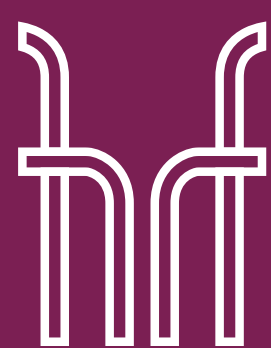


HOME & HAPPINESS

THE TWO THINGS WE ALL NEED



HOME
RENAISSANCE
FOUNDATION®



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

April is here and with it comes Home Renaissance Foundation's Communication Project, giving households a voice on "Home and Happiness." The choice of topic this time was prompted by the recent publication of our fourth book, *Happiness and Domestic Life*, and we wanted to explore further what people thought about happiness.

In *Happiness and Domestic Life* experts from different fields argue that the home is the cradle and origin of human happiness or unhappiness. Experience confirms that an emotionally stable child is more likely to become a well-functioning stable adult. Technology has an increasing impact on our well-being and our happiness is greatly influenced by the quality of the relationships we form, along with our commitment to community.

So with these and other findings in mind, we asked children and adults in 13 different countries to explain and draw what happiness means to them. And I can tell you, without intending to be a spoiler for what follows, that the responses were fascinating.

Apart from different cultural and language backgrounds the participants were in very different life situations: some were enjoying their summer holidays; others were overcoming the winter cold and others were closely following the war in Ukraine hoping to be able to return. Among the adults, a wide-range of professions is represented including an engineer, a financier, a writer, a TV presenter, a basketball player, a chef and a student. But the recurring and comforting thing is that for the vast majority happiness can be summed up in one word: Family. Even the youngest children enjoying their all activities sooner or later identify family relationships and closeness as their main source of happiness.

On this occasion I am not going to introduce you to the participants. You can discover them little by little, just by their names and place of origin as you turn the pages, but I am thinking especially of Anna, an 8-year-old Ukrainian girl, who along with

INTRODUCTION

her mother was given a home by an English family near London, because their town, Kherson, was bombed by Russia. Hopefully, from this war that Anna has sadly had to experience first-hand, she will keep the good things, the generosity of a family that, without knowing them, opened its doors to them and became their refuge for a time.

Experts in psychiatry recognise that in order to move forward, you have to fall down at some point in your life. There are hundreds of examples in nature that show us that, after the fall, the suffering, the stumble, the blow, comes the joy, the laughter, the hugs, the conquest of the summit. But they also insist that one can only recover physically, psychologically and emotionally if there is a strong place to recover. A safe, open, welcoming home, ready to work and care for that brokenness from which great fruits will emerge.

At Home Renaissance Foundation we seek to recognise the value of the home for everyone and to help as far as we can to ensure that homes are equipped to catch us when we fall and to open the door to happy and fulfilled lives.

ÁNGELA DE MIGUEL

Home Renaissance Foundation



MOMENTS



MAUREEN

Pastry chef and stay at home mum, Canada

Happiness to me is the little things. Waking up to see the sunrise, and staying someplace long enough to see the sunset. Going for a walk, doing yoga or doing a little bit of exercise. When you see your two children playing and laughing. Having alone time with my husband. Travelling and exploring new places and cultures. Anticipation on the plane when going somewhere. Eating delicious food. Eating something for the first time. Enjoying good company. Effortless conversations. Living in new places. Going back to your home after being away travelling. Cooking and baking for friends and family. Being close to my family no matter how far away I live. Having always their support and love. Meeting new friends spontaneously or unexpectedly and staying close with them.

Happiness is being able to remember good times and looking forward to having more. Being close to the ocean. Swimming and floating in the ocean, putting your feet in the sand. Self-care is happiness. Taking care of myself means I am better able to take care of others around me and therefore they will be happy.

Enjoying ice-cream and bubble tea with my daughter. A nice warm hug. Listening to music and the feeling you get listening to certain songs. Watching a really good series on TV with my husband. Falling asleep unexpectedly for a nap. Indulging a craving. Flowers on a random day. Finishing a book. Talking/seeing a friend after a long time and just continuing where you left off. Laughing so hard it hurts. Painting and being creative. Starting and finishing a project. Thinking about your goals and what you have achieved so far. Happiness is my husband and my girls and seeing everyone I love happy.



