

In Search Of?

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The Search for the Core of the Vicious Circle

Cees Snel

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For my daughter Annemáy,

For you, the little star in my heart.

In this book you carry the same name that you carry in my heart the
little star in my heart.

With love.

**You do not read this book.
This book looks back at you.**

“This book does not ask for understanding. It asks for recognition. And courage.”

“Not to know what is happening. But to feel what has been happening for a long time.”

“We cannot know where we are beginning until we understand where we began.”

Do not rush through this book. Give it the attention it deserves, because the subject it explores deserves attention.

Do not approach this book as you would a novel. Nor as an informational book in search of answers. Its purpose is not to be understood as quickly as possible, but to be experienced.

Read at your own pace

You do not have to read this book from beginning to end in a single sitting.

Feel free to skip a chapter and return to it later. Rereading is not repetition; it is a deeper understanding.

If you experience resistance, fatigue, or unease while reading, put the book aside for a while. That is not a sign of failure. It may simply be a sign that something has been touched. The subject of this book asks for feeling as much as understanding.

Understanding is not always the goal

Not everything of importance can be explained immediately.

Some passages are intended to evoke recognition rather than agreement or understanding.

If certain words remain with you without their meaning becoming immediately clear, allow them to remain there.

Meaning often arrives later.

About the personal and sensitive themes

This book contains personal experiences, vulnerability, and difficult subjects, including trauma, development, loss, and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

These parts are not intended to shock or persuade, but to make visible what often remains unseen.

Read these passages with care for yourself.

Pause or move on whenever something feels too close.

Moments of silence are part of the reading experience

At various points, you will be invited to pause, reflect, or consciously do nothing.

Do not skip these moments.

They are not interruptions to the reading process.

They are part of it.

This book does not offer solutions

It provides no step-by-step method, no diagnosis, and no judgment.

What it does offer is space to see, feel, and think differently.

Take with you what resonates.

Leave behind what does not.

Read with gentleness

For the people written about.

For yourself.

And for what may reveal itself only later.

This book does not ask to be proven right.

It asks for presence.

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Prologue

Everything you read in this book can be regarded as truth, even though it is described through a lens where fantasy and reality intertwine. Together, we will explore both the origins of and the lived experience with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), a condition shaped by early damage to the developing brain and forever connected to the fragile creation of a new life.

To truly understand what follows, it is best not to think too far ahead. Stay for a moment with your first impression. Our journey begins far behind us, in the past. For many readers, it may change the way they look at the life they experience every day.

This story concerns the birth of a child who has already endured a long journey of stress, setbacks, obstacles, and nervousness before ever entering the world while much of that journey still lies ahead in the present and the future. The route described in this book will return again and again, appearing at different points and in different forms.

To absorb it fully, it is best to read only when you can give yourself the peace and time this journey requires. Fantasy and reality walk side by side along a narrow edge, forced to hold each other's hand so neither one falls away.

By reading carefully and placing the details beside one another, it becomes clear that the story embraces an entire pattern of life. Within that pattern, we begin to understand why matters that have slowly faded into the background over the past fifty years still carry great importance for finding a positive path through life.

I also want to describe how strongly we have become focused on ourselves, even as the tendency to place people into categories continues to grow. Over time, egocentric thinking can become little more than an accumulation of frustrations and an increasing inability or unwillingness to express feelings. Those feelings continue to exist within us, yet we forget to show them. As this happens, walls begin to rise around us and around the people who share our lives. Progress slowly becomes blocked.

1Damage follows through repeated collisions with the walls surrounding us, and with the walls we have already placed around others in our own minds.

In the chapters about the Spirals of Fire and the other spirals, it may help to imagine a vast obstacle course. While moving through it, one question continues to return: **What is it that we truly want.**

Once doubt enters the picture, other details begin to reveal themselves. Gradually, it becomes clear that this story is about a condition of which very little is known and understanding it is of great importance.

A road that appears blocked is not always as closed as it seems. The person carrying the burden often searches for another route, another direction, another way forward. Even when the destination seems out of reach, the will continues searching for a path toward it.

At times, it may seem as though every traffic light remains red. Yet the very button that can turn the light green has been there all along. As long as the will remains present, another way forward can often be found.

Despite the damage, access may still be gained through many different doors doors we never expect to use, or doors we pass through without even realizing it. Other doors remain unnoticed until the moment arrives when they become necessary.

There is also a barrier that people place before themselves. When the mind becomes fixed on a specific outcome, everything and everyone is expected to move in the same direction. When things do not unfold as imagined, a barricade is often placed in front of the entrance without a second thought.

It is unfortunate that the discovery of the cause often arrives too late, as though it has just missed the bus. Then the question returns once more: **Why do we only realize what we should have done after the moment has already passed.**

As the spirals begin to reveal themselves throughout the story, you will notice that certain pieces of text return from time to time. Let them remain where they are. They serve a purpose: helping each person return the hand of the clock to its proper position.

After birth, we move through a vast landscape made up of history on one side and the future on the other. To describe it logically, we could call it the first moment of existence. From that moment until now, it becomes possible to look back and ask:

Where were the obstacles I avoided. And perhaps even more importantly: Why. When. Because of what. Together with whom. And because of whom.

In summary: **Who. What. Where. When. Through what. Why.**

Now that you are reading this, take a moment to consider the word *recovery*. Do you truly know what that word means. Does it mean repairing something. Renovating something. Or could it simply mean adjusting the direction of your own thinking.

1: Truth in Fantasy

This book explores Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in a way that allows reality and fantasy to stand beside one another, not to confuse the reader, but to make the truth more visible. What follows is not meant to be a collection of facts or explanations. It is meant to open a door to a world that is often unseen. Through experiences, observations, and imagery, a path appears one shaped by challenges, obstacles, resilience, and the quiet determination that continues even when the way forward seems uncertain.

The story begins at the point where truth meets imagination. Not to blur reality, but to reveal it. Some experiences cannot be explained through facts alone. When fantasy and reality walk together, a wider view of life with FAS becomes possible.

At its core, this book speaks about the impact of alcohol exposure before birth and the lifelong consequences that follow. It reflects on the barriers that rise, the stress that is carried, and the challenges faced not only by the individual, but also by those who stand close to them.

