



Family Constellation Training

The Mastery Program Level-1

Summer 2022



Training Manual Table of Contents

Section 1: Bert Hellinger The Man :	4
1.1 The Development of Family Constellations	5
1.2 Bert Hellinger In South Africa:	7
1.3 A Short Biography of Bert Hellinger	13
1.4 The Life of Bert Hellinger	22
Section 2: Facilitation Skills	36
2.1 Keys to Being a Great Family Constellations Facilitator	37
2.2 Accepting One's Parents: Being an Effective Facilitator	39
2.3 Honoring the Client's Family – Loyalty to All	40
2.4 Hellinger on Becoming Whole	42
Section 3: Orders of Love	44
3.1 Orders of Precedence	45
3.2 Orders of Love- Right Relationship Between Parent and Child	49
3.3 Basic Orders of Life	51
3.4 New Family Constellations - Forces Of Love	64
Section 4: The Importance Of Intake	67
4.1 Introduction to Intake	68
4.2 Family History Considerations	70
4.3 Intake to Set-up	72
4.4 Hellinger - Start Small	74
Section 5: Working in the Field	75
5.1 Working in the Field - Don't get Overwhelmed	76
5.2 Energy, order, reality	79
5.3 Examples of Healing Statements	81
5.4 Soul & Healing Statements	87
5.5 Indicating Element	95
5.6 Moving representatives in the field	99
5.7 Proximity in the Field & Correct Order	100
5.8 Representatives in the field: Where/what are they facing, what do they see?	101
5.9 Bringing A Client Into The Field	104
5.11 Triage On An Incomplete Constellation	110
Section 6: Definitions and Concepts	111
6.1 Definitions and Concepts	112
Definitions	112
Blessings	112



Entanglements	112
Role Reversal	113
Support	114
Blind Love	115
Loyalty	116
Belonging	117
What or who is excluded?	118
“I do it in your place”	118
Group Conscience	120
Family Soul	120
Identifications	121
Concepts	122
Victim and Perpetrator	122
Forfeiting One’s Place	123
Abortions and Lost Children	124
Impulse to join in death	125
Drug addiction and Death	125
“I’m sorry”	126
Interrupted Movement	126
Unable to Connect with Parents	128
Who moves towards whom?	128
Honoring Past Partners and Relationships	129
Death and Loss	130
Liberating a Wholeness in Love	131
Incest	131
Constellation Work and Illness	133
6.2 Christian/Jewish German/Jewish Healing in the Soul	137
6.3 Miranda Constellation	141
6.4 A child’s interrupted movement towards his mother or father	146
6.5 Forfeiting One’s Place	149
6.6 Bert Hellinger speaks on Forgiveness	150
6.7 Thoughts on Perpetrators & Victims and the End of Revenge	152
6.8 Primary, Secondary & Carried emotions	156
Section 7: Trauma & Constellations	158
7.1 Trauma Work & Family Constellations :	159
7.2 Family Constellations & Trauma Therapy	173
Section 8: Resources	189
8.1 Horse Constellation	190
8.2 The Stories that Bind Us	201



Section 1: Bert Hellinger | The Man :

Childhood, Time in South Africa, Religious Beliefs, and More



1.1 The Development of Family Constellations

By Vivian Broughton, 2013

Extracted from her book "In the Presence of Many"

Family Constellations, as the work was originally called, is the development of Bert Hellinger, a family and group therapist and self-described empiricist and philosopher. Hellinger's childhood and adolescence were against a background of National Socialism and subsequent war in Nazi Germany, which he survived in part as a rebellious teenager, avoiding the Hitler Youth meetings, instead attending the then illegal Catholic Youth organizations, and then as a 17-year old drafted soldier in the German army, captured by the allies and held in a prisoner of war camp in Belgium for the rest of the war.

His later life includes some 16 years as a Catholic priest and committed missionary in South Africa working and living with the Zulu tribes, during which he engaged in an extensive training in interracial and ecumenical group dynamics. During his time with the Zulu peoples he learned from their traditional culture respect for one's ancestors, viewing them as having influence on the present, providing strength, support and wisdom that could be drawn on. He also learned the value of ritual from both the church and the tribal traditions of the Zulus, as providing ways of giving understanding, validation and acceptance.

Subsequently he explored psychoanalysis, gestalt therapy, transactional analysis, primal therapy, hypnotherapy, NLP and family therapy, eventually leaving his ministry in the church. In the early 80's Hellinger began to combine his group and family therapy experience with the family re-construction work of Virginia Satir, who at the time was working in Germany and Austria. Satir's method of setting up families using group members seems to have been catalytic in Hellinger's move toward the work he eventually called Family Constellations.

In the process of setting up group members as role-play representatives for a person's family (which had also been done by others in the field apart from Satir, most notably Jakob Moreno, who developed Psychodrama, and the German psychiatrist, Thea Schonfelder), Hellinger seems to have begun listening to what the representatives were saying from a more existential and phenomenological base. By insisting on the representatives having little information about the person they represented, and that they refrain from taking up any sort of pose to indicate a certain attitude, Hellinger demonstrated a different approach from Moreno's psychodrama, and even Satir's family re-construction work. Hellinger thought that this helped the representatives in the constellation connect with deeper and more hidden dynamics and existential dilemmas.



From his close observation of the subtle body and facial movements, impulses and other reported experiences of the representatives, he developed an understanding of what he later called the Orders of Love: that, as in all things, there is a certain order to relationships and living processes, particularly in closely bonded systems such as families, and disturbance to this order, disruption or non-observance of the principles of this order, have effects on system members, sometimes over many generations. This is not dissimilar to our understanding that if we go against the natural order in the environment, there will probably be consequences that may, over time, become devastating. We see this currently in our struggle with global warming, over-use of chemicals, exploitation of the great forests of the world, contamination of water sources and so on.

“The Development of Family Constellations.” In the Presence of Many: Reflections on Constellations Emphasising the Individual Context, by Vivian Broughton, Green Balloon Publishing, 2010.



1.2 Bert Hellinger In South Africa:

A story of the Zulu origins of Family Constellations

By Tanja Meyburgh, 2009

Once Upon a Time in South Africa:

Bert Hellinger in Natal

I've often wondered why Bert Hellinger is so shy to talk of his time spent in South Africa, or of the traditional African origins of family constellations. He has never been forthcoming with information about his time spent here and has vowed that he will never return. Why has he left it behind? Why would he not talk about a place where he lived for 16 years? What did he give to this place, and what did he take?