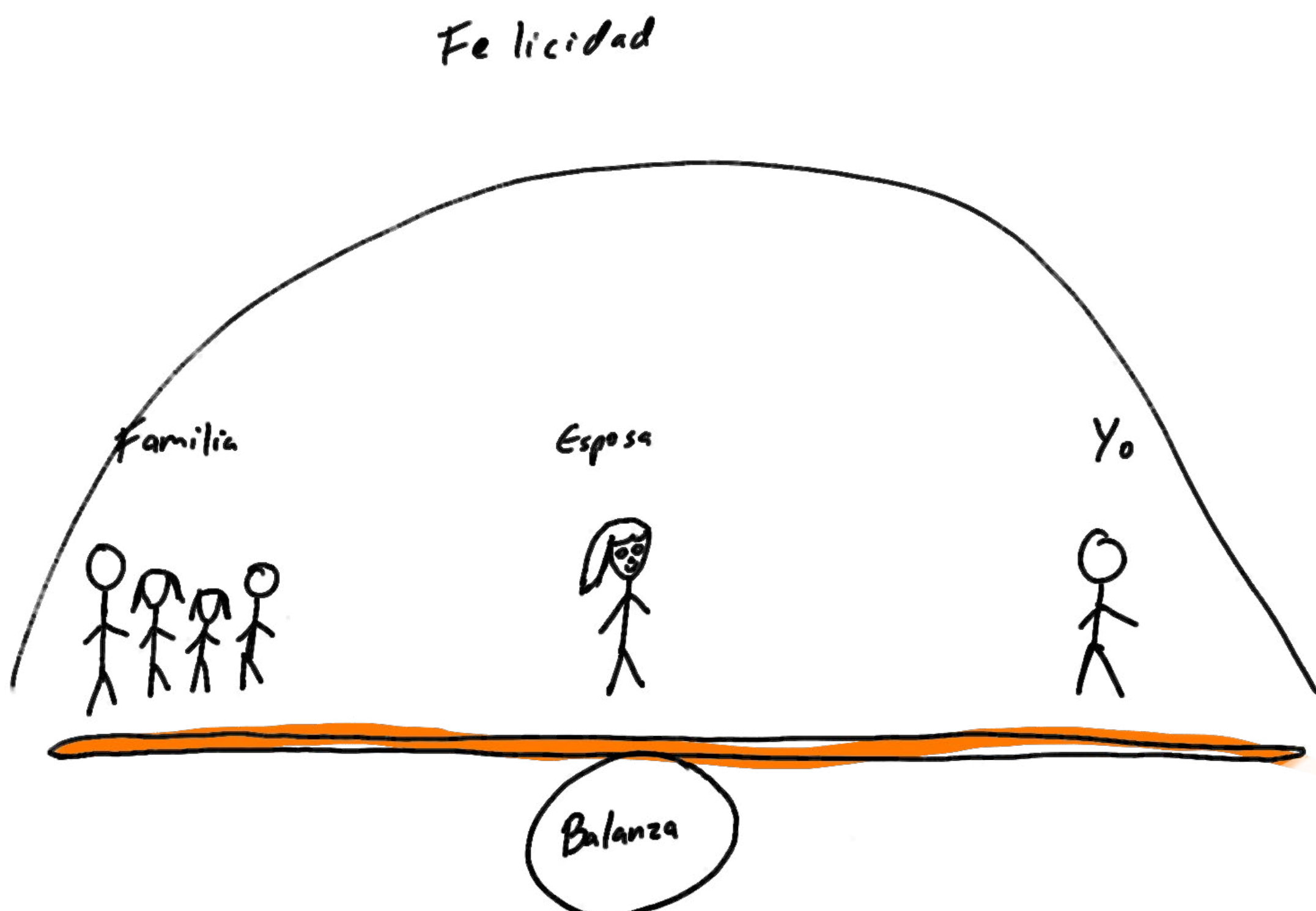
JAN

Bank Vice President, Panama

I found it interesting to try to put into words the meaning of happiness because, at the end of the day, it is something very personal. I can say that for me happiness is a feeling that is experienced through small and big moments throughout life, those moments that fill our hearts and give us joy. Possibly, seeing happiness in the little things, on a constant basis, is what gives us a sense of happiness that extends over time.

The best way to describe it is to give examples: Happiness is being able to share a dinner every night with your family, coming home to a puppy that greets you passionately, eating your favourite chocolate, your child giving you a hug, a walk in the park, and so on. This, added to great moments such as graduating from school, your first kiss with the girl you like, holding your baby in your arms for the first time, marrying the love of your life.

In conclusion, happiness is different for each person, in my case, I find it in both the small and big moments that give me a feeling of being complete.



ANA

TV presenter, United States

At this point in my life, and with the occasional disappointment in recent years, I would define happiness as 'Moments'.

Happiness is those moments when I literally feel like I'm floating, like my heart is going to explode. Those moments when there is nothing hammering in my head. Those moments when there isn't that nagging, all-consuming, all-tormenting worry. Happiness is moments in which you simply admire or live something with an intensity that generates the incredible pleasure of well-being, of tranquillity...

Watching my children, enjoying a glass of wine alone, finishing a series with my partner, hugging someone I miss, receiving good news, knowing that my family is well, feeling fulfilled, doing what I like, a shower after the gym, remembering my childhood, admiring a calm landscape, feeling nostalgia for beautiful things, seeing my parents with my children... but, in short, MOMENTS.

Another way of defining happiness would be peace or tranquillity. To feel that everything is fine and under control and the absence of fears and worries.



ELISA

Civil servant, Italy

For me, happiness is spending quiet and happy days with my family, my husband and our children. It makes me happy to spend time together, to talk and listen to our children. It also makes me feel good when I think about the family I come from, and to be aware that we have learned to overcome difficulties in the past. I would say that happiness is feeling good, down to earth, being in this world, but with a hopeful and serene gaze towards the sky.



