

**Kisco** – Hello, my name is Kisco, and this is my wife Macarena, yes, like the song!

**Macarena** - Hello!

**Kisco** – We’ve known each other since we were kids. We started to date in our early twenties, and we got married soon after that. Our first child came a year later, in the summer of 2004. Her name is Loreto, she is now ten years old, an excellent student, plays all kind of sports, and reads about a book a week.

**Segue Kisco** – A year after Loreto was born, Macarena was expecting our second child. Great news! However, near the end of her pregnancy we learned about complications with the baby. Ultimately, the birth had to be induced and we were told that the child could be born alive and then die, or be born dead. We were very frightened, really afraid. So you can imagine our happiness when we first heard the cry of our newborn son, Nico. We were thrilled!

**Macarena** – So much so, that when the doctors told Kisco that our son was born with Down Syndrome his first response was “Thank God!”

**Kisco** – It was a big surprise to us. There are no cases in any of our families and Macarena was just 26 at the time.

**Macarena** – Kids with Down syndrome have many health complications, but to me, the worst part was the congenital heart disease and the thought of having my baby go through open heart surgery. It would take Nico three months before he was strong enough to endure the surgery. His operation was on February 28, 2006. Everything went well and from that time on Nico began a time of slow recovery. Today he 9, a strong boy, plays football a lot and loves super heros.

**Kisco** – Then we had another girl, Rocío; she is a force of life, no one can stop that one, she is seven years old today. And after Rocío we got more good news; we were expecting our fourth child! However, something was not quite right with the baby. Further examinations confirmed that, in fact, we were having a daughter, and a second child with Down syndrome.

**Macarena** – Believe it or not, the diagnosis of Down syndrome part didn’t faze me at all. What terrified me was the thought of a second open heart surgery.

**Kisco** – Her name is Fátima and she was born with audience of over a dozen doctors observing closely in the delivery room.

**Macarena** – And again, Fátima needed to gain weight and strength to undergo open heart surgery. She struggled for a while, then we were put on a waiting list. Fearing for her health, we pushed to secure a date for her operation. Amazingly enough, it was set for February 28<sup>th</sup>, the same identical date as that of Nico’s... and with the same surgeon! Thank God everything went well. Within a few days we had Fátima at home with her brother and sisters.

**Kisco** –And so there we were, raising four children, two of them with special needs, and all under the age of seven. Happy as can be.

**Macarena** – Yes, so happy... that we went for another baby!

**Kisco** – Another girl! She was born only a month ago and she is very healthy, her name is Teresa. Now we are seven strong and there is never a dull moment in our house. We have our struggles, like all families; but all these struggles are nothing compared with the unspeakable joy that each one of our children bring to us. Not one day goes by that we don't give thanks for the great gift of life that we've been given.

**Macarena** – We could be here for hours and hours telling you amazing stories filled with humor, tenderness, excitement, adventure, and love.

**Kisco** – In fact, when we look back on these past twelve years, we realize that, the only thing that we feared for our children was the possibility of their death. And what we wanted most was to celebrate their life. And so, my wife and I can tell you, that the idea that any of our children were at any point incompatible with life, is ridiculous.

**Macarena** – and stupid! ... I'm sorry... but it is. All children are made for life; they are the gift of life.

**Macarena and Kisco** – thank you very much.