I first experienced constellations in 2002, and went on to train as a facilitator and co-found the first training here. I feel constantly engaged with the mystery of Hellinger's time here through an ongoing need to honor the origins of my work. I have always felt that family constellations connect me on a deeper level to South Africa and its traditional people and cultures. How strange that I had to travel to Germany to study what feels inherently African.

The connection was obvious to me: the ancestral presence and the placing of the elements in the same way as the bones are thrown by the Sangoma (a traditional African ancestral healer). However, I felt there was something more: something that would shed light on the healing effect of family constellations.

My search for understanding the historical origins in South Africa has taken me from an outer search in the midlands of Kwazulu Natal, to searching in the experience and ideas of the local people, and finally to looking inwards to my own experience and what family constellations means to me. As I slowly weave my thoughts over the past 7 years of working locally as a facilitator and trainer, I am finding a story to tell.

All the information contained in this article is true to my best knowledge, and is based on my own experiences. I have done my best to ask questions and present my findings with respect to Bert Hellinger's privacy and to honor his legacy. I am aware that I am walking the fine line, and that my personal perspective is forever changing.



On a Mission: Christianity and the African Ancestral Tradition

Meet in the African Wilderness

It wasn't easy to find the actual place. In fact, there were three places over the 16 years. I literally stumbled into one, by following my intuition. Looking at the map & saying – let me start here. The huge red brick building is old and looks strange amongst the rural hills dotted with round mud huts. The place is eerie and dilapidated, but has signs of dedicated labour in a time where resources in the Christian church are few. A skeleton staff remains. I ask myself: what it was all for? What did the missions achieve? What must it have been like to arrive in the wild lands of Africa to save the local people from their “non-religious” ways?

“Sawbona” – “I see you”. I am greeted by a young black priest. He fills me in on their history: Trappist monks arriving in the 1800's, and later the missions that warned the locals to stay away from their own traditional beliefs in favor of the church. Today, but only since the 80's, he is proud to report that the missions support all forms of traditional beliefs that “promotes life” and healing. At the same time, every decision must still be passed through Rome, and “Rome takes a long time to decide”. It feels like a part of the past is standing still here. Some advances are evident in the way the priest has decorated his private study: an eclectic mix of Catholic and African iconography, spears and shields, bibles, traditional African cloths, crosses, lions and pictures of the lily white virgin Mary.

Hellinger arrived in South Africa in the conservative 1950's. I met two grey-haired European priests who knew him. They don't say much: “He was a very gifted man”, “A very wise man” says the other. But, I sense there is more that is not said. I hear that Hellinger was “quite in the limelight” in his day and highly thought of by the African priests. He was fluent in Zulu and did all the text translations of the liturgy, “bringing the faith to the people in their own images and language”. He was responsible for building a church at his rural parish. He was considered a “white raven” – someone out of the ordinary. Someone special.

But not all reports are positive. He was “intolerant of old-fashioned ideas, which caused some difficulties within the hierarchy”. He often spoke the “harsh truth”, “and who is ready to hear the truth about yourselves”, said a sister. There were also harsh words, woundedness, and piercing analysis about the family life from which he came.

I visit the seminary where Hellinger taught. It's inhabited, but feels deserted. Another huge red brick box on the top of the hill in the middle of no-where. Leading down from the looming façade is a little pathway into a magical overgrown garden. There, nestled amongst the



African thorn bushes and flaming aloes, stands Mother Mary. Mary in the jungle. There are signs of life, but no-body. Disturbed, I leave again.

Finally, at the secondary school where Hellinger was allegedly principal for a brief period, I find animation – people going about their business. Steve Biko was schooled here during the 60's – and many other important figures in the black consciousness movement. Did they know Hellinger? I'm excited and brimming with questions: What was his role? When did he become headmaster? Who were his students?

I meet an old friend of his, who finds these questions unimportant, but shares his soul and the deep love of Hellinger as priest and as man. I hear about the strengths and the weaknesses. I get an image of the same split he has around him today – deeply loving and hating of one man at the same time. Honey and poison. Once his confession is over, we sit together on the veranda in the afternoon sun lost in our own thoughts until it is time to leave.

I feel a bit disappointed at the end of my journey that I did not find out more about the Zulu influences and origins from “the source”, but do have a stronger “feeling” for Hellinger the man and controversy surrounding him wherever he goes. I decide I need more information from other sources and interview the African graduates of the facilitator training for clues.

To the horse's mouth: South African constellation graduates's thoughts on Family Constellations and Traditional African culture

After talking to the Zulu graduates, the two most obvious connections of Family Constellations to their Traditional African beliefs are confirmed. Firstly, the acknowledgement that our ancestors are vital for our wellbeing:

“The Zulu culture has a strong belief in Ancestors “Amadlozi” regarding connecting with them to appease or release or ask for certain things. They are regarded as our guides and are composed of people we know who have left this planet. Constellating an unresolved issue is similar to doing a ceremony, talking to ancestor/s asking for forgiveness or connecting those who have left the planet in conflict.”

“Africa's sacred images are mainly ancestor spirits. God is the creator, the spirit force responsible for all life on earth, including the ancestors, but he is too remote to hear the prayers of ordinary mortals. Dead ancestors, being spirits, communicate with God, mediating between him and humanity”



“The belief in ancestors is rooted in the need or desire to preserve the memory of known past generations and known or unknown lineages. The emphasis of acknowledging the excluded is the foundation of the cure for various ailments, like bodily discomfort, spiritual discord or common need to wade off misfortune or a curse that will be seen to be projected by malevolent spirits. The good spirits are acknowledged and given gratitude through ceremonies or cleansing rituals. For example, a person will consult a traditional healer who will facilitate the session of finding a solution or a root cause of the trouble. This is often done through throwing the bones in order to constellate the wider family picture”

The other parallel drawn in the interviews is the use of divination by traditional African healers to receive the messages of the ancestors through “the throwing of the bones”. The bones consist of symbolic elements for various family members as well as symbolic elements relating to a person’s life: money, love, power, body organs, life force etc. Once the bones are cast, the healer considers the arrangements carefully, including how the bones are facing, the distance between the bones, configurations or patterns.

“The bones will fall to show the presence of spirits around the sick person, resentful ancestral spirits, offended nature or malevolent spirits. This gives the healer the picture of how the cause of the illness came about and what is needed as a remedy. Therapies can include animal sacrifices, rituals, massage, herbal teas, salves, snuffs, poultices, roots and herbs. African diviners play the role of spiritual leaders of ancient times and are diagnosers of both illness and mental problems.”