DEDICATION

GONZALO

Engineer, Spain

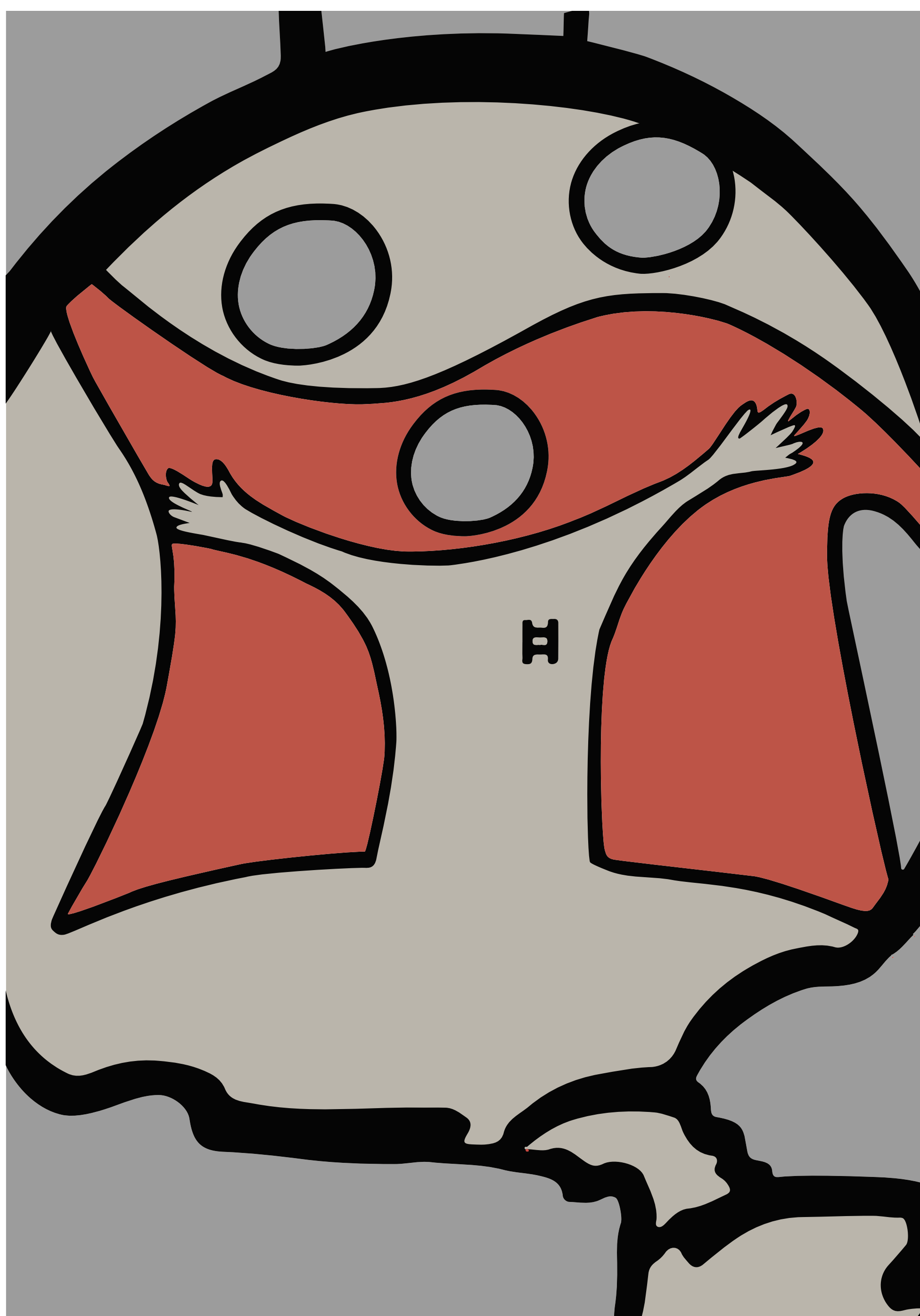
What does happiness mean to me? A difficult question to answer until we stop to reflect on it. I'm a civil engineer, I'm 25 years old and I'm just starting out in the world of work. It's been many years of studying, training, learning languages... but what's the point of a CV that only tells what we've done in our lives - diplomas and more diplomas? I've realised that a CV doesn't tell me who I am, what I'm good at, nor what it is that really influences who I am.

So, does a full CV make us happy? I think that being happy nowadays is complicated, as society surrounds us with the wrong idea of happiness. In my case, how do I manage to be happy?

It makes me happy to get out of my comfort zone, to meet people, to learn to love, but to really love, to show myself as I am, without trying to appear as someone else, without wearing masks, to give myself totally to the person next to me, to be a living fire in this society.

Happiness has to do with LIVING, with a continuous dedication, in which everything that is done is done with the heart. By discovering that I am loved, I can achieve happiness. But strangely enough, it is often we ourselves who put up barriers and feel that we have not fulfilled the expected CV or that we have not achieved the success that was demanded of us.

To be happy you have to really LIVE, and how do you do that? Well, by being ourselves, learning to enjoy everything that surrounds us; we all have bad days, the exam that we fail even though we have studied, we all have days when it's hard to get out of bed, we may even have to deal with a bad boss... but even in these situations we must find the good in them. ENJOY LIFE.



CATHERINE

University student, South Korea

For me, Happiness is not easy to express. I could say that Happiness is synonymous with peace and love. It sounds abstract, but if you find people around you who are peaceful or loving, you feel a happiness that is very difficult to explain. For example, I feel happy when I spend holidays with my family, with my partner, or when I spend time helping people in need.

I am also happy when I am able to make others smile, especially those who for various reasons have lost the smile from their faces. These small moments lift me up to overcome my own exhaustion and the hard times.



