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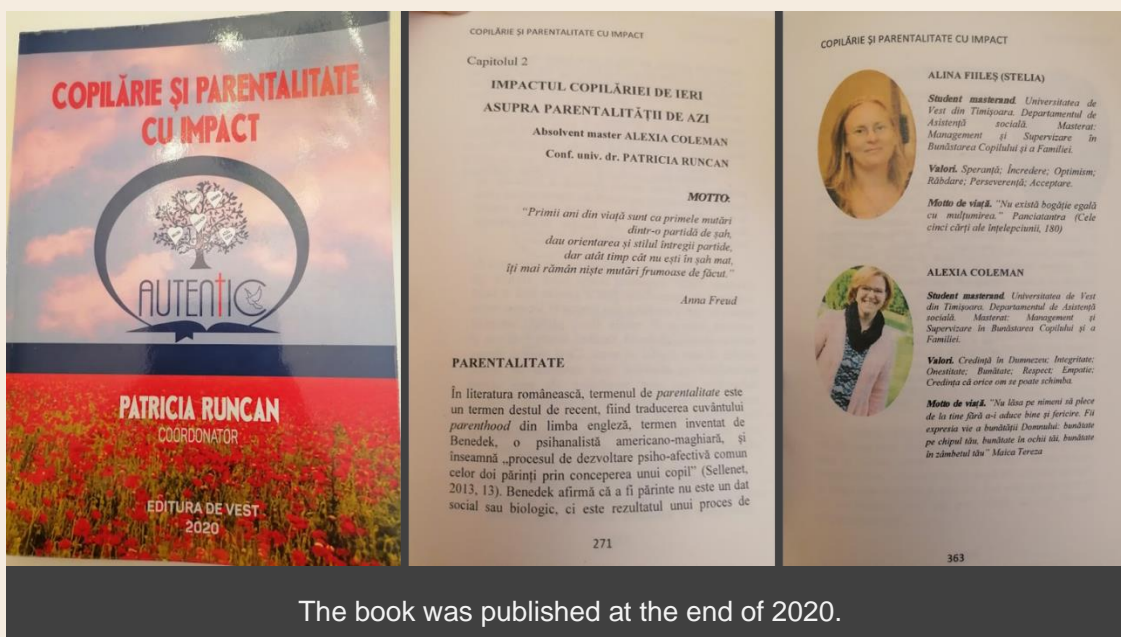
More than a year and a half has passed since my last newsletter. So many things have happened during this long period that it's high time I shared with you some of the experiences I've been through. This letter will be longer than usual to enable to understand what happened to me and learn of the new perspectives I now have.

2020-21

My involvement in Mitspa House intensified over the years with its greater and ever-increasing challenges. The amount of paperwork also increased and fund-raising became more difficult during the pandemic. The mothers we took in were younger and younger (the last ones only 13 and 14) or else were young adults with psychiatric problems linked to a very difficult past and needing individual care. The workload continued to increase, yet the team remained very fragile with a constant lack of qualified staff to cope with the many needs. All this weighed more and more heavily upon me with repercussions on my health at every level.

At the same time, in June 2020 I finished my Master's Degree in 'Management and supervision of the well-being of the child and his family'. My studies added another load to all the rest. I had to do case studies on the impact of yesterday's childhood on today's parenting. I analyzed the childhoods of all the mothers cared for at Mitspa House since the start and compared that with the kind of present relationship they had with their child as well as with their style of parenting. This area had previously never been studied and there are few scientific documents on the subject in Romania. One of my teachers decided to

produce a collective work on the relationship between childhood and parenting. As a result, the work I did for my degree has been included as one of the chapters of this first volume.



The book was published at the end of 2020.

Months of searching for a new coordinator at Mitspa House were complicated by the pandemic. For some periods we were confined to our workplace for 14 days and nights – not very tempting for job-hunters! At last, we found someone in August 2020 who had the necessary skills to take over the administration of Mitspa House, the idea being to free me to spend more time caring for the mothers and fundraising. Unfortunately, this person arrived too late. I was already in a state of total exhaustion. I was hardly able to train her and hand over the work before suffering a serious burn-out. The Mission decided that I should return to France without delay and within about 10 days I had arrived back in Alsace.

Time in Alsace

I was able to benefit from having a flat in Lautenbach all to myself for 6 weeks in the house of friends who were away in the U.S. Thank you for this opportunity!

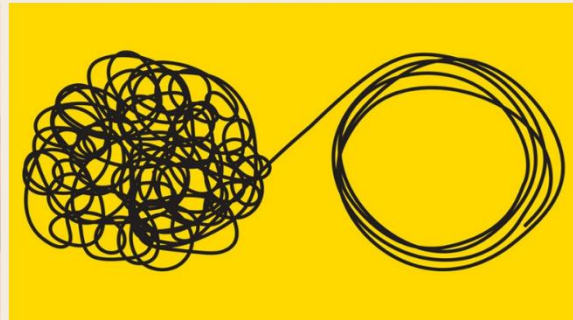


When I think about this time, I've got all sorts of feelings that come to the surface. I was very near my sending church and my friends, and yet incapable of getting there and not having the strength to make contact. I spent hours lying on the settee vegetating without any sense of time passing. I couldn't read or concentrate. I couldn't drive. I was completely dependent on others for everything. Gradually I was able to have a few visits but no more than one person at a time and not for very long. After that I had to lie down for several hours. Spiritually it was very difficult. I couldn't stay connected with God. I had many questions without answers. I could no longer read my Bible to renew my thoughts. I felt really lost and doubted God's goodness to me.

