdalla



Lúcia Helena Abdalla is a narrative therapist who lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and works with children, young people, couples and families in her own private clinic. Through Recycling Minds Institute, where she is director, she also develops community work projects with teenagers, young people and teachers who live in disadvantaged communities in extreme vulnerability. Lúcia can be contacted by email at luciahelenaabdalla@gmail.com

Abstract

In Brazil, as elsewhere, The COVID-19 pandemic and related upheavals exacerbated problems like unemployment and domestic violence. Feelings of hopelessness, isolation and impotence became pervasive. Seeking ways to respond to the uncertainty, insecurity and discouragement that many young people were expressing, the author sought ways that stories of courage, care, hope and solidarity could be shared and acknowledged. Drawing on the 'checklist of psychological and social resistance' developed in Lebanon by David Denborough and Mohamad Safa, a conversation guide for Brazilian communities was developed. It can be used by professionals, but is particularly designed for use among friends, family members and colleagues. It can even be used for individual reflection. Through consultation with the Nelson Mandela Favela in Rio de Janeiro, and its young people in particular, the Fala aí checklist was refined to be accessible and culturally resonant as a prompt for peer conversations that sustain hope and connection. The Fala aí checklist is included in the paper.

Key words: COVID-19; Brazil; checklist; peer; friendship; collective; community work; narrative practice

Abdalla, L. H. (2022). Fala aí checklist: Peer conversations recognising practices of care, hope and solidarity in times of loss and difficulty. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, (1), 49–59. <https://doi.org/10.4320/DVKT5746>

Author pronouns: she/her

In April 2021, the people of my country were undergoing a very difficult time, and were feeling powerless in the face of the enormous problems. We were being bombarded daily by acts of disrespect and lack of sense. Our government's disregard for the seriousness of the situation led to the COVID-19 virus spreading very quickly. People were dying for lack of oxygen, for lack of health care and even for lack of reliable guidance: science and politics did not always speak the same language. We were experiencing the worst moment of the pandemic in Brazil. We had already been dealing with this scenario for a year. We were tired of the social isolation. Despite a vaccination campaign having started, there were record numbers of deaths daily with no end in sight. This seemed to take the strength from all of us.

In an unequal society like ours, the pandemic, coupled with economic and political crises, exacerbated serious problems like unemployment and hunger. As a consequence, existing problems like domestic violence, sexual abuse, armed robbery and other kinds of violence got worse too. While dealing with the pandemic, we couldn't evaluate the level of injustice that we were dealing with. I could write about many absurd situations, but I prefer to say only that what we were experiencing was very, very hard. It felt inevitable that helplessness and impotence would become depression on a large scale.

In both my private clinical practice and in the social work that I do in vulnerable communities, a feeling of hopelessness was predominant. In my opinion, teenagers and young people were the most affected. In addition to the turmoil of the moment, the fact that they had to stay at home with their families meant that they had to deal with problems that previously, when they were at school and with their friends, they didn't have to confront.

There were many times when I heard: 'Why study? Why wear masks? Why do anything, Lúcia? We are all going to die from COVID. It's just a matter of time.'

It seemed that uncertainty, insecurity and helplessness were threatening people's hopes, leading to a general discouragement. And with me, it was no different. These weren't easy conversations for me because I sometimes had the same feelings. I kept working, trying to do my best, but I felt exhausted. It was difficult to imagine ways out of the situation. I wondered: Am I depressed? Am I tired? Am I burned out? Am I in a position to help others? And if so, what can I do? How can I do it? How might I respond to this general discouragement? What might help me to feel better?

In the midst of many doubts, the only certainty I had was that I couldn't let people continue to believe that they were somehow failing. I had a feeling that we needed to resist, stay connected and remain in solidarity. I was reminded of Vikki Reynolds' words. They inspired me to stay fully active in this process:

I don't think we therapists and community workers are burning out. The problem of burnout is not in our heads or in our hearts, but in the real world where there is a lack of justice. The people I work alongside don't burn me out and they don't hurt me: they transform me, challenge me and inspire me. What harms me are the injustices and indignities suffered by clients, and my frustrating inability to personally change the unjust structures of the society they struggle with and live in. (Reynolds, 2020, p. 2)