FRITZ

Audiovisual producer, United States

Defining happiness for me is not an easy task. Especially because I don't necessarily "feel" happy. Let me explain. You make plans, in my case for work, and then they don't work out. It's not that I'm unhappy, but I'm definitely not happy. What I can say is that, at this point in my life, happiness translates into stability.

- ✓ I have an amazing wife and our relationship is stable. Check
- ✓ I have a roof over my head, tools to work with, food to eat and adorable cats. Check
- ✓ My job... Oh, my job! Why did I decide to work in media? In the last eight years, I've lost my job more than once due to purely organisational restructuring. Instability. Check.

This project, in which I have happily participated, has made me think about many other things besides my own happiness, and I consider that to be another aspect of happiness.

There is an old salsa song by Tommy Olivencia sung by the legendary Frankie Ruiz. The song is called "Como una estrella" (Like a star) and the chorus goes:

"Porque yo quiero, yo quiero, que tú me des La felicidad, la felicidad". (Because I want, I want, that you give me Happiness, happiness.)

Whoever wrote that song forgets that it's not just about you and what you get in life. It's also about what you give. I'm not sure if I'm defining what happiness is for me, but maybe I'm defining what I aspire happiness to be for me. And what I wish for everyone because it brings much, much peace.



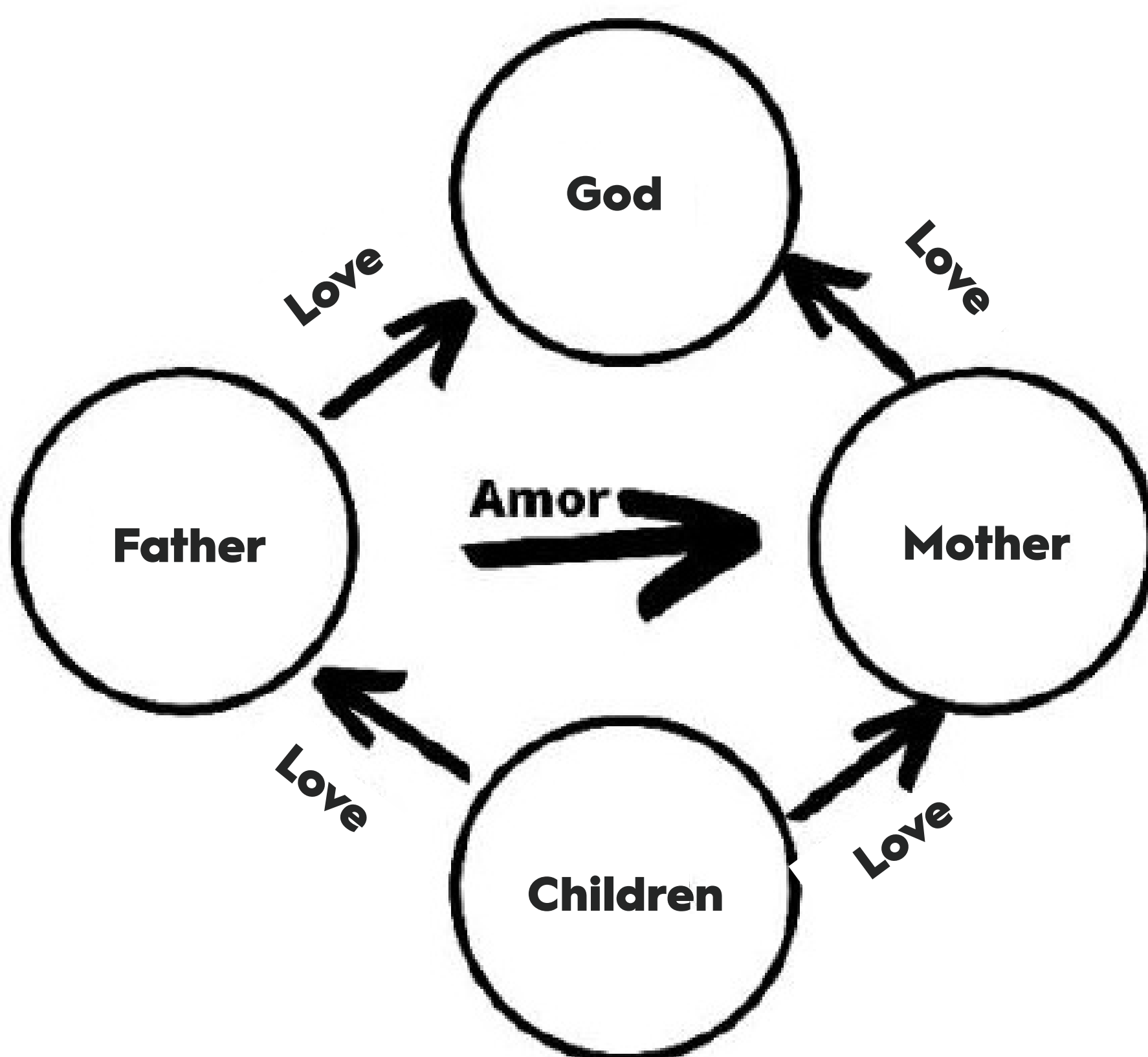
MAMA ABY Y BABA ABY

Tanzania

We are Mama Aby and Baba Aby, a family from Tanzania.

For us, happiness is real love, the love that starts within oneself and is given to another person without expecting anything in return, without taking advantage of the other person and without being paid by the other person.