It also touches on the ways people cope with difficulty. Feelings are hidden rather than expressed. Silence replaces openness. Understanding becomes clouded by assumptions. And slowly, walls are built where bridges could have stood.

Throughout this journey, the importance of perseverance becomes visible. Progress is not always found by removing obstacles. Sometimes it is found by moving around them. Even when limitations exist, possibilities remain.

Calmness, rhythm, routine, and structure return again and again. Not as simple solutions, but as foundations steady ground that can help create stability, understanding, and a better outlook for the present and for the generations that follow.

More than anything, this book is an invitation to look beyond what is immediately visible. It explores not only the realities of FAS, but also the strength, determination, and resilience that continue to exist beside it.

Through the combination of truth and fantasy, the reader is vited to reflect on personal limitations, hidden possibilities, and the ways in which positive change can still emerge, even when circumstances are difficult.

2: The Man, What He Did Not See

We speak about her. About the woman. About what she did. About that glass of wine. About her responsibility. But where was he?

The man who shared her life. The man who saw her. The man who knew her. The man who drank alcohol without understanding what it could mean. The man who never imagined that his own choices might one day affect a child who did not yet exist.

That is the detail that often remains unseen. Most people do not think about it beforehand. Many are never told. Yet it deserves attention.

The conversation is often directed toward the mother. Far less attention is given to the role of the father. Yet his choices are also part of the story that begins long before a child is born.

This chapter is not about blame. It is about responsibility. It is about understanding that becoming a parent begins long before a child enters the world.

Too often the man thinks: one glass will not matter. He says it. He believes it. Or he says nothing at all, because nobody ever explained it to him. He assumes it is her body, her responsibility, her decision.

But living together means more than sharing a home. It means sharing responsibility. Thinking together. Looking together. Feeling together.

The man is different from the woman. Not better. Not worse. Different.

He looks for solutions. He assumes things will work out. He prefers calm over conflict. So he dismisses concerns. He sees the glass and thinks it will be fine. Or he pours one for himself as well. Not out of harm, but because it feels easier than asking whether another choice should be made.

What he often does not realise is that his alcohol consumption before pregnancy can influence the child. It is a subject many people never consider. Awareness rarely begins before parenthood is discussed. As a result, important questions are never asked.

Preparation for new life involves more than what happens during pregnancy. Choices made beforehand are part of the foundation upon which a future child is built. Every person carries habits, experiences, and decisions into that future. Some influences are visible. Others remain unseen.

That is why awareness matters. Not because responsibility should be feared, but because responsibility gives people the opportunity to make choices. Not choices based on fear, but choices based on understanding.

The man matters. His decisions matter. His presence matters. He is not standing at the edge of the story. He is part of it.

Understanding is important. Not to create guilt. Not to judge. But to allow people to see what was previously unseen.

Awareness changes perspective. What once seemed insignificant may suddenly carry a different meaning. A habit becomes a choice. A choice becomes a responsibility. Responsibility becomes the possibility of change.

That is the purpose of this chapter: to reach him, to make him think, to show him that he matters. That his role matters. That his choices matter. Not because he should be blamed, but because he has the ability to make a difference.

He saw her. He saw himself. But what he did not see was what had already been passed on long before he knew he would become a father.

The Father and Grandfather of the Woman

What cannot be seen is often still felt. The woman who carries a child carries more than the child alone. She carries part of the past. Part of her father. Part of his father. Not as a conscious choice, but as an invisible inheritance.

An inheritance of beliefs, behaviours, silences, and experiences. An inheritance of things never explained and things never spoken about. Her father may have been absent. Or present too often. Strict. Unpredictable. Struggling with addiction. Unable to express emotion.

Whatever he was, he became her first example of what a man is. That example settles deep within her. Not as a memory, but as a response. A pattern. A way of seeing the world.

Her grandfather carried burdens of his own. A different time. Different expectations. Different responsibilities. Lessons passed from one generation to the next, not out of intention, but out of habit. What was normal for one generation became the foundation of the next.

In this way, the woman carries more than her own story. She carries traces of the men who came before her. Their choices. Their silences. Their beliefs. The things they understood and the things they never questioned.

But what if the glass was not raised by a man? What if the echo comes from a woman who hid her sorrow in bottles long before her grandchild was born?

Influence rarely travels in a straight line. It moves through families, through habits, through spoken words and silence. It continues long after the moment itself has passed.

A solitary tree stands upon an open plain. Its shadow stretches long and dark across the land, as though it carries something that cannot be seen. The sky appears layered, almost tangible in form. Everything within that image speaks of what remained unseen, yet was still passed on.

The Echo of a Glass Never Raised

(On the influence of grandparents on the child who never received a single drop)

A child is sometimes born carrying a vibration within. Not visible. Not measurable. Yet present in the silences between words. A restlessness that does not seem to belong to the child alone. An echo of something that once sounded in a room where that child had never been.

The grandmother. A woman who filled her days with drink to forget her nights. A woman who hid her sorrow in bottles and breathed the silence of the past. Long before her daughter became a mother. Long before the child took its first breath.

And yet something remains. Not as heredity, but as a trace. A mark left in the current. A copper wire once bent, now carrying a different flow.

What entered the grandmother's life altered more than her own rhythm. It shaped the rhythm of her daughter and, in turn, the life of the child who followed. Not through blame. Not through punishment. But through patterns that continue when no one interrupts them.

The Chain I

The beginning of feeling, before knowing why.

The chain cannot be seen, yet it can be felt. It cannot be heard, yet it is present. It cannot be touched, yet it influences everything around it.

Sometimes a child senses something surrounding them. Not a wall. Not a hand. But a weight. A tension in the air. A vibration beneath the skin. A chain holding them long before they understand they are being held.

The child does not know where it comes from. The child only knows that it is there. In the way reactions appear, in the way withdrawal becomes familiar, in the search for something that cannot yet be named.

Doctors do not see it. Professionals call it behavior. Parents call it difficult. The child calls it nothing at all, because there are no words for it.

The chain does not rattle. It whispers. It does not pull. It weighs. It does not close doors. It circles.