Our struggles are rooted in the injustices of society, and so I respond collectively and relationally, shored up with a spirit of solidarity, and connected to an ethic of justice-doing that embraces clients, workers, communities and societies. I am suggesting the co-creation of something like Earth democracy (Shiva, 2005), which respects the dignity, interconnectedness and sustainability of life in all of its domains. ... I believe we have an ethical responsibility to engage with enough self-care to be able to be fully present with clients, keep their suffering at the centre, and bring hope to the work. (Reynolds, 2020, p. 3)

These words made perfect sense to me. They nourished my soul. I wondered if there was anything I could do to reach a greater number of people: something that could help not only my clients, colleagues and the communities assisted by Recycling Minds, but also something that could be made available to anyone, especially community leaders; something that could be put into practice both by specialised professionals and by anyone dedicated to caring for others.

In contexts where one-on-one counselling is not possible or culturally appropriate, how can narrative approaches be used to assist people who are experiencing hardship? Where resources are scarce, how can we develop narrative approaches that can be put into practice by dedicated community people; approaches that can be engaged with beyond the professional world? (Denborough, 2018, p. 214)

Guided by these reflections, I recalled the 'checklist of psychological and social resistance' developed in Lebanon just after the ceasefire by David Denborough and Mohamad Safa (Denborough, 2008, pp. 128–142).

How can we notice, acknowledge and build upon culturally relevant and resonant practices of psychosocial support? And can our knowledge about narrative practices be in any way relevant to this task? (Denborough, 2008, p. 128)

It is my hope that checklists of social and psychological resistance may assist practitioners to notice and acknowledge the initiatives, skills, knowledge and values that are implicit in the ways in which individuals, groups and communities respond to trauma and hardship. ... Even in the midst of devastation, children, adults and the elderly take actions, no matter how small, to resist the effects of trauma and to provide comfort and protection to others. Finding ways to richly acknowledge the wide-ranging effects of traumatic experience is very important. So too, however, is finding ways to richly acknowledge acts of social and psychological resistance. As we continue to strive to develop forms of psychology that are relevant in war-torn contexts, perhaps Mohammed Safa's words will ring in our ears: 'Maybe we should create a new psychology ... one that honours psychological resistance...'. (Denborough, 2008, p. 142)

Rereading this work brought me great relief. The possibility of using this checklist in our situation was like finding water in the middle of the desert. I needed to think of a way to adapt the checklist to give people a chance to have their stories of courage, bravery and solidarity recognised.

I shared the idea with David Denborough, who seemed to be as excited as I was. He strongly recommended: 'It is important that it be a Brazilian checklist!'

'Stop wishing, start doing'

That's the sentence written on a frame behind my computer, a gift from my daughter that often inspires me to get out of my thoughts and get into action. Like those rolling out the COVID vaccine, I couldn't wait for the ideal format, I needed to get started.

I understood that this work could have a broader perspective: seeking to recognise the practices of

care, survival and resistance that Brazilians have been developing in the face of the violence and injustices to which our people have been exposed.

I recognised that our circumstances were a bit different from those in Lebanon when the first checklist was written because the war there was over, whereas we were in the middle of the conflict. I adapted the themes, trying to recognise all the actions that were being developed. I wanted to include questions that led people to think of possibilities for the future, despite the adversity that they were dealing with.

Considering all this and trying to take care that this checklist wouldn't be limited to things that I thought were important, I wrote a first draft and scheduled a meeting with about 30 friends, many of them therapists. My concern at that moment was that people were so tired of this stressful situation that they didn't want to talk about anything. The big challenge was how to engage people from different age groups, contexts and social conditions.

At the end of the meeting, I realised that we needed to move away from the format developed in Lebanon, and to develop a checklist that was specific to the Brazilian context. From previous experience, we identified a need to phrase the items in the checklist as questions, rather than topics. We also decided to produce a handout with guidelines about how to use the checklist so that anyone could facilitate the conversations. It could be presented as an activity to be carried out among friends or colleagues. The handout would include room to record people's stories.

We needed to find a good name for the checklist – one that might generate curiosity and interest among young people and invite them into a conversation. This led me to consider the expressions young people use to start a conversation. 'Fala aí!' or 'What's up?' came straight to mind!

