

The Bonds That Let Us Continue: Stories from the Survivors of Covid-19

This document is initiated by a narrative practitioner İclal Eskioğlu Aydın from Turkey in a group work process that explored the skills, knowledge, and values in response to Covid-19 pandemic. The group work is done with a group of psychologists who are master students at [İbn Haldun University](#) in Turkey.

In the group work, the group members looked for the effects of Covid-19 process and they discovered the skills, knowledge and values that help them to survive. They also explored the stories related to these knowledge and values and the history of them. In addition, they found the connections with their family, community, and culture. They want to share their stories with people, and they have a message for the readers:

“We think that people have various stories and some stories may intersect. Also, we believe that sharing our skills and knowledge may invigorate other people’s too. With sharing our stories, we hope that we and the readers will feel the message that we are not alone. We hope that in this process, people’s own stories will help each other.”

The group members generated some questions that are hoped to help you if you want to give response to our collective work. The questions are below the document. We are excited to hear from you!

The Bonds That Let Us Continue

There is strength in numbers

Some of us, nowadays, feel that we are drawn into a black hole that is trying to strangle the silence and make us lonely. One of us explains her response to this black hole as: “I am trying to strengthen my bond with my loved ones, to feel that we are together against this black hole. In this process, I call my family, relatives and loved ones more often, and strive according to myself and my environment that we still have a connection with them and that we can overcome this process together. It feels peaceful to remember the smile on everyone's face at the festive tables organized by my grandmother and grandfather, bringing all my loved ones together”. As our elders say, "There is strength in numbers". It feels good to be the only strong voice against black hole that tries to make silence around.

Throwing out the sticky red gum

We have been noticing lately that the more we deal with our anxiety, the more our anxiety spreads and increases. One of us liken her anxiety to a sticky gum and says, “I think this gum is somewhere in my stomach and is red. It is something that expands upwards and creates more discomfort as you think.” We think that one of the things to do for this sticky gum is by clearly sharing our feelings with people and throwing out the gum, and focusing on other things to do instead of dealing with the gum. As most of us know, problems decrease by sharing with others, and happiness increases by sharing with others.

To move forward even if life stops

These days, we are worried that something might happen to our loved ones. One among us says, “some mornings, a concrete block falls on me and I feel like I’m under that heavy block. Fulfilling my responsibilities lightens the weight of the concrete block. I make a list for the next day at the end of each day, and I tick off what I have completed at the end of the day. Doing this allows me to continue my life by clinging to my daily routines. I learned to embrace my responsibilities by seeing that a family elder does not neglect what he should do”. There is a common proverb in our society: "a rolling stone gathers no moss". This proverb reminds us to keep things that will make us feel we are moving forward in our relatively stopping lives today.

Tradition in the kitchen

At this time, we think that anxiety is doing its best not to give anyone else an opportunity in our lives. “Whenever I get into an intense feeling, one of the things I do is to breathe and enter the kitchen. Everyone in the family likes to try new recipes. After tasting it we comment on it with other family members. Sometimes, we make jokes on these trials. So this is a common tradition of our family. Being in the kitchen not only allows me to continue the family tradition, but also opens up space for me and my family to discuss non-anxiety issues by including humour in my life”. Maintaining our family traditions can guide us through our hard times.

Leaving the shadow behind

At this time, we are concerned about the uncertainty of our future. One of us defines this anxiety as follows: “This apprehension is like a shadow of mine, something I can never get rid of at any point of my life, no matter what I do.” In this period, in the shadow of the shadow, I read so many books that I have no time to look at social media. Reading disconnects me from the world, it makes me forget about my worries and most importantly it clears my mind. My mother would get a book and go into her corner and when she came back to us she would be purified from that negative state of mind. ‘Each book is a world.’ Each world whose doors are opened with the books we read makes us feel that it is possible to leave the shadow behind and that we have control.

Questions for Contribution:

- Did our stories remind you anything that assist you in your surviving in the face of pandemic?
- Are there any skills, knowledge or values that you feel close to? In which ways do you think that you are linked to them?
- Is there anything helpful in your reading?
- Do you have a tradition or ritual related to your family or community that enable you to continue despite the difficulties the Covid-19 brings in your life?

For your responses: iclal.aydin@ihu.edu.tr