Still after these interviews, I’m left with the feeling that there is a secret – something that I’m not being let in on. Could it be some kind of secret or sacred knowledge that is protected? Perhaps something that is feared to be shared? One of the students confirms this:

“I experience fear (with family constellations) that I am tampering with something that is very sacred by talking about my ancestors, selling out a secret when in fact ancestors as spirit is a medium that is meant to be out there and need reverence than be tempered with. Given the effect of respecting elders, and negative connotation of authority and the unseen, it becomes even more scary to tamper with that one cannot touch if one has not done healing work. This could be as a result of superstition that is rife in my cultural upbringing or the influence of Christianity that has tainted the ancestors as something one needs to abolish...”

This same student also considers that sources of the knowledge behind the development of constellations that are not being adequately acknowledged:

“I would think that there is an element of intellectual property that is ignored or not taken into account thus shielding the role African spiritualism might have impacted on this development”



I'm left wondering if perhaps the connection between the two has not been openly acknowledged on purpose, as a way of respecting the tradition and sacred customs from which it stems. What did Hellinger learn from local spiritual leaders at a time when he was expected to convert them to his own beliefs? Into what knowledge was he initiated? Was he requested to honor the secrets of African tradition?

A Personal Experience: Following the Calling of my South African and German Ancestors

Before I first encountered family constellations in 2002, I was told that I am called to become a “Sangoma”, a traditional African healer. I had over the years since adolescence been plagued by repeated symptoms of chronic fatigue, heavy arms, and illnesses of unknown origin. In passing conversation someone mentioned that these afflictions could be the work of my ancestors to whom I was “not listening” and I should consult a traditional African healer to hear what my ancestors might want of me.

What followed was a huge conflict – to continue my studies as a psychologist, or to follow the calling to become a Sangoma through a cultural tradition that had very little to do with my own ancestors. When I discovered family constellations however, there was an instant “fit”. I could do ancestral work, but remain true to the experiences and knowledge of both my South African and German ancestors.

What followed was seven years of intense training and working in family constellations, completing psychology qualifications, and an ongoing journey through African bone throwing, ritual and ceremony with my teacher and guide – a white African traditional healer. As I pull these strands together, my understanding of the origin of family constellation work in African culture has been deepened and enriched. I am “hearing my ancestors” through my work and am no longer required to be initiated in the traditional sense. Family constellations has been my initiation and I am healthy now.

I still debate with myself how much the healing effect of Family Constellations is spirit, and how much is science, but what I do know is that, with a skilled facilitator, it works. We can do the research and scientifically validate that it does work, but finding proof of “how” it works – by western or African explanations seems impossible. Perhaps this is the sacred knowledge that remains hidden in traditional initiations and mystery schools. Perhaps this is the protected knowledge that we can only “know” but not speak of or explain. Or perhaps it is access to the part of the soul that which we cannot know for sure, but can feel or intuit when we work with constellations. So, I try to find a simple summary for myself for the state of being that



constellation supports and through this state can bring healing. When I remove the Christian religious, the traditional African, and the psychological systems of knowledge and thought, and distill it to the essence I perceive. In the end I am left with:

I am not alone.

I am part of something greater.

I am connected to my source through my ancestors.

I have (seen and unseen) resources that are always available to me.

For many people from individualized and western cultures this is a new discovery when they experience constellations for the first time. Beyond what the constellation can reveal, this is the first step towards healing and a feeling of wholeness. When I personally come to stillness in this place, I feel centered, supported and at peace.

Meyburgh, Tanja. "Bert Hellinger in South Africa." Tanjameyburgh.co.za, 28 Apr. 2020, www.tanjameyburgh.co.za/post/bert-hellinger-in-south-africa.



1.3 A Short Biography of Bert Hellinger

Seeingwithyourheart.com

with editing review by Bert Hellinger

A Short Biography of Bert Hellinger

By Dan Booth Cohen, PhD

By the age of 45, most innovators in the field of psychotherapy are well established in their careers. Freud was 45 when he wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Jung was the same age when his opus *The Psychological Types* went to print (Ellenberger, 1970, pp. 540 and 674).

In contrast, age 45 is when Bert Hellinger first went to Vienna to begin his formal training in psychoanalysis (Hellinger, 2001, p. 435). If his approach to working with the unconscious is considered unorthodox by the broader professional community, perhaps a contributing factor has been that he did not follow a conventional career path. Conversely, having life experiences at such variance with the majority of psychologists may have contributed to his understanding.

Hellinger was born into a Catholic family in Germany in 1925. During Hellinger's early childhood, the German Weimar Republic disintegrated into economic and political disarray. In 1933, Adolph Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist (Nazi) party, came to power as Chancellor of Germany. Hellinger was eight years old. Hitler and the Nazis quickly consolidated their power. They rebuilt the army and initiated numerous foreign and domestic initiatives designed to elevate Germany to a dominant world power.

Central to Nazi ideology was the subordination of the individual to the state, the necessity of blind and unswerving obedience to a supreme charismatic leader, the claims of the racial and cultural superiority of the Germanic peoples, and the identification of Jews and those of Jewish extraction as the personification of cosmic evil. The Nazi regime emphasized the inequality of men and races and the right of the strong to rule over the weak. The State apparatus consolidated and exercised control over the population through mass propaganda and systematized terror.

Even as the Nazi regime tightened its grip on the population in pursuit of its extreme nationalistic vision, there remained in Germany the remnants of a diverse cultural and intellectual tradition. Hellinger's parents' "particular form of [Catholic] faith provided the entire family with immunity against believing the distortions of National Socialism" (Hellinger, Weber & Beaumont, 1998, p. 327). At age 10, he left his family to attend a Catholic monastery school



run by the Order in which he was later ordained and that sent him to South Africa as a missionary.

The local Hitler Youth Organization tried without success to recruit the teenage Bert Hellinger. Members would frequently come to his apartment to take him to their meetings. He always tried to evade them. Hellinger says that as a result of his apparent reluctance, “The Gestapo became suspicious of me. Once I was interrogated by a member of the Gestapo.” This resulted in their classifying him in the category of ‘Suspected of Being an Enemy of the People’ (Hellinger, personal communication, May 15, 2004).

In 1942, Hellinger was conscripted into the regular German army, along with most other seventeen-year-olds. He was sent into combat on the Western front. Despite his misgivings about the regime and its pursuit of war, once armed and in uniform, Hellinger was relatively safe from interference from the Nazis. He was exposed to close combat (Hellinger, personal communication, May 15, 2004). In 1945, he was captured and imprisoned in an Allied P.O.W. camp in Belgium.