We had more than nine meetings to improve the checklist handout and its questions; however, it was only four months later, when we talked to the young people in the Nelson Mandela Community, that we were able to determine the best way to present this activity.

Visiting the Nelson Mandela Community

Our meeting took place in the courtyard of the Church of São Miguel Archangel. Father Charles, who was responsible for the parish, had asked us

for help because there were many young people in the community with depression. According to him, of the 173 young people who had attended church activities before the pandemic, only about 30 had maintained close contact. When he talked to these young people, he learnt that their friends were not doing well at all.

We decided that, although the pandemic was not over, this meeting needed to be in person. We scheduled it for a Saturday morning. In addition to an invitation from Father Charles, our young interns made a video that could be shared among young people in the community.

The meeting happened on a sunny day, and we were all very excited because this would be the first face-to-face meeting after more than a year in which Recycling Minds had only been able to offer online assistance to communities. Given the lack of a good internet access, this had been very far from ideal. Beyond that, can you imagine what it's like for a Brazilians to spend more than a year without hugging people?

In this emotion-filled atmosphere, our team, equipped with lots of masks, sanitisers and alcohol wipes, headed to the community of Nelson Mandela, a favela located inside the city of Rio de Janeiro. It is important to explain that a community or favela in Rio de Janeiro is coordinated by drug dealing commands or militias. Even when you have been invited in, it is not simple to enter a community to talk to young people. You usually have to go through barriers of armed men. This time was no different. Every time I go to a community and pass through a barrier like that, in addition to connecting with all my conditions of privilege, this situation reinforces my understanding that I know practically nothing about living in a community, and that the little I know comes from stories shared by people who do live there.

When we arrived at the churchyard there was a surprise! Although the invitation had been addressed to young people, there were many adults waiting for us there. We arranged the chairs in a big circle on the patio, and since it was difficult to communicate while wearing masks outdoors, we arranged a microphone and a speaker. Can you imagine more than 60 people talking about their lives using a microphone? That conversation took place practically in the middle of the street and many times there were cars with loudspeakers, and local vendors offering eggs and vegetables at a low price. However, at no moment did these difficulties harm our meeting. We started by reflecting on what we had been living through in recent times, what was worrying us at that moment, and what each of us had been doing to help us move forward.

At the end of the meeting, I presented the checklist idea to them. I explained that their feedback would be important in helping us to improve the questions, and how this work could enable many people to have meaningful conversations with their friends. The receptivity was total: everyone wanted a checklist to talk to a friend!

The people will teach us. We will not be working among weak people, or broken people. We will be facing people who are full of life and we will work together. They will give us psychological power. They will rehabilitate us at the same time that we support them. (Mohammad Safa, as quoted in Denborough, 2008, p. 130)

We left this meeting amazed at all that we had witnessed. How many special young people we had met!

I realised that even without having planned it, we had reached a group of people who were very concerned about their friends, and who saw in the checklist an opportunity to talk to and take care of those who were dear but who were down, without energy to get things done.

We had barely finished that meeting, and we were already looking forward to the next one.

Feedback from the young people

Three weeks went by and there we were, back in Mandela's community to find out about the young people's experience with using the checklist. However, once again, we observed that although the invitation was addressed only to young people, many adults were present, and all were extremely interested in participating in the activity.

Because many had not yet had the opportunity to experience using the checklist, we suggested that each person join with a friend or colleague to work through the questions. It was a beautiful sunny day and since it was extremely hot, we all went inside the church and each pair found a corner in which to talk.

After an hour and a half, we invited everyone to return to the larger group and share what it had been like to participate in a conversation guided by the checklist. The reflections were very significant. Even young people who had already done it loved having the opportunity to redo the checklist with another friend.

They gave us very encouraging feedback, and we heard a lot of meaningful stories and testimonies.

Some of the stories prompted me to think about using the checklist in a more comprehensive way. One of these was when I asked a 60-year-old lady named Doña Cecilia about her experience.

Lúcia: Doña Cecilia, would you like to share what it meant to you to do the checklist exercise?

Doña Cecilia: Me?

Lúcia: Yes, would you like to tell us?

Doña Cecilia: This exercise was made for me! It was made for people who live like me.