The chain is not a piece of jewelry. It is a series of links made from behavior, beliefs, and pain. Each link belongs to a generation, and each generation adds something of its own. Together they form an invisible structure that settles into the body, the mind, and everyday life.

It is the chain of what was never said. Of what was never seen. Of what was repeated without anyone knowing why.

And this is where it begins. With a feeling. A vibration. A restlessness. An echo of something that once sounded in a room where the child has never been.

A belief: *You must be strong.*

Strength was once considered a necessity. Men were expected to work, fight, survive. Emotions were seen as a luxury that could not be afforded. And so they taught their children: *Crying does not help. Keep going.*

The woman grew up with that voice in her mind. When she was hurt, she held it in. When she was sad, she swallowed the feeling and moved on. Weakness was dangerous.

Now she is pregnant, or perhaps she is simply thinking about becoming a mother. She feels vulnerable, yet she does not dare to show it. She tells herself: *I must be strong for my child.*

But true strength is not found in hiding pain. It is found in allowing yourself to feel. In being able to say: *I need help.* The belief that strength means showing nothing leaves her isolated.

And the child already senses that isolation within the womb.

Even before that, at the moment thoughts begin moving toward the idea of new life, the foundation has already begun to form. The child will one day rest upon that foundation throughout its journey of existence.

That foundation is not neutral. It is filled with everything that was already there. Beliefs, memories, expectations, images of how life should be. It also carries traces of how life once was.

The moment people begin thinking about a child, they also begin thinking about the future. About continuation. About hope. But also about fear. About what must never return. About what should remain unseen.

That thought is not a single moment. It becomes the beginning of a transfer. A structure. A history.

When that thought is carried by unspoken pain, the pain becomes part of the foundation. Not as blame, but as reality.

The child will eventually grow within a body, but also within an atmosphere. Within expectations. Within a story that had already begun before the child was able to begin.

That atmosphere is not neutral. It is shaped by everything present at the moment those thoughts take form. By beliefs that remained. By memories that were never processed. By images of how life should be. By fears of what must not return.

What exists within that atmosphere will not only surround the child, but also influence the direction in which the child develops. Not as a conscious message, but as an underlying layer upon which life begins to build.

The thought of having a child is therefore not an abstract desire. It is the beginning of movement. The beginning of transfer. The beginning of preparation.

Not only physical preparation, but emotional, rational, and structural preparation as well.

What remains unspoken becomes visible through feeling. What remains unrecognized is carried forward. What remains unbroken is repeated.

That is why care does not begin with pregnancy. It begins at the moment the future starts taking shape.

That is where responsibility begins. That is where the possibility of recovery begins. Not by forgetting what already exists, but by acknowledging it.

What begins there does not stand alone. The thought of a child, the atmosphere in which that thought develops, and the pain that remains unspoken together create the environment into which the child will one day be welcomed.

Yet that environment is not shaped by parents alone. The partner plays a role. The family plays a role. The professional who fails to look plays a role. The school that does not know plays a role. The society that remains silent plays a role.

What is not seen cannot be recognized. And what is not recognized cannot be protected.

That is where the next chapter begins. A chapter about what a child encounters once it becomes visible. About the way systems respond to behavior they do not understand. About the way a condition is mistaken for character.

A habit: *A drink is part of life.*

The grandfather drank after work. The father drank after work. The father drank on weekends. The woman drinks when she feels stressed.

Not because she is addicted, but because it feels normal.

A drink with dinner. A glass of wine to relax. A drink while cooking. It is social. Familiar. Part of everyday life.

But the child in her thoughts, or the child growing within her, does not know familiarity. It only knows chemistry. Alcohol changes the environment in which life begins and develops. The habit that appears harmless can become a risk. Not through malice, but through unawareness.

Because nobody ever told her that a drink can carry consequences. And so she repeats what she has seen. Until someone says: *You have another choice.*

A habit is never just a moment. It becomes a pattern. A pattern that settles into the structure of daily life. What settles into a structure becomes invisible. It becomes unquestioned.

Who speaks about something everyone does? Who questions what is considered normal?

That is why awareness is not a judgment. It is an invitation to look, to feel, to choose. Not against someone else, but for the child.

A silence: *We don't talk about that.*

The father never spoke about his childhood. The grandfather never spoke about the war. The mother swallowed her sorrow. The partner learned to remain silent.

The woman learned that difficult things should be kept to herself.

Abuse. Loss. Fear. Swallow it. Hide it. Move on.

Because talking about it makes it real. And reality can be painful.

Silence is not protection. It is a wall. A wall that keeps out more than words. It keeps out connection. Recognition. Recovery.

What is not spoken is still felt. In the body. In the atmosphere. In the choices people make without knowing why.

The sleepless nights. The tension. The panic. They speak on behalf of what was never said.

And the child feels that tension, or will feel it once the decision to begin a new life has been made. What remains unspoken is still felt and still passed on.

Silence is not an ending. It is a beginning. A beginning of repetition. Of confusion. Of a story that continues without being told.

That is why speaking is not a weakness. It is an act of care. An act of responsibility. A way of breaking what would otherwise remain hidden beneath the surface.

A fear: *What will other people think?*

She lives beneath a magnifying glass. What she eats, what she drinks, how she dresses, how she behaves everything seems open to judgment. Every choice feels watched.

She wants to do everything right. Perfectly. Because she has learned that her value depends on what others think of her.

That fear may have begun long before her. A father concerned with status. A grandfather who lived for reputation. Expectations passed from one generation to the next until approval became something to chase.

But approval never stays.

A child does not need perfection. A child does not need a carefully protected image. A child needs presence.

The moment she dares to choose what feels right instead of what merely appears right, something begins to change. Space appears. Space for authenticity. Space for calm. Space for connection.

When the opinions of others become less important than the well-being of the child, the fear begins to loosen its grip. Not all at once, but step by step. Every step creates room for something that was previously pushed aside.

And within that space, a different future can begin to grow.

A reaction: *Stop making a fuss.*

She has heard it many times. As a child. As a teenager. As an adult. Her emotions dismissed, her questions ignored. *You're exaggerating. You're too sensitive. Just get on with it.*

Over time she learned to silence her own feelings. Adapting became easier than expressing what lived inside her. Slowly she pushed aside what she felt in order to become what others expected her to be.