Hellinger’s experience as a prisoner of war, and its ultimate impact on his views about perpetrators and victims, is a matter of speculation. He has steadfastly refrained from speaking about his war experiences, but historians have documented that upwards of one million former German soldiers perished after the war, many of them while imprisoned by the Allies (Bacque, 1999; Biddiscombe, 1998). Those close to him suggest that he endured harsh treatment. After one year, Hellinger escaped under dramatic circumstances. Beaumont reflected, “In addition to his experience in the Nazi times, he witnessed how vulnerable the victor is to behaving like the enemy. It is important to his ideas about conscience” (Beaumont, personal communication, May 16, 2004).

Hellinger made his way back to a Germany that lay in ruins. Nearly 7 million people, out of a pre-war population of 68 million, had perished. Eight million refugees were expelled from areas captured by the Soviet Union and its allies. Every major German city had been pounded to rubble by Allied bombing. The industrial and transportation infrastructure had ceased functioning. Food and fuel were in short supply, leading to illness and malnutrition. The German state itself ceased to exist.

The Nazis’ master plan of creating a dominant global power led by a race of *Übermenschen* had resulted in a devastating and catastrophic defeat. Furthermore, the surviving Germans carried responsibility for being the perpetrators of history’s greatest crime against humanity, the extermination of more than 6 million Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and others in the Holocaust.



The brutality and destructiveness of the Nazi era is central to Hellinger's life's work. Sixty years after the cessation of warfare, with all the victims and perpetrators either dead or aged, Hellinger continues to focus on ways to acknowledge and reconcile the echoes and reverberations of this massive collective trauma. His aim is to interrupt the transmission of suffering and guilt to successive generations.

Following his return to Germany, Hellinger entered a Catholic religious order and began a long process of monastic purification. He studied philosophy and theology at the University of Würzburg en route to his ordination as a priest. In the early 1950s, he was dispatched to South Africa where he was assigned to be a missionary to the Zulus. There he continued his studies at the University of Pietermaritzburg and the University of South Africa where he received a B.A. and a University Education Diploma, which entitled him to teach at public high schools.

Hellinger lived in South Africa for 16 years. During these years he served as a parish priest, teacher and, finally, as headmaster of a large school for African students. He also had administrative responsibility for the entire diocesan district containing 150 schools. He became fluent in the Zulu language, participated in their rituals, and gained an appreciation for their distinct worldview.

Although he makes no claim to be an interpreter or promulgator of Zulu culture, it is clear that his immersion in their lives had a profound impact on him. Of particular importance is the difference between Zulu attitudes toward parents and ancestors and those typically held by Europeans. The Hitler Youth Organization was notorious for encouraging children to betray their parents' confidence. In Zulu culture, Hellinger says, "I never heard anyone speak disrespectfully about their parents. That would have been inconceivable" (Hellinger, 2001, p. 443).

His choice to leave the Catholic priesthood occurred during the 1960s, but it is unclear exactly what factors influenced his decision. His participation in a series of interracial, ecumenical trainings in group dynamics led by Anglican clergy in South Africa laid the groundwork. The trainers worked from a phenomenological orientation. They were concerned with recognizing what is essential out of all the diversity present, without intention, without fear, without preconceptions, relying purely on what appears (Hellinger, 2003). He was deeply impressed by the way their methods showed it was possible for opposites to become reconciled through mutual respect.

The beginning of his interest in phenomenology coincided with the unfolding dissolution of his vows to the priesthood. Hellinger tells how one of the trainers asked the group, "What is



more important to you, your ideals or people? Which would you sacrifice for the other?” A sleepless night followed as Hellinger wrestled with the implications of this question. As a German, he had participated in the destruction of his country. As a priest, he was sworn to adhere to a particular creed, to a specific set of values and beliefs, and to accept the infallibility of the interpreter of God’s will, the Pope. This was not merely a philosophical riddle to him. He was acutely sensitive to how the Nazi regime sacrificed human beings in service of ideals. He says, “In a sense, the question changed my life. A fundamental orientation toward people has shaped all my work since” (Hellinger et al., 1998, p. 328).

Hellinger’s rejection of Nazi attitudes about racial superiority and his years spent living and teaching among the Zulus set him in opposition to the South African policy of Apartheid. He was able to use these insights immediately with the African students and white teachers in his school.

This newfound orientation toward looking for what is essential in a broadly perceived reality without intention, fear, or preconceived answers, proved incompatible with his responsibilities to the priesthood. He could not adhere to a strictly defined creed nor bow to rigid institutional hierarchy and simultaneously be open to spontaneous, emergent reality. He decided to give up the collar and, with it, his position as a respected teacher, headmaster, and school district administrator. He met his first wife, Herta, and was married, shortly after returning to Germany.

He spent several years in the early 1970s in Vienna training in a classical course in psychoanalysis at the Wiener Arbeitskreis für Tiefenpsychologie (Viennese Association for Depth Psychology). Near the completion of his studies one of his training analysts gave him a copy of Arthur Janov’s *Primal Scream* (1970), which he actually had not read himself. Janov presented a radical psychotherapeutic procedure where patients were encouraged to say the phrase, “Mommy, Daddy” repeatedly until they became overtaken by an explosion of cathartic feelings, which left them writhing on the floor, crying, screaming, and nearly convulsive. Janov reported that patients would experience instantaneous and enduring benefit from this ego-shattering intervention.

The directness with which Janov addressed central feelings made a deep impression on Hellinger. Without permission from the faculty, he experimented with the method with students in his group dynamics course. The results were powerful (Hellinger, 2001, pp. 435-36). Encouraged by these experiences, he presented a lecture to the faculty and students, in which he praised Janov’s methods. The scholars in Vienna were accustomed to defending the orthodoxy from radical challenges and they were quick to discredit Hellinger’s talk (Franke, 2003, p. 89). Once again, Hellinger was at a crossroad, where he had to choose between maintaining



allegiance to a proscribed set of practices or forsake them in favor of what felt to him to be more humanistic. Once again, he chose to break ties with the institution that supported him in favor of pursuing an unmarked path.

He completed his training at the Münchner Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Psychoanalyse (Munich Psychoanalytic Training Institute) and was accepted as a practicing member of their professional association. In 1973, he left Germany for a second time and traveled to the United States to pursue training from Janov in California. Hellinger studied directly with Janov and his first assistant for nine months. Afterwards, he returned to Germany and entered into private practice as a psychoanalyst from his house in a small town near the German–Austrian border. He set up client living quarters and a custom-designed Primal therapy room. Initially, he conducted intensive Primal treatment with a single client at a time. The client would move into the living quarters for a period of three months.