Lúcia: I'm happy to hear that you enjoyed the conversation you had. Would you like to share a moment that was particularly significant?

Doña Cecilia: Yes. As soon as I started talking, I remembered when I got married. My husband was a good man, but the problem of lack of a job led him to drink, and then our lives started to be different. He drank and got aggressive. He started hitting me. While he only hit *me*, I kept silent, but when he went to hit my son, I changed. Answering these questions, I remembered the day I went to the head of the drug dealers. You know, don't you? Here at Mandela, it is calm, but we are commanded by the Comando Vermelho. The police don't come here. So I talked to the chief drug dealer, and he talked to my husband. Since that day, he hasn't stopped drinking, but he doesn't hit me anymore, nor my son, who is now grown up. He comes home and goes to his place and I try to live my life the way I can.

Lúcia: Wow, Doña Cecilia, thank you so much for sharing your story with us. I was imagining all the wisdom you had and have in dealing with such difficult situations. Is there something or someone that comforts you in these moments of tension?

Doña Cecilia: Yes, Father Charles, Mr Sérgio and my cat.

Lúcia: Ah! Do you have a cat? What's its name?

Doña Cecilia: Romeu.

Lúcia: And what does Romeu usually do that helps you feel good?

Doña Cecilia: He is always by my side. He doesn't leave me alone. And he knows exactly when I'm sad.

Lúcia: I was remembering when you mentioned the people who live like you. I was imagining that many other women here in the community may have gone through or are going through a similar situation and how it could be meaningful if we could gather all this kind of wisdom and share it with these people. I also think that these stories might help the youngsters.

Doña Cecilia: That would be wonderful. A lot of people need this conversation. I'm so glad you guys hear me. [Several women were very emotional at this time] When will you be here again?

Lúcia: At the end of next month. And I will want to meet Romeo.

Doña Cecilia: [Smiling] He will love you!

As soon as Doña Cecilia finished her reflection, Alice and Natalia, Recycling Minds' interns, spoke to me very quietly.

Natalia: I think the adults didn't understand the activity.

Alice: Maybe we have to make it clearer for them.

These commentaries were meaningful to me. They were referring to the fact that Doña Cecilia started to tell the story of her life and referred not only to the period of the pandemic but to other events. The first part of the checklist was titled 'Thinking about what has sustained us in these difficult times'. For me, it was clear that when reading this heading, many of the adults connected it with a lifetime of stories, because they had been through many difficult times.

Anyway, the only thing I was registering was that they were delighted with the opportunity to tell us their stories, and that the whole process was very strong. From that I realised how powerful this activity could be

in generating a process of acknowledgment, and how our presence as witnesses could enrich this process, honouring people's experiences and stories of life.

I later realised that this process had also enabled conversation between different generations. I reflected about how it might have been important for the teenage girls who were present to hear Doña Cecilia's stories. And about how her story was connected to the stories of many women, and about how they might organise to take care of the dignity of women in their communities, respecting the different ages involved.

A facilitator's ability to recognise precious perspectives within people's narratives and to create possibilities for people to make contributions through their stories is a valuable resource in the process of community agency. It is extremely important to recognise that people are taking actions to avoid or to diminish the effects of situations of injustice, and they are not just hostages to them.

People's enthusiasm seemed to take over this encounter. Everyone wanted to share their stories and experiences, but as we had been talking for a long time and it was getting late, we agreed to come back the following week with more time to hear the testimonies of the young people. And so we did.

Some excerpts from conversations with the young people

Laura (13 years old)

Lúcia: Hi Laura, what was it like for you to do the checklist?

Laura: My experience with this checklist was very good. It helped me a lot. It came to my mind that people do care about us. They want to know what's going on in our lives – if we're feeling bad, if we're in need of help. The checklist helped me because it made me remember something that happened in my life that hurt me a lot, but it also made me remember what I did so I wouldn't get hurt anymore.

Lúcia: Do you think that talking to a friend guided by the checklist could help other people who are going through a difficult time?

Laura: Yes! Yes, yes, it can help other people. It's very good because we need to know, even if the person doesn't want to talk, we need to find out what's happening to be able to help that person and do as much as possible so that it doesn't affect them anymore.

Lúcia: Do you think the checklist is more relevant to a specific age group?