This picture will help to understand how love is contagious.



VULNERABILITY

MARCIE

Memoirist, United Kingdom

“My home is in my heart, wherever I may be”

Happiness for me, is an absence of other things:

a lack of fear,

a lack of grief,

a lack of aimlessness,

a lack of pain.

I used to confuse happiness with delight

a new dress

my stocking on Christmas morning

ice cream on a sunny beach.

But

delight lasts the length of a lit match

I saw delight as if through the eyes of a child.

Happiness is not a destination, like Euston station

I understand this now.

It cannot be sought after and it cannot be arrived at.

Happiness unpeels.

If my grief rests and my fear is calm and I no longer ache and the road ahead is clear

Then happiness is what remains.



SERGIO

Basketball player, Belgium

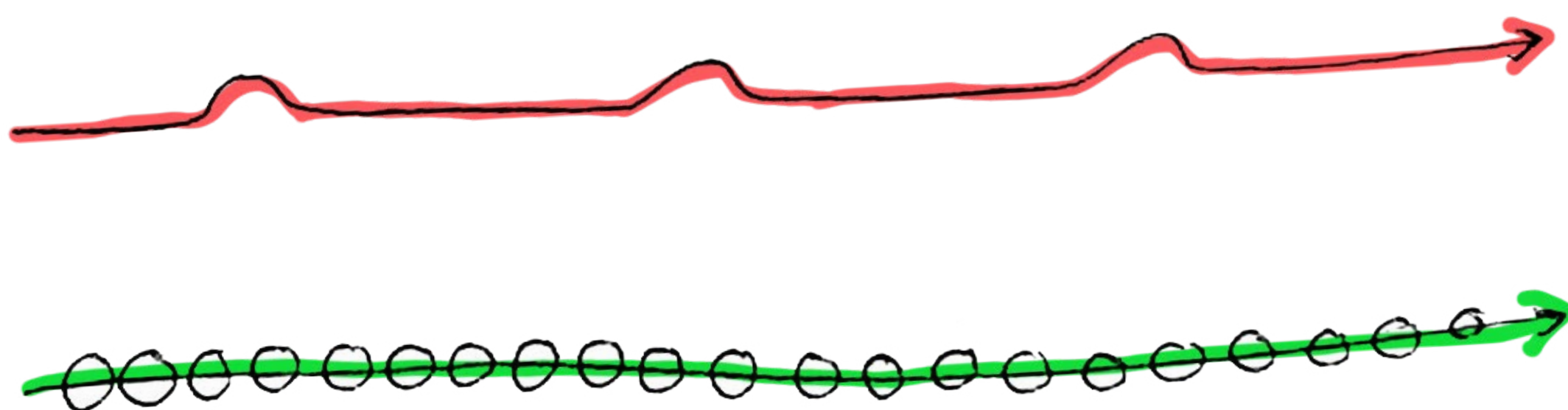
The first thing I try to do is to understand if I have felt what people think happiness is: people who are visibly happy, who enjoy themselves, who achieve goals, who share happy moments... and yes, I have experienced that happiness.

But I believe that true happiness comes when we see the people we love happy. Nothing else. It's not about the job, it's how you make the people you work with feel and what they give back to you. It is not the family, but how you care for the people in it that fills you with happiness.

I think that's why it's so hard to be happy now. The circumstances that surround us prevent us from giving what we want and educating the next ones with those values. We educate by example.

Happiness is noticeable in its absence, but this is a perception as happiness can be found in vulnerability. It can be calling your friend or mother because you feel lonely and sharing that feeling, showing that he or she is important to you when you are vulnerable. This is what brings us together, what makes us feel understood.

In my case, for example, as a professional basketball player, I think that happiness in collective sport is not in winning, but in feeling that a group of people has become a team. Society is result-oriented, that's why it is an unhappy society. There are not enough teams.



KSENNIA Y ANNA

A mother and daughter, Ukraine

Kseniia and Anna lived in Kherson, a southern city in Ukraine, but when the war started their city was bombarded and they fled to the UK. They have been given a home by an English family living near London. Happiness for them would be to achieve peace in their country. To be reunited with their family, to play with their cat, to visit grandparents every day and to see their friends again, to play together.





**THROUGH THE EYES
OF CHILDREN**

MADDALENA

4 YEARS OLD
ITALY

When I am happy, I feel content and I am not sad. My mother makes me happy. I am happy when I do nice things, for example, when I go to an amusement park with my family or when I see a play with my grandparents.



THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN

LIO

9 YEARS OLD
UNITED STATES

For me happiness is soccer. I like it so much because I feel free when I'm running out on the field. I love the feeling when I shoot a soccer ball. When I score a goal, I have a nice happy feeling that makes me very proud of my team and myself.

Also, I feel very happy when my mom is not stressed out and happy.