After several rounds of this method of treatment, Hellinger came to recognize the weaknesses in this approach. For the next several years, he alternated between treating small numbers of clients out of his home and traveling internationally to train in new methods.

There were many important influences that shaped his approach during this period. One of the most significant was Eric Berne and Transactional Analysis. Berne proposed that dysfunctional behavior results from self-limiting decisions made in childhood. Such decisions culminate in what Berne called the “life script,” the pre-conscious life plan that governs the way life is lived out. Changing the life script is the aim of Transactional Analysis (International Transactional Analysis Association, 2003).

Hellinger immersed himself in learning to understand the embedded patterns by working with stories, fairy tales, novels and films that have special meaning to an individual. His work with clients validated Berne’s key premise that there is an underlying, unconscious structure that shapes and drives people’s responses to external stimuli.

He continued to operate from a phenomenological, rather than a theoretical, stance. The effect is that he was always willing to discard or modify a theory when his experiences with clients contradicted the theory’s hypothesis. In the case of Transactional Analysis, Hellinger says, “Berne believed that these scripts are often based on early parental messages, but I discovered that this isn’t the whole truth” (Hellinger, 2001, p. 433).

It became clear to him that some of the scripts come from other sources. One example came from working with clients who chose the story of Rumpelstiltskin as their signature fairy tale. This is a story of a motherless child whose father gives her away. Hellinger asked, “Who



has been given away?” In many cases, someone in the grandparent’s generation really had been sent away and the client’s life script came from this source. He concluded, “Whether we’re aware of it or not, a great deal of our suffering is not caused by what we have personally experienced, but what others in our system have experienced or suffered” (Hellinger, 2001, p. 434).

The implications of this insight were particularly significant in post-war Germany because of the extreme variance of experience between generations. Beginning in 1948, Germany instituted a series of currency and economic reforms that, when combined with financing provided by the U.S. Marshall Plan, ushered in an unprecedented 30-year period of economic growth, social stability, and widespread prosperity known as the German Economic Miracle (Peterson, 1988).

A typical 25-year old German in 1980 had been born and raised in an environment wholly untouched by the ravages and upheavals that plagued Hellinger’s generation. Despite this, many of these young people exhibited symptoms that conventional psychoanalytic theories would ascribe to early childhood traumas. Hellinger saw that some unconscious mechanism was transferring the psychic scars from grandparents to their newborn grandchildren.

The insight that a client’s current suffering could be entangled with events that occurred two or more generations earlier led Hellinger back to the United States to study emerging trends in family therapy. In 1979, he spent one month training with Ruth McClendon and Leslie Kadis. This was his introduction to the Family Sculpture method pioneered by Virginia Satir. Shortly afterwards, he participated in two training courses on the use of family constellations led by Thea Schoenfelder in Hamburg.

Another major influence in his work during this period was the hypnotherapy of Milton Erickson. He trained with Jeffrey K. Zeig, Stephen Lankton, Barabara Steen, and Beverly Stoy. He was particularly drawn to Erickson’s use of “teaching stories.” He was not able to employ these methods immediately, but several years later during a group session he composed one spontaneously. Hellinger offers clients a healing story when he senses they might resist the story’s message if it were delivered directly. “One of the major advantages of stories is that they work indirectly. That gives people a lot of freedom to decide whether or not it is useful to them” (Hellinger, 2001, pp. 441-442).

By 1985, Hellinger, then 60 years old, had completed a 15-year cycle of education and training. He had integrated what he had learned from psychoanalysis, Primal therapy, Transactional therapy, Ericksonian hypnotherapy, and the family systems insights of Virginia Satir and Ivan Bozsormeyni-Nagy into an approach that drew from these sources but was, in



several key respects, radically different. He continued to lead groups and offer lectures to a limited audience of professionals from his home base in southern Germany.

Hellinger would likely have remained an obscure figure, practicing an esoteric method of intervention, had it not been for his encounter with a prominent German psychiatrist, Gunthard Weber. Weber was the director of an in-patient clinic at the University of Heidelberg Hospital for people suffering from anorexia nervosa. He had attended three Hellinger workshops on group dynamics in the 1970s and they had left an indelible mark. Weber recalls, “I experienced something that continued to move me years later, to work in me, bringing me back into balance, guiding me back to myself when I became confused” (Hellinger et al., 1998, p. vi).

Anorexia remains a perplexing and treatment-resistant illness in psychiatry, with one of the highest morbidity rates. The American Psychiatric Association’s *Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Eating Disorders* (2000) recommends behaviorally formulated interventions but notes that “no controlled studies have reported whether cognitive behavior psychotherapy or other specific psychotherapeutic interventions are effective for nutritional recovery” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p.37). Weber’s hospital was considered one of the most advanced in Germany, but despite the extensive resources applied to treatment, many patients failed to respond favorably.

In 1988, Hellinger and Weber led separate workshops at a training conference for psychotherapists. They had been out of touch for nearly a decade, but Weber still recalled with clarity the profound impact of Hellinger’s work. Weber made a point of sitting in at the session where Hellinger demonstrated his work. “It was amazing for me,” he recalls. “I knew it was something new” (G. Weber, personal communication, February 12, 2004).

Following the conference, Weber and Hellinger renewed their friendship and professional relationship. Weber arranged for a series of workshops for patients from his clinic diagnosed with anorexia and bulimia. He found the immediate results remarkable, though Hellinger refused to allow formal research to confirm the longitudinal outcomes. As a physician in a psychiatric hospitals for many years, Weber was particularly impressed with the responses of other patients who suffered from the most daunting symptoms, such as schizophrenia, psychosis, and persistent suicidal urges (G. Weber, personal communication, February 12, 2004).

Weber urged that the two begin collaboration on writing a book. Hellinger was reluctant, explaining, “The best can’t be said. The next best will be misunderstood” (Hellinger et al., 1998, p. vi). However, having reached the retirement age of 65, he had neither documented his insights and approach nor trained students to carry on his methods. He agreed for Weber to record and edit a series of workshop transcripts. Weber published the book himself in 1993 under the title



Zweierlei Gluck [*Capricious Good Fortune; aka Second Chance*]. He hoped to sell two thousand copies within the community of German psychotherapists interested in alternative approaches. To everyone's surprise, the book was received with acclaim and quickly became a national best-seller, selling two hundred thousand copies. At about the same time, Hellinger was invited to participate at the ZIST Congress for Humanistic Medicine at Garmisch, Germany. The turnout for his session was much greater than expected. This forced him for the first time to work with a large group (H. Beaumont, personal communication).