Now, with a child in her womb or with her thoughts reaching toward the future, those feelings return. Stronger than before. Yet the familiar voice remains, reminding her not to make a fuss.

But making a fuss is not the problem. Ignoring what needs to be felt is.

Feelings pushed away do not disappear. They settle beneath the surface. They return as tension, restlessness, stress. Not always visible, but present nonetheless.

The body remembers what the mind tries to avoid. What remains unspoken finds another way to express itself. Through tension. Through behavior. Through the atmosphere surrounding everyday life.

That is why acknowledging emotions is not a weakness. It is awareness. It is care. It is the willingness to recognize what is present before it becomes something heavier to carry.

What is recognized can be understood. What is understood can be addressed. And what is addressed no longer has to remain hidden.

A refuge: *I need it to relax.*

She smokes. She drinks. She scrolls. She reaches for whatever seems to offer relief. Not because she enjoys it, but because she feels she needs it. And in a way, she is right.

She does need relief. She needs rest, space, a moment in which the pressure no longer feels so heavy. The need itself is not the problem. The problem is that nobody ever taught her where real relaxation can be found.

Her father relaxed with a beer. Her mother relaxed with medication. And so she searches for calm in the same places where she has always seen others searching.

What she finds is temporary relief. What she truly needs is safety. Safety in her thoughts. Safety in her feelings. Safety in the life around her.

Rest does not live in a glass. It does not live in a cigarette. It does not live in distraction. Rest lives in feeling safe enough to remain present.

That is not something learned overnight. It is learned slowly, step by step, choice by choice. As understanding grows, the need to escape begins to loosen its grip. The search for relief becomes a search for balance.

Within that balance, something else becomes possible. The ability to stay with herself, with her child, with the life she wishes to build.

When she dares to look at her father and at the generations before him, a choice begins to appear. Not a choice to judge them. Not a choice to blame them. A choice to understand.

From that understanding comes the possibility of breaking the chain, so her child no longer has to carry what she once carried herself.

3: The Generation Wave

Where it began, without anyone noticing. What appears normal is often damage that has simply been passed on.

There is a wave that moves through families. Not a wave of water, but a wave of habits. A wave of substances. A wave of behaviors that may once have begun as survival and now continue as tradition.

Alcohol. Drugs. Tobacco. Caffeine. Not always as addictions, but as accepted parts of daily life. A beer with dinner. A cigarette after work. A joint to relax. A cup of coffee to stay awake. Each generation adds something to the pattern, and rarely does anyone stop to ask: Why do we do this.

The grandfather smoked tobacco. The father drank beer. The mother took sleeping pills. The woman drinks wine. And the child? The child receives all of it. Not through words, but through the mother's body. Through stress. Through substances. Through signals that influence the brain long before birth.

What has become normal is often a way of escaping. Escaping fatigue. Escaping sorrow. Escaping pressure. Substances do not solve those problems. They soften them. They blur them.

And that blurring can become part of pregnancy. The child develops in an environment that is no longer entirely stable. Caffeine stimulates. Nicotine restricts. Alcohol influences development. Stress disrupts the balance of hormones.

No one does it with the intention of causing harm. Most people were never taught that what is considered normal is not always healthy. They were never taught that what their parents did may not have been the best path forward. What appears harmless or familiar can sometimes have consequences that reach further than expected.

The message is everywhere. In advertisements. At celebrations. In the way people are raised. A glass of wine should be fine. A cigarette is just a moment for yourself. A pill is simply a tool to help.

But the child who is yet to come, or who is already growing in the womb, does not understand context. The child only experiences chemistry. And that chemistry becomes part of the foundation upon which life is built. A foundation that can already begin to lean before birth.

The woman thinks: My mother did it too. Or: My grandmother smoked and her children were fine.

But what we see is never the whole story. What is felt. What is missing. What remains difficult to understand. Those things are also passed on. Not through genes alone, but through behavior. Through stress responses. Through survival strategies. Through a wave that continues rolling forward until someone chooses to stop it.

Repetition begins to change when someone dares to say: I will do it differently. When someone dares to ask: What have I been carrying with me. When someone dares to feel: What do I truly need.

That is where repetition begins to lose its strength. Not through substances presented as comfort, but through calm without numbing. Through connection without escape.

A child deserves a new beginning. A beginning free from the weight of the wave. Free from the inheritance of substances. Free from the pressure of *this is how we have always done it*.

A beginning with space. With breath. With gentleness.

4: The Invisible Inheritance

We often believe that a child begins at zero. But that is an illusion.

A child begins with a backpack. A backpack filled by others. By fathers. By mothers. By systems. By silences.

That backpack contains no possessions. Instead, it carries beliefs, behavior patterns, unspoken fears, unresolved trauma, and unconscious expectations. What we pass on is often passed on without words, without intention, without awareness. The body remembers, the child registers, and the future responds.

4a: Sound

To us, they are sounds. To the child, they are vibrations.

Every shout, every argument, every tone becomes a wave of threat. The stress system is activated long before the child is born. Long before there is even a visible pregnancy. And later we call it a difficult child.

But it is not character. It is a consequence.

What often goes unseen is how deeply sound can cut. How every harsh tone, every tension, every voice carrying too much sharpness settles into a body that has not yet learned how to choose. The child lives in a world of signals it cannot understand, yet must process.

The brain learns survival before it learns trust. The heartbeat adjusts itself to perceived danger. The breath learns restraint.

Sound shapes development. Not only through what is heard, but through what is felt. An environment filled with stress creates a child that remains alert, reacting to what was once too much to bear.

Later we call it behavior. But it is memory. A body still listening to something that should have passed long ago.

The fetus develops under the influence of sound. Every stimulus is absorbed and must somehow be processed. Yet some tones, tensions, and vibrations cross boundaries that a vulnerable development should never have to carry.

Every vibration, every tone, every tension becomes part of a system that has yet to learn what calm truly is. The child tries to process what cannot yet be understood. The body does what it can: adapt, compress, survive.