Living Stones Center at Entrepierres

In November 2020 I was finally able to go and stay at Entrepierres, a center for pastors and missionaries in the Alpes de Haute Provence. There I was able to benefit from psychological and spiritual care for a period of 6 months. Usually,

people only stay for several days, more rarely for a month maximum, but in the context of the pandemic and in view of my condition the team decided to make me an exception and care for me over a longer period.



The first photo on the left shows the flat where I first lodged.

The second on the right show the team at Entrepierres who look after pastors and missionaries, providing them with a peaceful environment, an attentive ear, care and counsel for those who want it but also little acts of kindness and attention offering a continual, constant support. Thank you to each one of you!

The photo on the bottom left is of the little chapel which also provides the right atmosphere to meet with God in a peaceful setting...

The last picture speaks to me powerfully about the work the team at Entrepierres did with me. I arrived totally exhausted with all sorts of conflicting thoughts and unable to sort anything out. Thanks to various tests and assessments and the psychological help Jonathan gave me, little by little things became clearer. I wasn't suffering from depression but from a severe burn-out. We were able to analyze the three main causes that had led me to this and work out what needed to change so that I wouldn't go back into the same situation. However, with

regard to the third and most important reason I couldn't change anything personally. So I prayed for several weeks asking the Lord to change the circumstances himself so that I could return to Mitspa House on a healthier basis.

The weeks went by and I was gradually beginning to get better but the context of Mitspa House remained the same. God has his reasons. He knows why. He sees the overall picture... It was clear to everyone that if I went back into the same situation, I would be back to square one within a few months and once again in a state of burn-out. A saying kept going round in my head which came from several sources in the mental health profession: « You don't easily recover from a first burn-out but you never completely recover from a second ». I was just coming out of one burn-out but I couldn't bear the thought of it happening again.

After several weeks of thought and prayer I came to the conclusion that I couldn't go back to Mitspa House and that my involvement there was coming to an end. I had to accept that God had called me to set up the center but now he was asking me to move on and leave it behind. I thought of **1 Corinthians 3.6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth"**. The center will go on but without me. This period has been a real time of bereavement for me. I am slowly getting over it even if it is still painful at times.

Reflections and perspectives

A time of reflection followed. What was I going to do now? Was it the time to return to France permanently? Did I still have my place in Romania? After discussions both in France and Romania, especially with my pastor and his wife in Romania, I came to the conviction that my time in Romania was not yet over but that my next role must respect my limitations while enabling me to use my gifts and training. So, it was decided that I should return to Romania in June 2021 and bring an end to my involvement in Mitspa House. I also had to move as my flat was going to be sold and I needed to have an idea of the new work God had in store for me. **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should**

June 2021 : return to Romania

The first months back in Romania were very difficult. To begin with I had to spend 14 days in quarantine. This time enabled me to recover physically from the trip but at the same time I was confronted by the prospect of leaving Casa Mitspa and all the steps that I had to take for it to go smoothly. Needless to say this period was painful coming as it did with the search for a new flat and packing up to move. I soon reached the point of exhaustion again. Several friends helped me move and settle in to my new flat but I had to take a complete break once again for the whole of the month of August in order to recover. At this time my head was spinning every time I stood up.

In spite of the rest, my health problems carried over into September. So, I consulted a neurologist who gave me a 6-week treatment for vertigo. I gradually started to get better even though I caught everything going apart from COVID!

During this time a door opened with the Esther Foundation. This is the center for women with unwanted pregnancies where I had first worked as a volunteer for 2 years when I came to Romania 11 and a half years ago before leaving to set up the Mitspa House Centre. So, it was like returning to familiar ground. At present I am working there on a part-time basis until summer 2022 when an initial assessment will be made to see whether this position corresponds to their needs and mine.

After several days with the Esther Foundation, I once again had health problems. After 3 days in a row at the emergency room, I ended up spending time in 2 different hospitals, firstly with generalized hives and beginnings of angioedema. Then after 8 days when the hives was starting to get better, I had violent pains in my shoulders and arms and then in my leg. Just a few hours after arriving home from hospital I was back in the emergency room. I went from one diagnosis to another: multiple allergies, auto-immune disease, degenerative neurological disorder... In brief, after several examinations, MRI scan and analyses, I now

know all the illnesses I don't have but have no idea of what provoked these symptoms.

I was once again very tired and dependent on friends, in particular my small group at church, during this whole period and the weeks that followed as once more I wasn't able to drive.



Our small group consists of 15 adults and 12 children and young people. We meet every Friday evening and eat together, then share our different concerns and discuss questions based on the previous Sunday's message. Each week it's a different family that hosts the meeting. We share responsibility for each other, to watch over each other, pray for each other and support each other in practical ways. I have benefited enormously from their good care over the past months. They have been such a blessing to me! When they saw there was no real improvement in my condition they decided to fast and pray for me for 3 days. When I woke up on the third day, I no longer felt any pain and since then I haven't had any more symptoms. Thank you to each one of them and praise the Lord for answering your prayers!

In my next letter I will tell you more about my involvement with the Esther Foundation and about my church, the Harvest Church of Timisoara, amongst other things!

Thank you for your faithful support for me over all these years! May the Lord grant you a blessed New Year 2022!

With all my love,
Alexia :)

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