Laura: No! It doesn't have a defined age. There were people who were older than us here last week, and the checklist helped a lot. They remembered things that had happened in their lives. It made us know what was happening in their lives, and helped other people too. So you don't have to be a certain age to do the checklist.

Lúcia: Do you think listening to older people's stories helps the younger ones?

Laura: Yes, it helps. It helps because they just want what's good for us. They went through an the experience first and they'll do their best to take us on the right path, you know? They will give advice and it's good to follow because they've been through this experience before.

Lúcia: The fact that the checklist is an activity to be carried out between friends – what does that say to you?

Laura: I liked the fact that it was held between friends because we don't know what goes on in friend's head and the things the friend is feeling. So the checklist helped a lot because the questions made him talk. When we know what's going on, we can help our friend, do our best to help them. So the idea of the checklist being between friends is really good because we can help each other.

Antônio (17 years old)

Lúcia: Do you think that doing an exercise like this can help young people to stop and reflect?

Antônio: I haven't thought about that before. I just lived. This exercise made me stop to think about what I have been doing. It did a lot to open my mind.

Lúcia: I asked you this question because there is a boy in Cidade de Deus whose name is Rodrigo Felha. He is the coordinator of the Arteiros project, and when I was talking to him, he turned around and said, 'Look, when we live in a community, we go through so many adversities every day and we go on living, but we never stop to think about what helps us go through this'. I was listening to you and remembering him. And that day, he added: 'Now, suddenly, from what you are saying, I realise how important it is for us to stop and see what we've accomplished and what we have done to accomplish this'. Does this make sense to you?

Antônio: Yeah, it does. It makes sense because in fact, here in the community, you just go on living or surviving, right? Because often unpredicted events happen here. They just happen and you just take it. You're just living. And when you really stop to think about what you've done, what you're doing, it's good to think about.

Paulo (17 years old)

Lúcia: Were there particular questions that drew your attention?

Paulo: Yes, the questions about how to hold on to hope in difficult times. I was just saying that it reminded me of a movie. Watching movies was a hobby I took for myself during the pandemic. I already had it, but during the pandemic, it grew a lot. The movie I remembered is called *Life is Beautiful* (Benigni, 1997). It's an Italian movie. It's about having hope in difficult times. The family had been arrested by the Nazis, and yet they managed to keep their hope through small things. The father did everything to deceive his son, to protect his son from the reality. He pretended that everything was a game. So, it's how we see our problems. Can I see how I can overcome it? Or else I can only sit there feeling sad. The name of the film says it: 'Life is beautiful'. Having hope in difficult times is being aware of the little things. You can feel pleased very easily – sometimes you just give someone a

chocolate ice-cream and that person is happy. We need to look not at what we don't have but at what we do have.

Lúcia: The fact that the checklist is done between friends, does that tell you anything?

Paulo: Yes. The checklist is a way to help. I believe we are not here alone, but with others. And of course, there are people who will hurt us, there are people who will stab us in the back, but we also have friends, and everyone has a friend. I remember the phrase 'whoever has found a friend, has found a treasure'. Sometimes you're down and a friend lifts you up by sharing their story. And for me, that's the best way to have a conversation. I really like to share stories, share experiences.

Lúcia: It seems to me that being a friend and having the opportunity to share stories are precious things for you, is that right? And if so, what is the feeling you have when you realise that you can help someone else by sharing your story?

Paulo: Wow, I feel great! I say, this is what I want, I live for it. I think that when I help others with my story, I show myself, because I can say 'life is beautiful', but if I don't make my life beautiful, I can't pass it on to others. Testimony, then, is about what we do, not just what we say.

Lúcia: You know, Paulo, when you share your testimony, you speak from the place of someone who has responded to a certain problem, from the place of an expert on a certain difficulty. And in the checklist activity, this testimony is even more important. We do not want to put an expert in to help people, but a friend to help the other. So the specialists are the friends. For us, this has been a very special and valuable thought as it allows us to reach a much larger number of people. Do you believe this idea is good? Do you think that if we get people to share this activity with several other people, in time we might be able to hold a meeting and get feedback on how it happened here in the Mandela Community?

Paulo: I believe so. We can start with two people, but in time, we can grow. I think it's an experience worth trying. I think it will work.