When sound becomes too heavy, it crosses invisible boundaries. It reaches into the development of the brain, the nervous system, and the rhythm of the heartbeat. It influences how the child will later respond to the world, not through choice, but through necessity.

What we call sound becomes a constant instruction: Be alert. Be careful. Be quiet.

Few people realize how far that influence reaches. How a voice, an argument, a harsh tone, or a day filled with tension can become part of the foundation of a life in which the body never fully relaxes.

We call it behavior. We call it restlessness. We call it difficult. But it is memory. An echo of what was once too much.

4b: Light

The mother watches. She scrolls. She moves from screen to screen. And the child experiences it too. Not through sight, but through rhythm.

Bright light and flashing screens disrupt the natural patterns through which rest and recovery are created. The mother's body responds to those stimuli, and the child responds with her.

The fetus develops in a world where day and night begin to overlap, where rest no longer has a fixed place. A child growing in a world without night never truly learns what rest feels like. It never experiences what it means for stimulation to decrease. It never discovers that the world can pause.

The nervous system develops under continuous stimulation. The brain learns acceleration rather than slowing down. The heartbeat adapts to unrest. The breath searches for stability in a rhythm that never settles.

And later we call it a restless baby. Perhaps it never learned what calm means. Perhaps it never learned what fewer stimuli feel like. Perhaps the fetus was already growing in a state of constant activation while needing rest more than anything else.

4c: Radiation

We are connected. Always. Everywhere. And the child is connected as well. Not to the network, but to the waves.

A digital storm that never truly ends.

The mother lives within a field of signals. Phones, Wi-Fi, screens, transmitters. Invisible movements touching the body without being consciously felt.

The child develops within that environment. Not consciously, yet not untouched by it either.

The fetus grows in a world that is never completely silent. A world in which every second contains another form of activity. The nervous system learns to adapt to stimuli that cannot be recognized or understood. The body learns to respond to something that cannot be touched.

And when the child is born, that constant background has already become familiar. Or perhaps not familiar. Perhaps it has simply become part of the environment to which the body has continuously adapted.

The child searches for stimulation because life without it feels unfamiliar. It seeks movement because silence feels strange. It seeks light because rest remains unknown.

We call it curiosity. We call it energy. But perhaps it is simply a body that never learned what silence means.

4d: Tension

The mother feels it. The child feels it too. Not as a thought. As biology.

Cortisol passes through the placenta. It influences the developing brain, sensitivity, resilience. A mother living under tension passes that tension on, not through words, but through blood.

The fetus learns what stress is before it learns what calm feels like. The body adapts to threat, building a system that reacts more quickly, remains more alert, and continues responding long after the danger has passed.

Tension becomes a language. A form of communication that does not disappear after birth.

The child recognizes the tone of unrest, the breath that moves too quickly, the silence that feels too heavy.

We call it sensitivity. We call it vulnerability. But it is also an imprint of what the body has learned to carry. A memory that exists not in words, but in cells.

Cells built one after another during a long period within a life marked by unrest. Not necessarily through choice, but through habit, circumstances, repetition.

The body begins to experience tension as normal. Biology adapts to what repeatedly occurs.

Yet one of the greatest needs for both mother and child remains calm, routine, rhythm, structure. These are not simply words from a textbook. They are conditions for development. For recovery. For safety.

But in a life where unrest has become the norm, those conditions are often lost.

The mother's body lives in overdrive, and the child develops within that acceleration.

Many children grow up without those foundations. Not because they lacked love, but because their beginning was filled with stimuli that were too heavy to carry.

They carry the echo of a world that was never quiet. A world in which tension became the language and calm remained an unfamiliar sound.

5: The Father

He saw her. He saw himself. But what he did not see was what had already been passed on long before he knew he would become a father. A single drop can already be a drop too many. What he often does not realize is that his alcohol consumption before pregnancy can influence the child. It is not only her glass that matters, but his as well. Alcohol changes something within him. It changes something in what he carries forward, in the building blocks of new life, and that happens long before there is a pregnancy.

Every time he drinks, something shifts within his body. Something shifts in the quality of what he contributes. That is the detail many people never hear about. Who speaks to him before the child exists. Who tells him that what he does today matters tomorrow. Very few people do. And so life continues. He drinks. He smokes. He assumes everything will be fine.

When a child is born with difficulties, attention is often directed toward the mother. Yet he was there too. He also played a role. This is not about blame. It is about awareness. It is about showing him that he matters, that his choices matter, that his actions can have an influence far beyond himself.

The father should be part of the conversation. Not through accusation, but through understanding. Not through judgment, but through explanation, stories, and truth. Because once he understands, he has the opportunity to choose differently. He may say: we will do this together. Not because he is forced to, but because he wants to. Because he understands what is at stake.

5a: The Chain II

The woman who carries her child carries more than the child alone. She carries part of the past, part of her father, part of his father, not as a conscious choice but as an invisible inheritance. Her father may have been absent, or present too often. Strict, unpredictable, addicted, emotionally blocked. Whatever he was, he became her first example of what a man is, and that example settles deep within her system, not as a memory but as a reflex.

And the grandfather was often harder still. A man of war, of labor, of silence. He taught his son that emotions were weakness, that drinking brought relief, that work was survival, and that women should listen. That son passed those lessons on, not out of cruelty but out of habit. He knew no other way.

Each generation adds another link. Together they form a chain, a system that settles into the body, the mind, and everyday life. The woman thinks: I must be strong for my child. What she does not realize is that the thought may not be entirely her own. It is an echo, an inherited belief, another link in the chain.

Being strong was once a necessity. Now it often becomes isolation. True strength is not found in hiding pain. It is found in allowing yourself to feel, in being able to say: I need help. And the child feels with her, lives with her, breathes with her, even within the womb. Not as a thought, but as a vibration. As biology.

5b: The World Within the Womb

A fetus does not live in silence. It lives in a world that pulses, vibrates, sounds, burns, transmits. The womb is not a bunker or a cocoon. It is a permeable space, a membrane between what is inside and what is outside. What the mother feels, the child feels. What she hears, the child hears. What she thinks influences the child.

The effect is often far greater for the child because no defenses have yet been built. Developing life receives every signal without the protection that later comes with experience. What surrounds the mother becomes part of the environment in which the child learns, grows, and develops. The child does not judge those signals. It absorbs them. And from those signals, its first understanding of the world begins to take shape.