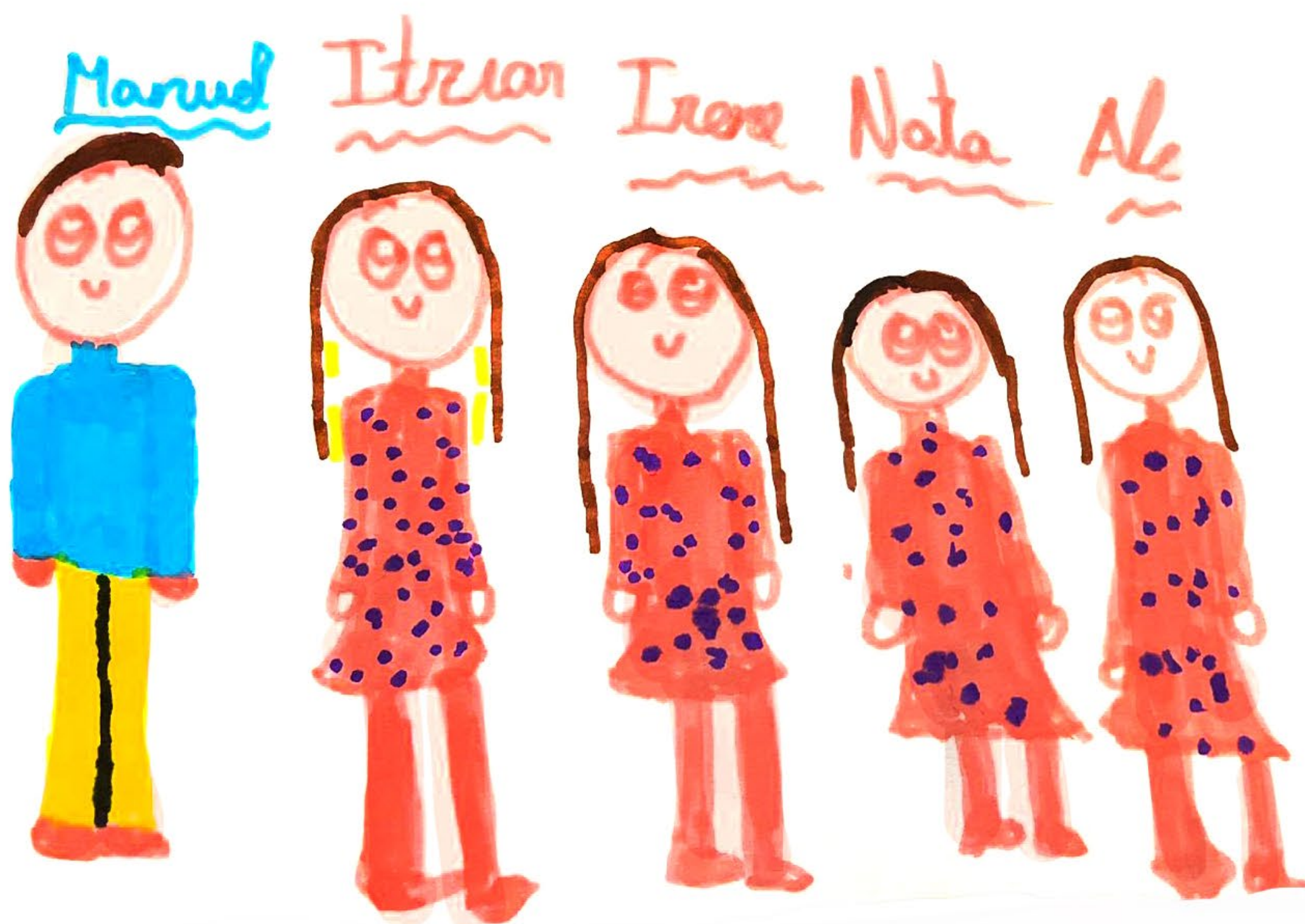


ALEJANDRA

9 YEARS OLD
SPAIN

For me happiness is my family.

♥ ♥ ♥
Mi Familia ♥



MAIMUNA

12 YEARS OLD
SENEGAL

For me, happiness is to see my parents safe and sound, in good health.

Maman et papa



THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN

The Sanderson family

ELVI 7 YEARS OLD
UNITED KINGDOM

Happiness is hugging my family and friends.

Happiness is loving and kindness.

Happiness is sharing and helping people.



The Sanderson family

KASPER

8 YEARS OLD

UNITED KINGDOM

Happiness for me: I like skiing and going off-piste. Playing with my brother and sister. Playing with any device. Going on holiday and cuddling with mum and dad.

the
MAPPYNESS OF
me

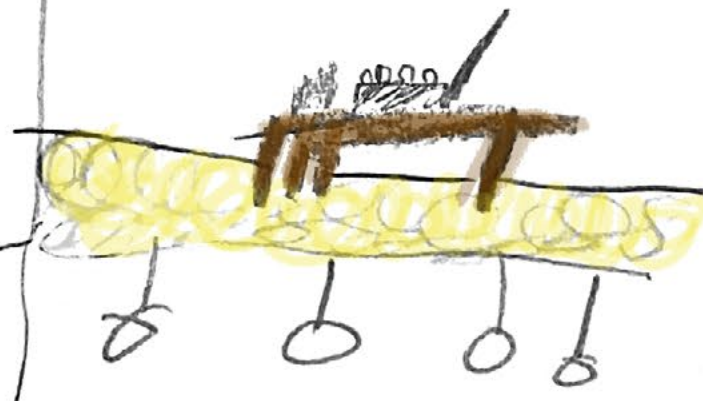
• I like Skiing
and I like going
off piste.



• Playing with
my brother and
sister.