At the age of 70, Bert Hellinger experienced a rapid transformation from being an obscure practitioner to an international best-selling author. During the next 10 years, he authored or co-authored 30 books. Those translated in English include: *Love's Hidden Symmetry: What Makes Love Work in Relationships* (1998); *Acknowledging What Is: Conversations with Bert Hellinger* (1999); *Love's Own Truths: Bonding and Balancing in Close Relationships* (2001); and *Insights: Lectures and Stories* (2002); *On Life & Other Paradoxes* (2002a). Expanding from his base in Germany, Hellinger traveled widely, delivering lectures, workshops and training courses throughout Europe, in the United States, South America, China, and Japan. He made numerous trips to Israel, where his work often dealt with issues relating to the Nazi Holocaust.

Nearing age 80, Hellinger went through yet another metamorphosis. He divorced, remarried, and removed himself as the central figure in the community of Constellation facilitators who had followed his footsteps. His methods of working with people continued to evolve and change, becoming more minimalist and austere. Eventually, he concluded, "there are some issues which cannot be solved with Family Constellations" (Hellinger, 2006, p. 69). This led him to further refine his approach into what he calls "Gehen mit dem Geist [Moving with the Spirit or Moving with the Spirit-Mind]."

Around this time, he stirred further controversy in Germany when an unexpected construction delay on his new house led him to temporarily rent an apartment that Adolph Hitler had occasionally used in the 1930s. This association generated a firestorm of negative publicity. Hellinger's response was non-apologetic, emphasizing that the evils of Nazism should not be ascribed to an aberrant individual, but seen as a manifestation of extreme tendencies that are present in most human beings. His refusal to vilify Hitler on demand fueled further criticism, which became quite vocal and intense.

The effect of these events was to distance some practitioners from the method's founding figure. In 2004, a group of 200 Constellation facilitators issued a formal declaration that "Constellation work 'beyond Hellinger' should be developed further as a therapeutic instrument" (Society for Systemic Constellation Work, 2004, p. 1). These critics represented a portion of



those who had trained in his methods; many others continued their association, integrating the further developments into their own practices.

At the 2007 Congress on Systemic Constellations in Cologne, Germany, “the hole left by Bert Hellinger’s absence was tangible” (Maier, 2007, p.10). Speaking at the introductory plenary, Heinrich Breuer, the Congress organizer addressed these concerns: “I would have liked to have Bert with us so that he himself could have presented the Movements of the Spirit... At the same time, I have the impression that the scene has grown up and it has developed to such an extent that Bert would never have thought of” (quoted in Maier, 2007, p.1).

Moving in a new circle, Hellinger and his wife Marie-Sophie Hellinger remain active as practitioners and teachers in their ever-evolving practice, operating under the name *Scientia*. Now in his 80s, he remains an articulate, controversial, and compelling figure who continues to publish, travel internationally and offer professional training programs to “whoever truly wants to succeed and experience deeper insights into this ‘new’ style and method of Family Constellations” (Hellinger personal communication, 2007, T. Mellet, Trans.).

Cohen, Dan B. “A Short Biography of Bert Hellinger.” Edited by Bert Hellinger, 2007.



1.4 The Life of Bert Hellinger

The Man Bert Hellinger : Q & A Interview

By Heinrich Breuer, Theo Roos, and Wilfried Nelles

For those interested in getting to know Bert Hellinger a little better, Heinrich Breuer, Theo Roos and Wilfried Nelles held an interview in which he shares pieces of his life.

The Man Bert Hellinger : Q & A Interview

Interviewer: Is there for you a place that you associate with the term "homeland"?

BH: Especially important for me is the place where I come from, Leimen near Heidelberg. My grandparents lived there, both my parents are from the town. But our family moved away from there to Cologne at an early age. For me, Leimen is a place that feels like home. Whenever I drive past there, I experience that.

My mother's father worked in the cement factory of Leimen. It was hard physical work. The workers lived in settlements that belonged to the factory. And every family got a piece of land from the factory. That was the time of transition from farming to industry, the workers were still working their fields. My grandfather too. He had a pig and chickens and fields. The men and women worked from morning to night. By the time I was born, my grandfather was no longer at the factory. I witnessed him and the people and life in the settlement. There was something warm there, and something upright. That has influenced me all my life. I have a heart for this simple life, for the simple things.

Before I went to school, I spent a long time with my grandparents. During this time I grew up in this environment and experienced the life of the simple people. The families had many children, and the children were naturally together a lot. We were able to enter the different families as if we belonged to them. Basically, it was like an extended family.

Interviewer: Why did your parents leave you with your grandparents for a while?

BH: The grandparents wanted me to stay with them for a while. Maybe I should sweeten their farewell to the family, who had already moved to Cologne when I was younger. But I was very happy to be with them. I returned to Cologne when my school days began. I spent the first four years of elementary school in Cologne. The secondary school time began in a boarding school in Lohr am Main, a Catholic boarding school run by the Mariannahill missionaries, the missionaries I went to later.



The School and Boarding School Days of Bert (Anton) Hellinger

Interviewer: Was this boarding school already something like a preparation for the priesthood?

BH: That was the idea. We lived in a boarding school and went to the state high school, the Order did not have its own school. I felt very comfortable in the boarding school. That was a great time for me, a very wonderful time.

The time in the boarding school fell into the Nazi period. I came to the boarding school in 1936. In a big election, which took place at that time when Austria was annexed to Germany, some of the nuns who looked after us had voted with "no". And because there were obviously no secret elections at that time, this became known. In the night the SA went up in front of the boarding school. They broke the windows and wrote on the walls: "Traitors live here." Later the boarding school was closed. The war had already begun and the boarding school was turned into a military hospital. Then I returned to my family, who meanwhile were living in Kassel, where my father had got a new job. There I continued to go to high school for another two years.

Interviewer: Did you graduate from high-school there?

BH: With us there was no high school graduation, we were drafted before the high school graduation. After the seventh grade - I was 17 years old at that time - I was sent to work for three months and then to the army as a radio operator in the infantry. Our unit was transferred to the Western Front in France. There I witnessed the invasion and the retreat. Near Aachen I fell into American captivity.

Interviewer: When you think back to the time when many young people supported the ideology of the Nazis and could identify themselves with it. How was that for you?

BH: In boarding school we were in a completely different field than the other young people. We did not go to the Young People or the Hitler Youth and therefore had little contact with them. Later, in Kassel, I joined a small Catholic youth group, which was of course forbidden. But we met regularly in secret.

Members of the HY often came by our house and wanted to pick me up for HY service. My mother would say, "He's not here right now." But you could only do that for a time, then it wouldn't work anymore, it would have threatened the family too much. That's why my parents wanted me to play the violin in an HY orchestra every two weeks.