5c: Repetition

What we pass on is often passed on without words, without intention, without awareness. Yet the body remembers, the child registers, and the future responds. Inheritance is not only biological. It is emotional. It is a pattern carried forward. When the child is born, it does not begin at zero. It begins with a story that was already being written before the first breath was taken.

But that story is not a beginning. It is a continuation, an echo of something that sounded before, broke before, and fell silent before. To truly understand what we pass on, we must go back. Back to the first fracture. Back to the first silence. Back to where it began. Because only when we dare to look there can the system begin to change, can the chain be broken, can the child begin with a story of its own. Not as a carrier of the past, but as a builder of the future.

5d: Transition

We do not know what we are beginning until we know where we began. That is where the next chapter starts. Not with the child, but with the origin. Where it began. We often believe that life begins with the first breath. But what if it began earlier. What if a child is born not only with a body, but also with a burden. A burden that cannot be seen on a scan or in an image, yet reveals itself through behavior, reactions, and patterns.

The invisible inheritance is not something that belongs only to the past. It lives in the present. If we want to understand what we pass on, we must be willing to look at where it began. Not with the child, but with the system. With the first fracture. With the origin. Because that is not only where the story begins. It is also where the possibility of change begins.

6: The Origin No One Wants to See

Most people believe that life begins at birth, that it only matters once it becomes visible, once there is a name, a face, a first breath. But that is a misunderstanding. The formation of a child begins much earlier than most people realize. What happens during pregnancy matters. What happens before pregnancy matters. What happened years before can matter as well.

A child does not build its own foundation. That foundation is already being formed by what came before: patterns, beliefs, wounds that were never healed, silences that were never broken. The foundation of a child does not begin in the first weeks of pregnancy. It begins much earlier, in the way people think, in the way people feel, in the way they respond to stress, connection, and vulnerability.

A child does not arrive as a blank page. A child arrives within a story that was already moving long before the first breath was taken, a story shaped by stress, expectations, beliefs, and experiences carried from one generation to the next. Pain is part of that story. Not only the pain we recognize, but also the pain we hide, the pain we keep away from the outside world, the pain that remains unspoken while continuing to influence the way we live.

To understand what is being passed on, we must first understand what happens beneath the surface. Neurologically, the brain begins developing during the earliest weeks after conception. The first neural connections appear very early. The systems responsible for emotional regulation and stress responses begin forming long before birth. As development continues, the growing brain responds to its environment. Sound, tension, hormonal changes, and stress all become part of that environment.

Stress is not a side issue. It becomes part of development. When the body is repeatedly exposed to tension, the systems responsible for stress regulation learn from that experience. A child is not responding with character. A child is responding with biology.

7: “Where It Began”

What began was not a moment. It was a sequence, a pattern, an echo of something that started long ago. Not with her. Not with him. But with those who came before them, with choices that were never questioned, with pain that was never spoken of.

It began with a man who swallowed his emotions, with a woman who pushed her boundaries until they disappeared, with a child who learned: I must adapt, or I am not safe. That child grew older, became a father, became a mother, and passed on what had never been processed. Because what is not healed is repeated. What is not understood is carried. What is not named begins to shape us.

That is where it began. Not with the first bottle. Not with the first argument. But with the first moment someone believed: I am not important. That feeling settled into the body, the mind, and the family itself.

That is where we must be willing to look. Not to blame, but to understand. Not to judge, but to break the cycle and say: it ends here. Because when we know where something began, we can choose where it ends.

Not every beginning is visible. Some beginnings are quiet, gradual, unspoken. They settle themselves into systems, families, and bodies. What we feel today often took root long ago. What we pass on often began before we ever had the opportunity to choose.

If we want to understand why the child cries, why the mother remains silent, or why the father withdraws, we must go back. Back to the first absence. Back to the first judgment. Back to the first moment love became conditional. Because the key is there. Not to blame. But to understand. And to begin again.

What we often forget is that the damage does not begin at birth. Not even during pregnancy. It begins the moment two people look at one another and say: perhaps one day we would like to have a child.

Before there is a child, there is a choice. Before a heartbeat begins, responsibility already exists. Before life comes into being, the conditions in which that life will grow have already begun to take shape.

FAS does not begin at birth. It does not begin during pregnancy. It begins with people. People who believe it will not matter. People who do not realize that choices made today can influence tomorrow.

And those people are not limited to the woman alone. The man is part of the story as well. His body is not separate from what comes next. His choices matter. His habits matter. His awareness matters.

The child who arrives does not arrive from nowhere. It arrives through bodies shaped by generations, through experiences, beliefs, stress, and behaviors that have traveled through time. That inheritance is not destiny. It is an opportunity to pause, to become aware, to choose differently.

The difficulty is that most people do not know. They do not realize that influences can begin long before there is a pregnancy. They do not realize that what appears insignificant today may become part of a child's future tomorrow. They do not realize how stress, substances, beliefs, habits, and patterns can become part of the environment in which a child begins to develop.

That is why understanding is needed. Understanding for one another. Understanding for what we do not yet know. Understanding for the power of knowledge itself.

FASD is not a punishment. It is a consequence, often a consequence of unawareness rather than intention. That is why people need to talk, to share, to learn.

FASD is a spectrum, a range of conditions that arise when development is affected during the earliest stages of life. It influences the brain, behavior, emotions, and development, and its effects can remain throughout life.

That is why the story does not begin with the child. It begins with the person who is willing to stop, willing to look, willing to choose a healthier future.

But are we truly willing to look. Not only at the child. Not only at the mother. But at the world in which they live. A world filled with stress. A world in which young adults grow up surrounded by constant stimulation, expectations, and screens that never switch off.

When the foundation is already unstable before a child is even imagined, the outcome should not surprise us. That is why we must look further. Toward the generation now growing up. Toward what they will need one day if they are to carry life safely and responsibly.

It is not only the individual. It is the generation. Many young people grow up in a world where stress is no longer the exception. It is the background against which life unfolds. Speed surrounds them. Expectations surround them. Distraction surrounds them.