• Playing on any
devices



• going on
holiday



• hugging my
mum or
dad



The Sanderson family

KIMI

10 YEARS OLD
UNITED KINGDOM

- ✓ I love to have success in anything after persevering hard and it makes me feel proud.
- ✓ Being with friends and using teamwork skills to have fun!
- ✓ Sports in general, it is great to play singularly and in a team!
- ✓ Getting a good sleep and dinner after a long day.
- ✓ Reading books, it is very interesting to learn new things.
- ✓ Being with family and loving each other and having a good time.
- ✓ Speaking and debating, I love persuading people and sometimes myself :).
- ✓ Being creative, it's amazing to be original and it is good fun.
- ✓ Helping other people be happy, it's best to be kind.

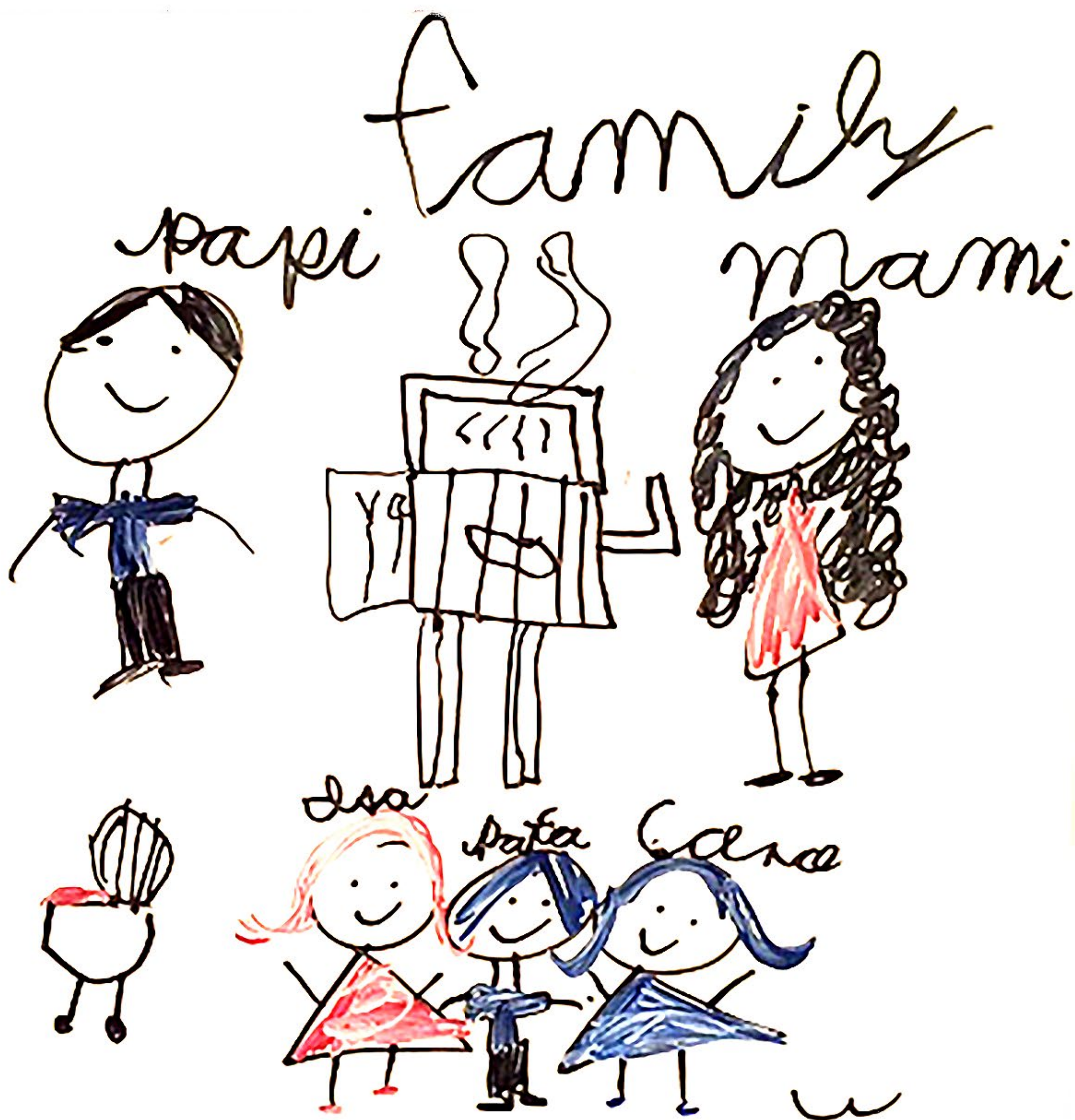


The Hurtado Family

CAROLINA

14 YEARS OLD
MEXICO

Happiness for the Hurtados is family. We enjoy watching mum and dad talking about everything, life's challenges and the trips they have taken. They usually have these conversations on the weekends. And on those days, the food they prepare for us tastes much better, always with a tremendous smell of smoke and embers, plus a great repertoire of music. And at the family barbecue there is always singing and dancing. We start making jokes and my parents start giving speeches about love and life. For us, the family is a party to which we are all invited.

