

Danielle Silva

“She Learned the One Thing I Never Did: To Let Go.”

My parents' divorce was a very traumatic time for our family. It is easy to say that my sister and I never saw it coming, but we were seven and eight respectively, and our parents' relationship was none of our interest. There were hard custodial battles involving money and visitation time, my father and mother fought over the phone all the time, something they never did, my mother and father were wrecked and our families hated each other. My sister and I were being forced to choose between our parents. It was the standard divorce nightmare.

I chose to interview my sister, Caroline. We are just one year apart, so we experienced almost everything together. We went to the same school, we had the same friends, we liked the same bands and had a similar style. It is clear that we have a lot of things alike, but I always wondered how differently we experienced those things. She must have had a different way of expressing her feelings, she must have had a different interpretation of what our father said when he told us he was leaving home, and she must have had a whole different way of coping with the divorce. I decided to investigate her perspective on her crisis of meaning during and after our parents' divorce.

Interviewer: Danielle Silva (DS)

Interviewee: Caroline Silva (CS)

DS - Our country has a divorce rate of 45,06%, our parents are part of that percentage since 2008. Can you talk more about their divorce process?

CS - Our parents got divorced when we were young. We decided to stay with our mom in our apartment and stay close to our friends. At first, when our parents met to decide how they were going to divide the bills, they used to fight a lot, but fortunately, it stopped. Also, the time spent to come to an agreement was huge.

DS - You were very young when they got divorced, how did you feel at that time?

CS - At the beginning, I felt a little bit lost. I was confused about what was actually happening, then I felt like something was missing and it wasn't right. I started to wonder if those wrong things would, someday, be fixed and I could feel better again.

DS - How did you confront that feeling?

CS - I would constantly tell myself that it would be a lot worse if the divorce didn't happen, and, with time, things would get better.

DS - We dealt with the divorce differently, how was it for you when you noticed that we were not reacting the same way?

CS - I felt weak, because I cried almost every night and before school, and I thought that you handled this problem better than I did.

DS - How did you get through that hard period? Where did you find the motivation to keep going? Was there some kind of ritual or routine to help you?

CS - The most important thing that helped me get through it was time. It made me realize that even though our parents weren't together anymore we could still count with both of them for whatever we needed.

DS - Can you remember one person that helped you go through that?

CS - As soon as the divorce happened I started to cry to go school every day, and there was a teacher who always helped me stop crying and taught me that things do get better when we want them to.

DS - Can you see a difference in yourself before and after the divorce?

CS - I think that before the divorce I didn't have much consideration with other people, and after the divorce I started to care for others a lot more. But also, before the divorce, I used to open up more to other people and now I keep things to myself.

DS - How hard it was to deal with the consequences of that process? I mean, our house was a little bit empty, and we only saw our father every other weekend; things changed.

CS - I remember that I missed the way our father used to wake us up, and as I said, I used to cry. A lot. But the weekends that we saw our father were always a special time.

DS - Finally, do you think that their divorce had any influence to the person you are today?

CS - The divorce made me say things I didn't want to say, but it was necessary, and it is something that I took in my daily life. It also made me learn that every choice we make we are winning and losing something; and the only person that you should make these decisions for, is yourself. Because the same way they made me deal with their choice to get a divorce, they need to deal with my choices.

Comments:

After studying the different philosophies, the ones I can relate to her feelings are Taoism and Buddhism. Throughout her answers the word "time" shows up a lot. My sister used time to heal her pain, a clear characteristic of the Taoists. Let things happen and accept them. She learned the one thing I never did: to let go. Caroline told herself multiple times that whatever was happening was just a temporary feeling and she would be alright at the end. She did not try to fight the divorce or our parents, she felt pain but she made peace with it, which is a Buddhist teaching. With the help of one of her teachers, my sister learned that if she carried a positive posture toward the situation, things would brighten up.

But also, as a consequence of the divorce, the non-conformist inside her woke up. She realized that her life was in her hands. An existentialist characteristic we both share now. The same way my parents choice to get a divorce was a problem she had to deal with, Caroline learned that she could make whatever choice she wanted for her life, and my parents would have to deal with that. Yes, the divorce made her close up, however it also made her a warrior of a kind. From that moment on, she would fight for what she wanted.

This was the first time I asked my sister about what she felt during the divorce, so this is the first time I am going into her head to understand what she was going through. I was a little bit surprised with her answers, I felt a lot more anger. I did not cry during that period because I am not an emotionally available person. I simply shut down and block everything. I do remember her crying and I did not understand why she felt that way, but now I do. I am grateful for this project because without it, I would never have understood my own sister.