And in the middle of it all, there is very little space to become still, to reflect, or to feel what truly matters. The phone has become a companion, an anchor, a source of connection. But it can also become a limitation.

When thinking never moves beyond the screen, it remains trapped in the present moment. Little attention is given to what today's way of living may mean for tomorrow. Not because people do not care. But because they are overwhelmed, tired, overstimulated.

They want to do well. They simply do not know how. No one taught them.

And so a generation emerges that lives in fragments and thinks in flashes, a generation that feels in waves but often misses depth. If we are willing to see that, something can change. Not through judgment, but through guidance, through learning once again what it means to build a foundation before a child arrives.

Because if we want to build a healthy generation, we must first learn how to stand firmly ourselves. That is why FASD does not begin with the child. It begins with the person who is willing to look, willing to stop, willing to choose a future with less harm and more awareness.

Every child deserves a foundation that is not built on haste, but on presence
a presence that lives not only in the mind, but also in the heart.

8: “The Stillness of Thought”

If we are willing to choose a goal and carry it within our thoughts, that is the first step. A day without a goal is a day without direction. The question that continues to return is always the same: what do you want. The second question is: what is now.

When you tell someone that a person is always too late, they often look at you with confusion. Yet the reason is simple. Thinking comes first. Before a thought has been processed, before the signal has been passed on, we are already behind ourselves. A response only comes after the mind has examined what is happening. While that process takes place, the clock continues to move forward. Time continues. Only our thoughts pause for a moment so they can understand what is taking place.

A person is always late. Not because they are slow, but because they think. And thinking takes time. Before the body responds, the mind must understand. Before the mind understands, it must become still. Still enough to process. Still enough to recognize what is happening. The moment has already passed, yet the thought is still on its way. The clock continues to move, but inside the mind time seems to pause for a moment. That is not a flaw. It is not a weakness. It is the space in which we live. The space in which we feel, understand, and only then respond.

Human beings live in delay, always a fraction behind the present moment. Yet within that delay lies a strength of its own. Those who dare to slow down begin to see. And those who dare to see can choose. Not through haste, but through understanding. We often believe that we know, but knowledge does not become real until it has been lived. And living something takes time. Time we rarely give ourselves because we are already moving toward the next thing. Yet when we do not know where we began, we cannot truly know where we are going.

9: “The Inheritance of Invisible Pain”

I do not know when it began, because it did not begin with me. It began with them. With my father. With my mother. With their parents. With people who lived without knowing what they felt, who did what had to be done, who remained silent about what hurt, and who simply kept going.

My father did not talk. He worked. He drank. He remained silent. He looked away. Not because he felt nothing, but because he did not know how to feel. My mother cared, always, for everyone, even at the expense of herself. She was present, yet somehow never fully there. And me? I watched. I learned. Not from words, but from silence. From glances. From patterns. I learned that emotions were dangerous, that silence was safer than speaking, that adapting was easier than existing.

That is where it began. Not with a blow. Not with a trauma. But with a slow disappearance. The disappearance of will. Of direction. Of desire.

The Generation Before Us

Our parents. Their parents. They carried the same pain but called it something else. They called it duty. They called it faith. They called it normal. Feeling was dangerous. Doubt was discouraged. Questions were seen as disobedience. And so they learned to suppress, to obey, to believe in something outside themselves so they would not have to feel what lived within them.

Faith provided stability, but it could also become a boundary, a system of rules in which there was little room for inner pain. The culture was strict, hard. Preservation came first. Status had to be maintained. Weakness carried consequences. And so everything was swallowed, packaged, and left unspoken.

10: "Where I Am Now"

I live, but I feel nothing. I move, but I get nowhere. I try, but I fall back. Again and again. The same spiral. The same darkness. I say "I'm tired," but what I mean is "I'm empty." I say "I don't feel like it," but what I mean is "I don't know what desire feels like." I say "Never mind," but what I really mean is "Help me, because I don't know what I'm feeling."

I do not know what I want. I do not know who I am. Because what I think does not feel like mine. What I feel does not feel like mine. What I miss was never mine to begin with. I am a carrier. A carrier of pain without a name, of thoughts that are not mine, of beliefs that hold on to me even though I do not understand why.

And nobody sees it. Because I function. I work. I smile. I take part. But inside it is quiet. Cold. Dark.

The years that followed were confusing. I tried to fit in, but never truly felt part of anything. School was a place of achievement, not a place of recognition. I was good at mathematics, yet struggled elsewhere. Near the center, yet somehow outside the circle. At home everything revolved around the business, around my father, his status, his pride. Not around feelings. Not around me.

I carried the expectations. I carried the pressure. And then epilepsy arrived. Suddenly. Without warning. Everything collapsed. My grades. My sense of worth. His pride. I became a burden. Not comforted. Not understood. Not acknowledged. Only silence remained.

I walked beside the river with the dogs carrying a single question: why continue, what value do I have. The edge was close. Too close. But the little star in my heart kept shining. My daughter. My reason.

I asked for help. Psychologists. Treatment. Support. For a while it helped. But the cloud returned. The spiral remained. The threat remained. It felt like the tide. One moment the ground beneath me seemed solid. The next I was sinking again. Yet I am still here. Because she is here. Because I want to stop what I never chose.

The World That Leaves No Room

The world is fast, loud, filled with demands, images, expectations. You must perform. You must succeed. You must belong. You must be visible. But what happens when the inside cannot keep pace with the outside. What happens when the mind never finds rest. What happens when feelings have nowhere to go.

Then something begins to fracture. A loss of balance. An emptiness. A constant noise inside the mind. A constant pressure within the chest. The world asks for the outside while you are searching for the inside. And that is part of the inheritance. An inheritance from generations that were not allowed to feel, from systems that did not know how to listen, from a culture that did not know how to carry what people were truly experiencing.

11: "Where It Can End"

I have a choice. Not to forget, but to break the cycle. Not to ignore, but to heal. Because what I feel may not have started with me, yet I am the one carrying it. I no longer want to pass it on. I do not want my child searching for what I never found. I want my child to feel what I never dared to feel. I want my child to live without carrying my emptiness.

And it begins here. With looking. With feeling. With naming. With being able to say: this is old, but I see it now, and I stop it.