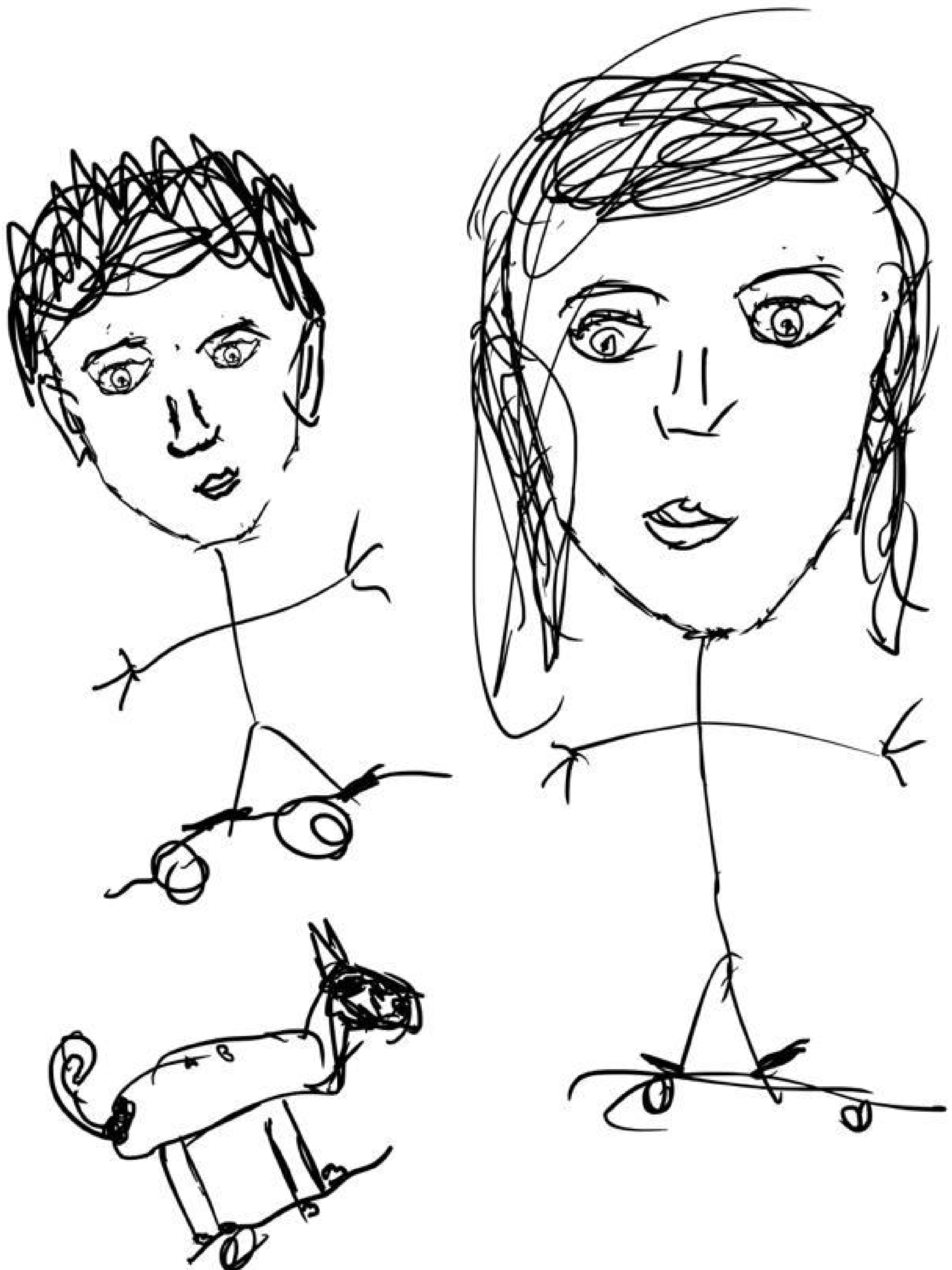


The Peña Family

SANTIAGO

12 AÑOS
ARGENTINA

Happiness for me is when I spend time with my family. For example, when I go skating with my sister and our dog.



The Peña Family

VICKY

15 AÑOS
ARGENTINA

Happiness for me is being myself with the people I love.





EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

According to Martin Seligman, founder of Positive Psychology, “genuine happiness consists in experiencing positive emotions about the past and the future, in savouring positive sensations derived from the many pleasures of existence, in deriving abundant gratification from one’s personal capacities, and in using those capacities in the service of something greater to give it meaning”.

It seems to me that this definition is faithfully reflected in the answers collected here. On the one hand, it is the small satisfied tastes, the comforting rituals, a certain amount of comfort, even physical comfort, that contribute to our subjective well-being. They are the “little joys” that bring joy to everyday life.

On the other hand, it is above all relationships, especially family relationships, that satisfy our desire for a happiness that is more than just feeling good.

It is not by chance that two words recur in these answers and in the drawings, both of adults and of children: love and family. Love as sharing, as caring for others, as listening and telling stories. Family as an affective space in which to receive – security, support, shelter – but also to give – time, attention, a smile.

And the home is the framework of this everyday life made of customs and novelties; the place from which one leaves and to which one returns, where the memory of the past and the expectation of the future mingle. Domestic happiness made up of chores and celebrations, of the necessary and the superfluous, where one wishes to rest unhurriedly with one’s loved ones. A welcoming space where it is pleasant to be, because mutual care makes it possible for what is mine and what is yours to become “ours”.

The wish or hope is that this can be realised, always and in every home in the world.

MARÍA TERESA RUSSO

Philosopher and Director of HRF



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