Interviewer: The family was also a safe field when you look back?

BH: Family was a safe field, especially my mother. My mother was so solid in her faith that the ideology of National Socialism could not touch her.



Interviewer: Wasn't your father forced to be in the party?

BH: A lot of pressure was put on him to join the party, but he did not do so. He stayed strictly out of it. That was a particular sign of courage in those days.

Interviewer: *This means the collapse was not a personal disaster for anyone of the family, as it was for many families?*

BH: Of course, the death of my older brother, who fell in Russia, was very difficult. My brother was considered missing for a long time. I only learned about his death a few years ago in Leimen. My cousin Albert's wife told me at that time: "Albert met someone today in the cemetery who told me that he was in the prison camp together with a man called Hellinger from Leimen." That was my brother. I visited the man, and he confirmed that he was present when my brother died. They were in a huge prison camp from which only about twenty survived, including him. The others almost all died of dysentery. That is how we heard about my brother's death.

The collapse of the Third Reich was no disaster for us. On the contrary. If Germany had won, my fate would have been sealed. Of course our family was deeply affected by my brother's death. The house we lived in Kassel was also very much affected by the war. But the loss of relatives and belongings was normal at that time, and most families experienced that at that time.

Interviewer: *As someone who was born shortly after the war and grew up in the post-war period, I remember well these men with the empty sleeves and the limping ones with the prosthetic legs. The aftermath of the war was evident to me in these people.*

BH: Wartime was a great time of dying for everyone. It was quite natural, another one had fallen, another one there. I think half of my class died. In wartime it was natural. You didn't walk around sad, that was part of it. It was war, and people died. From the outside, you can no longer imagine what it was like.

Interviewer: *I realize how strange this is to me. Death then, seems to be an everyday occurrence.*

BH: Exactly, exactly.

Interviewer: *Then the bombings and the civilian deaths.*

BH: At that time it was a natural part of life.

Interviewer: *Is it the effect of the experiences from that time that you work with war and death, and that you can deal with it so fearlessly because of that time as well?*

BH: That has something to do with it. Horst Eberhard Richter once gave a lecture at the Psychotherapy Weeks in Lindau, in which he said something like this: "Sometimes we expect - he was talking about his generation - that the youth should be like us. But that is not possible. By our twentieth year we had learned that half of our comrades were dead. What others only experience at the age of sixty or seventy as



their peers die away, we have already experienced at twenty." Of course we are shaped by this. It is part of our lived life.

Interviewer: *When you look back on your time as a soldier, are there any particularly powerful experiences? With people who have died beside you, comrades you have lost yourself? It is always impressive how you can talk about the community of soldiers. I suspect that this is based on your own experiences.*

BH: You were dependent on each other, and you needed and respected each other. And, of course, loved each other. One stood up for the other. There were great experiences of comradeship, and above all, there were no differences in status. All were equal. I remember I was in a unit with only two high school students. I didn't know that there were groups where there weren't many high school students, I had never experienced that. There was such a wealth of different experiences and previous experiences from life before the war. For me it was a great experience to see how each of the people was different.

Of course the war itself is an experience in itself. You were a soldier in a unit that was not so big at that time. It consisted of about sixty or seventy soldiers. After eight days in action, there were maybe twenty of them left. The rest were wounded or fallen or captured. Then a new unit was formed and sent back into action, and after eight days there were only twenty of them left again. These are deep experiences.

Interviewer: *How do you overcome something like this, what kind of mourning does this require?*

BH: No mourning at all. It was a time of dying. Death was everywhere, and it doesn't make you afraid anymore that it's so present. Everything is concentrated on the moment, you have no illusions whether you will escape, whether you will escape at all, you are at the mercy of it. And if it went well, you gave a sigh of relief. That's all. It wasn't only like that at the front, death was just as present at home.

Interviewer: *Does this still play a role, when you look at death today and question the meaning of death as something bad and terrible?*

BH: Yes, it does play a role, because it is familiar to me, it is still very close.

Interviewer: Is this somehow related to a posture that consents to one's own death?

BH: It was very clear in the war. Death was simply by your side. It was beside you all the time, because you could have been shot at any time, and then you would have been dead. That was normal life.

Interviewer: Did death make life more intense?

BH: Yeah, I guess. I was eighteen, nineteen years old at the time! My God!

Interviewer: And after the war, what happened then?



BH: I was first in captivity, in Charleroi, Belgium, for a year. I escaped from the prison camp. This escape, this running away, gave me a year and a half of independent living. After the escape I went straight to the Mariannahillers. A few weeks after I came home, I joined the Order and began my studies. I studied philosophy and theology in Würzburg.

Interviewer: After graduating you probably received your ordination to the priesthood, around the mid-fifties?

BH: 1952, I think. I can't remember exactly, it was so long ago.

Interviewer: Have you ever had doubts whether you should follow the priest's path?

BH: No, I didn't, I never doubted it. I decided when I was five years old.

Interviewer: Already at five? I was also carrying this question when I was a boy too. The priest told me then that you would have something like a calling experience when God called you. I always waited for the voice of God, but it did not come. How was that with you?

BH: The idea to become a priest came just like that. I never had any other idea.

Interviewer: Later I could never understand that the young men wanted to renounce a life with women. At the age of five that is not an issue, but at fifteen this question arises quite massively, I can imagine. Was there no debate about celibacy and the issues involved?

BH: At the age of five there is no such thing.

Interviewer: But later, at the age of 15 is it a decision not only for a certain life form, but also against another life form?

BH: You can't treat it like that. It is not about these things, but about a reference to God. It is subordinate to this reference to God. You have to see it on the level of the relationship to God. It has to do with God, of course with God in my imagination at that time.

Interviewer: Was then later, when you had thoughts of leaving in the sixties, the subject of celibacy a factor? You got married then, too.

BH: The decision to give up the priesthood had nothing to do with a possible marriage. This decision was also subordinated to the relationship with God. I suddenly saw that much of what was important to me in Christianity was covered up by other things in the Church. Suddenly I was to get involved in something that contradicted my idea of God. Suddenly it was clear to me that I could no longer go along with it. Not because I had become a disbeliever, but rather because I was still a believer.

Interviewer: Faith was too precious to you?



BH: It was too precious to me. That's why I had to leave the order. The other things came later.

Bert Hellinger as Teacher in South Africa

Interviewer: When did you go to South Africa?

