

Parenting in times of climate change

Written by A. İdil Gaziulusoy and published in the “Current Research in Environmental Sustainability” journal in December 2020, this article analyses the main issues facing parents raising their children in times of climate change. While recent research on child-rearing and climate change has mainly focused on parenting and aimed to provide guidance to parents, this topic has so far hardly been examined at all from the perspective of the parents themselves. For this study, data was collected through open-ended interviews with the participation of twelve parents.

#1

The question of whether or not to have children is becoming more and more important. In addition to the fear of the world left to their descendants, it is now clear that on becoming parents, individuals increase their own emissions and give birth to future transmitters. In addition, many parents are aware that their children will experience the effects of climate change during their lifetimes. In general, their fears reflect the content communicated to the public through the media. They include food insecurity, the extinction of species, floods, the rising of the sea level, water shortages, extremes of heat and drought, massive population movements, social conflicts and declining living standards.

#2

Some of the parents interviewed do their best to talk about climate change with their children. The aim is for them to give information that takes into account their children's age, so as not to arouse any fear or anxiety in them. Several parents mention the difficulty of discussing climate issues with their children because of a feeling that they are not acting as they should: children's questions about the state of the world sometimes bring up feelings of guilt and responsibility. Parents want to prepare their children for the effects of climate change, in particular by teaching them skills such as flexibility, collaboration, empathy and resilience. Many of them also want to convey the importance of political awareness and activism.

#3

Overall, parents who are concerned about the impact of climate change on their children experience feelings of sadness, despair and anxiety. They feel guilty and helpless, thinking that they do not have the resources and capacities required to prepare for their children's future. According to the author, it is therefore essential to reassure these parents through an interventionist research programme that would not only aim to report on the situation, but also to think about how things could and should be, and to put in place a solution-oriented policy. This is essential so that parents in turn can provide their children with proper reassurance, but also because education and parenting are keys to implementing the systemic changes that will enable us to achieve carbon neutrality.

The opinion of Damien Borot, Treasurer of LFE

Everything must be done to enable parents and educators to pass on to children the knowledge and means to act to preserve the planet.