Exploring future developments

From that meeting on, we started to relate to the checklist in a different way. I felt that the questions had taken on a life of their own. Nothing depended on me. Now the work depended on the community, and they were proud of it.

After this experience, we started to get in touch with many other communities in different states of Brazil, always trying to locate youth leaders. We realised that in poor communities, it would be important to be able to print the checklist, because physical paper worked better for them. From a community in the northeast of Brazil, we learnt about the importance of finding local youth leaders, because questions that were clear for communities like Mandela in Rio seemed a little bit difficult for other communities to understand.

Based on these experiences, we decided to produce a podcast about the checklist. It described why and how

to use the checklist and included short explanations of the questions. In this way, we sought to include the illiterate population, which in Brazil, unfortunately, still includes a great number of people.

Exploring ways to recognise the small practices of care that we develop in times of extreme difficulty has been extremely rewarding and refreshing. Recognising these practices as acts of resistance that people have enacted to preserve their dignity, hopes and dreams, has connected us to more ways of being in life and, consequently, has helped us to keep our own dreams alive.

On behalf of Recycling Minds and the young people of the Nelson Mandela Community, I appreciate the opportunity to share these experiences with you. We hope that these practices will inspire you to develop new checklists for your contexts, in the same way that Mohammad Safa's and David Denborough's experiences inspired us.

Fala aí! (What's up?):

Mapping social and psychological resistance in difficult times

- How can we connect with good stories in tough times?
- How can we take care of joy and hope in these times?
- How can we come up with ideas in moments when anguish seems to speak louder?
- Would you like to help someone by sharing your stories?

In difficult times, discovering resources and skills in our life stories can help us to resist adversities. Inspired by a checklist developed in Lebanon by David Denborough and Mohamad Safa (in Denborough, 2008, pp. 128–142), we offer this checklist to help identify Brazilians' acts of social and psychological resistance in difficult times.

We named it 'Fala aí!' or 'What's up?' This is an expression often used by teenagers and young people in Brazil. In fact, it can be said that it is almost a code because, after saying 'What's up?', a straightforward conversation is born, and the other person shares ideas, possibilities and what they have been doing with the utmost naturalness. It is a well-known and perhaps compelling way to invite the other into a conversation.

Professionals from different areas of expertise can use this checklist, but we strongly recommended the questions be used among colleagues, friends or family members who want to recognise the small practices of care that we have been developing in these hard times – practices of resistance, dignity and hope that have helped us in the face of so much adversity and keep our dreams alive.

It is my hope that a checklist of social and psychological resistance may assist practitioners to notice and acknowledge the initiatives, skills, knowledge and values that are implicit in the ways in which individuals, groups and communities respond to trauma and hardship. ... Even during devastation, children, adults and the elderly take actions, no matter how small, to resist the effects of trauma and to provide comfort and protection to others. (Denborough, 2008, p. 142)

Choosing a good friend and a nice place for this conversation to take place

The Fala aí checklist can be used by teenagers, youngsters and adults. Whatever your age, what's most important is that you choose a friend or colleague with whom you feel comfortable sharing your experiences and stories, a person whom you trust and believe can collaborate with your moment of reflection. It can often be easier for a person who is going through a difficult time and is not feeling well to share their stories with a friend rather than a stranger, even if that person is a professional.

Choosing the location is also very important. Select a place where you feel comfortable having this conversation with your friend. It could be on a beach, under a tree or in a school or college classroom. It could be over an ice-cream or coffee, or even an 'online coffee' over a video call.

The important thing is that it be pleasant, that you reserve enough time for the conversation to happen, and that this meeting can be remembered as a special date. It is a meeting where we can support each other, honouring our experiences and stories. So, take the time for both of you to answer the questions. When you are in the role of interviewer, write down some of the remarkable expressions used by your friend. It can make all the difference if you share the resonances that your friend's stories have for you.

And at the end, don't forget to give a toast! Having gone through such painful losses, the mere fact that we have chosen a friend to share these meaningful stories with can be reason enough to celebrate.