The Dialogue: What Was Never Said

I sit across from him. My father. Gray. Quiet. His hands rest on his knees. His eyes look away, as they always did. "Dad... I feel empty." He nods but says nothing. "It feels as if I have no direction." He takes a deep breath. "I know that feeling."

For the first time, I truly look at him. "Where does it come from." He swallows. "I don't know." "Did you feel it too." He nods. "Always." "Why did you never talk about it." He looks at his hands. "Nobody did. My father didn't. His father didn't. So I didn't either."

Something breaks open. "But I don't want to pass it on." For the first time, he looks up. "I said the same thing once. I just didn't know how." "Maybe we do now." He nods gently. "Maybe."

"What did you feel when you were young." He thinks for a moment. "Pressure without a reason. Always having to. Never being allowed to. Always being strong. Never weak." "I feel that too." He nods. "Then I passed it on. Without knowing it. Without wanting to."

"But I want it to stop." He looks at me. "Then you have to dare to feel. Dare to fail. Dare to live. It's difficult, and it's new. For you. For me. For us."

We fall silent, but it is no longer the old silence. It is a beginning. He moves his hand forward. Not quickly. Not confidently. But he touches mine for a moment. And that is enough. No explanations. No speeches. No answers. Only recognition. For the first time here is space.

For the first time there is contact. For the first time there is something that no longer needs to be passed on.

The Circle

And now we stand here with their pain, our pain, and a choice. To pass it on or to break it. Because where the circle began, the circle can also end if we dare to look, dare to feel, and dare to say: this is old, this is not mine, but I see it, and I stop it.

What is not processed is inherited. What is not named remains. What is not felt continues to repeat itself. I do not want to repeat it anymore. Not in my child. Not in my child's child. Not in the silence of another generation learning to survive by keeping quiet.

I want the circle to break. Not through force. Not through anger. But through truth. We do not know what we are beginning until we know where we began.

12: FASD: A Silent Layer of Mental Pain

There are people living with FASD. And that means living with a form of mental pain that cannot always be explained. A life in which thinking does not come naturally, feelings are often disrupted, and dependence is not a choice but a constant. It is like living in two worlds, one part in reality and one part in a world of your own. And nobody sees it. Nobody understands it. Nobody stops to think about it. Yet it is there. Every day. Every thought. Every situation. That alone deserves recognition. Not to explain it. Not to analyze it. But to acknowledge that the pain exists there as well.

What This Is Not

For anyone wondering whether this is a tribute to my father, the answer is no. This is not a reconciliation. Not a reunion. Not a return. I was eighteen when he left, and I felt relieved. I never spoke to him again. Not because it meant nothing to me, but because it meant too much. There was anger. There was resentment. There was pain that was never given a voice.

The dialogue I described is not a memory. It is a representation of what was never said. A voice given to silence. A form given to what remained unspoken. This story is not about him. It is about me. About what I have broken. About what I no longer wish to pass on. And that does not begin with him. It begins with me.

The Writing Me: Who I Am Now

I write this as someone who once believed he could do nothing. Someone who barely finished school and felt at home nowhere. Not at school. Not in his own mind. Not in the world around him. Even now there are moments when I feel as though I do not belong in this world.

Yet I also write this as someone who now understands. Not because I learned it from books, but because I lived it. Today I am an FASD peer supporter. I help people. I give words to things that remained invisible for years. And I now know something that many people still do not know. Mental pain does not always have a name. Functioning is not the same as living. Recognition begins when someone dares to speak.

This is not a victory. It is a testimony. The testimony of someone who did not know where he began, but now knows where he wants to end. And yes, the text you have just read could easily have been written by a scholar. But it was written by me. By someone who carries no academic titles, but who does carry the scars of life. Perhaps that is exactly what was needed in order to write it.

From My Truth to Our Vulnerability

What you have just read is not a general story. It is my story. Unique in its form. Unique in its content. What I have lived through cannot be measured with numbers, diagnoses, or comparisons. This is not an example. It is a revelation. A revelation of what remained hidden for years, of what was not seen, not named, not understood.

That is precisely why it has value. By sharing my story, I make visible what for many people still remains invisible. Later in this book I will tell more. Not to say “This is how it is for everyone,” but to say “This is how it was for me.” Perhaps you recognize something. Perhaps you feel something. Perhaps you see something you did not see before.

Because although every person is unique, we all live in a world that shapes us. And that world makes us vulnerable. That is why we continue from here.

Not along the road of my story alone, but from my story into the world in which we live.
Toward the question: why are we more vulnerable today than ever before.

13: More Vulnerable Than Ever

Why are we more vulnerable than ever. We live in a time where everything must happen faster. There was once silence; now there is noise. There was once rhythm; now there is haste. There was once contact; now there is a screen. The world has changed, not gradually but suddenly. And we changed with it, not consciously but automatically. We learned to live through speed, stimulation, and expectation. Everything must be visible. Everything must be measurable. Everything must be shareable.

But what if your feelings cannot be measured. What if your pain cannot be captured in words. What if your mind is full and nobody sees it. Then you do not lose the burden; you lose yourself. You lose your boundaries. You lose your peace. And that is what is happening now.

People live as though something could go wrong at any moment, as though they are always falling short, as though they are never enough. And it slowly consumes them — the body, the mind, the emotions. The vulnerability of today is not a character trait. It is a consequence. A consequence of a world that no longer listens, no longer slows down, and no longer asks: how are you.

We have learned to live inside systems, inside structures, inside protocols. But we are people, not machines and not algorithms. And so we struggle. Not only people with FASD. People without FASD as well. The brain does not distinguish between different forms of pressure. It only knows what it can carry. And eventually that capacity begins to wear down when we no longer allow ourselves to feel or to stop.

Vulnerability is not weakness. It is a signal. A signal telling us to pay attention. A signal telling us that something needs to change. A signal showing that the source of our energy is being drained too quickly. The pain of today is not always visible. It is not always measurable. It cannot always be explained. Yet it exists — in minds, in bodies, in silence.

And from somewhere deep inside comes the need to be recognized. Not for someone to say “Everything will be fine,” but for someone to say “I see you. I understand.”