You can also choose to use this checklist for self-reflection. If you do, we also recommend that you choose a place where you feel safe, comfortable and at ease, where the connection with yourself can happen without interruption. You could sit outdoors, choose a soundtrack to accompany you at this time, or find that sofa that looks so comfortable it feels like it was tailor-made for you. Respect your own pace and timing. Reflect on the experiences of this period in whatever way is most convenient for you.

Regardless of whether you are going to have this conversation with a good friend or with yourself, when you start this conversation, think through each question carefully and share your story no matter how silly it may seem to you. Sometimes the most interesting stories come from unexpected situations and reflections. Following the sequence of questions offered by the checklist, you also may feel the need to include a question that is not in the checklist. If it's so, we'd like you to feel completely free to add any question that you consider relevant at any moment.

At the end of this meeting, it can be very meaningful to share your best stories and ideas. Your stories can be very helpful to another person. We suggest organising a library of life stories at your school and/or community or group. You could also create an Instagram campaign with interesting sentences from your stories.

And just one more request! If you enjoyed this experience, please share this activity and these ideas with as many people as possible. We believe that by sharing stories of resistance and hope, many people can benefit from each other's wisdom and knowledge, and a wave of confidence and possibilities can be created in the face of so much difficulty.

For each of the questions, you can invite your friend (or yourself) to think about whether they have done these things many times, occasionally or not once. You can also invite them to share a story about their experience.

PART I: Thinking about what has sustained us in difficult times

1. Have you tried to protect yourself in any way, physically and/or emotionally?
2. Have you shown care, affection, concern and/or tried to promote comfort for others?
3. Have you received any support, care, affection or comfort from others?
4. Have you demonstrated care for yourself?
5. Have you observed acts of dignity, pride or solidarity?
6. Have you performed (done) acts of dignity, pride or solidarity?
7. Did you find ways to stay well or be well?
8. Have you found ways to stay in touch with what is precious to you during this time?
9. Have you found ways to maintain hope or keep your dreams alive?
10. Did you experience something that made you feel brave and satisfied?
11. Have you tried to stay connected with others?
12. Have you tried to collaborate so that the other could feel better or stronger?
13. Has any movie, television series or book helped you during this period?
14. Have you developed or improved any hobbies? (e.g. cooking, playing the guitar, a sport)
15. Thinking of life as a soccer game, have you ever had to get past an injustice on the field?
16. What skills have you used to tackle injustice?
17. Do you believe you scored a goal during this game? Was it an individual or collective play?
18. Did you find joy in little things?
19. Was there humour present?

PART II: Reflecting on how we have been dealing with losses, honouring and remembering those we have lost

1. At a moment of loss, did you develop any practice or ritual that was particularly important to you? (e.g. listening to a song, praying, meditating)
2. If you lost a loved one, or know someone who lost someone, did you develop your own ways to deal with this situation?
3. Have you honoured the lives of those who have been lost? (e.g. through rituals, ceremonies, memorials, song, art)
4. Have you been joining with others in this remembrance?
5. Have you honoured the lives of those who have left by taking actions that are in accordance with their values and wishes? (e.g. sharing stories about them, doing something that was important to them)
6. Have you sought ways to recognise what they contributed to other people?
7. Have you found ways to continue their legacy?

PART III: Searching for ways to move ahead

1. Have you performed actions that seek to protect, recover or promote your dignity or the dignity of others?
2. Have you been making plans to rebuild what was affected or to make room for new paths, new possibilities in your life?
3. Have you, individually and/or collectively, sought to help others reconnect with their hopes and dreams in life?
4. Have you established, or do you intend to establish, new partnerships or actions to collaborate with others?
5. Have you already been able to imagine directions for your life?
6. After this conversation, what would you like to celebrate?

Acknowledgments

This checklist was translated by Isa Carvalho. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of this checklist, in particular Carol Sette, Raum Batista, Bianca Oliveira, Alice Diegues, and the youngsters from Mandela community who participated throughout the process and provided valuable feedback on the questions.

References

- Benigni, R. (Director). (1997). *La vita è bella* [Life is beautiful] [Film]. Melampo Cinematografica; Cecchi Gori Group.
- Denborough, D. (2008). *Collective narrative practice: Responding to individuals, groups, and communities who have experienced trauma*. Dulwich Centre Publications.
- Reynolds, V. (2020). *Justice-doing at the intersections of power*. Dulwich Centre Publications.