BH: It was 1953, I suppose. I went to South Africa to study for another degree, for a teaching career. Then I went to a school to teach there. While I was teaching in the school, I took a distance study course to obtain the University Education Diploma in Educational Sciences. This gave me the teaching license for teaching at secondary schools. After that I had to take over the administration of this school in addition. But I had overworked myself by taking over this position and the additional distance learning. I got a nervous breakdown. It was a curative disease, so to speak, because it got me out of school.

Interviewer: Did you have an exhaustive depression, or what would you call it?

BH: I couldn't sleep anymore, it was a terrible period. I was at the end of my rope. I went to a missionary station to a Dutch brother and just wandered around with him when he was doing his work. As a result I slowly recovered within two months. I then went to a mission station and worked in pastoral care. That was much more satisfying for me.

Interviewer: And after the missionary station, came the return to Germany?

BH: Not for a long time yet. More than ten years passed. During this time I also became head of St. Francis College in Mariannhill. There was an elite school. At that time a high percentage of the indigenous university students came from that one school, it had an excellent reputation throughout South Africa. The school was also a boarding school. All students also lived in the boarding school. That was a beautiful and fruitful time for me. There was a very close cooperation between me as the director and another priest who was at my side. One cannot run such a large school and boarding school alone.

Basically, the school had two boarding schools, one for the girls and one for the boys. Sisters were responsible for the girls and we two priests for the boys. We organized the school and the boarding school in the sense of a far-reaching self-administration. Each class elected a spokesperson, in addition, all together from the final class elected five representatives to the school board of directors, the student parliament. This body settled most issues among itself. We were surprised how well it worked. It was an important experience for me.

Interviewer: How long did you remain in South Africa?

BH: For sixteen years.



Interviewer: What were the reasons you left? Was it because you wanted to leave the priesthood?

BH: The reasons were elsewhere. I represented a somewhat progressive, modern theology, for which I was known. Suddenly I was suspected of having views in religious education at school that were incompatible with the teachings of the Church.

At that time I was supposed to represent my bishop at the Bishops' Conference. The bishop called me to his office to discuss with me what his concerns were there. After the conversation he pulled out a letter in which someone accused me of heresy. The bishop asked me to comment on it and advised me to be a little more careful in the future. I told him: "If I do not have confidence in this matter, I cannot represent you at the Bishops' Conference. Nor can I carry out my duties." I resigned from all my positions, I was very radical about it. Afterwards it was clear that I would return to Germany.

Interviewer: *People often come...to a crossroads and stop in front of it and do not move. But you have always continued there with great fearlessness. Or was it almost a lack of a way out? To be able to continue to exist for you, you had to take this step?*

BH: Whenever I notice that somewhere I can't go on, I go another way and do something new.

Interviewer: *What happened next?*

BH: In the meantime it had become known in Germany that I had resigned from my offices in South Africa. The Order immediately demanded my return from the diocese there, because I had long been supposed to take over the rector's office of the Mariannahiller seminary in Würzburg.

But before that something important had happened in South Africa, namely the contact with the group dynamics. At a conference I met a Benedictine monk who told me: "There is something there that is very interesting, you have to participate in it." He put me in touch with a group of Anglican priests who had introduced group dynamics in South Africa. They offered ecumenical and interracial courses, so they were very progressive in that respect. I went to them for group dynamics training. In this first course I had a crucial experience. The facilitator asked only general questions in the group: "What is more important to you, ideals or people? What do you sacrifice to whom? The people of an ideal or the ideal to people." That affected me deeply, I could not sleep the night after. It was a turning point in my life.

Interviewer: *You realized it had to be about people?*

BH: All of a sudden, people were in the spotlight for me. I did several other trainings with them and I also applied the group dynamics in the school I was at. With this knowledge and skills I returned to Germany. When I had already been here for two months, Professor Däumling from Bonn (one of the founders of group dynamics in Germany, H.B.), gave a lecture on group dynamics in Würzburg. Of course I went there and told him that I knew about group dynamics from my work in South Africa. In Germany, group dynamics was still new, whereas in South Africa it was already established. Mr. Thumb then invited me to



a training in Bonn as an assistant trainer. Through this invitation I got a place in the group dynamics scene in Germany, as someone who already knew something.

Interviewer: But that was back in the early seventies?

BH: That was 1970. I had returned from South Africa at the end of 1969. With group dynamics I had a new foothold in Germany right away. I immediately applied the group dynamics work in this seminary. I also offered courses in group dynamics and became known as a trainer for group dynamics. But I knew that I was still missing a lot. That is why I started a psychoanalysis in Würzburg right after my return.

In the meantime, I had slowly become inwardly estranged from my order. More and more often I had to experience that in important decisions issues of self-preservation were more important than religious and human issues.

With this inner conflict I went to the first group dynamic congress in Cologne and met Ruth Cohn there. The congress took place at the end of the 60s, the time of the hippies and radical students. They also invaded this congress and disturbed the events. Ruth Cohn saved the congress with incredible skill by winning over the students. I was very impressed by that. Shortly afterwards I went to her in a course. It was the first course she offered in Germany.

In that course she told me something about Gestalt therapy. She had known Fritz Perls well and was therefore familiar with Gestalt Therapy. In Germany Gestalt Therapy was still completely unknown. She offered a demonstration of Gestalt Therapy in the group and asked who would be the first to volunteer to sit on the so-called hot chair. I volunteered. While she worked with me, I looked into the distance. Suddenly I saw that I had a different future. No longer in the Order. The key sentence at the end of that session was, "I'm leaving." Then I had to stand in front of each participant in turn and say: "I'm leaving". It was an incredible experience, a key experience.

It was now clear to me that my remaining in the Order was only a matter of time. But first I went back to Würzburg. At the same time I decided to do a training analysis. A friend of mine, Professor Hermann Stenger, also a group dynamist, got me a place in Vienna for a training analysis. Although I knew that I would leave the Order and had already made provisions for this. But the time was not yet ripe, I was waiting for the right time. During a group dynamic training that I offered in Rome, during a conversation with an American, it suddenly "clicked", I knew: "Now was the time." A few days later I communicated my decision to my superiors in Rome. Afterwards everything necessary went off without any difficulties. I stood fully behind this decision. My religious superiors noticed this and made no attempt to change my mind.

I had made provisions for life outside the Order. I stood on my own feet because I was a respected group dynamic facilitator. I immediately moved to Vienna and began the teaching analysis.



The Influences of Different Therapeutic Schools on Bert Hellinger

Interviewer: And then came relatively quickly Arthur Janov with Primal Therapy?

BH: That had another prelude. I had taken all the exams for the degree as a psychoanalyst and joined the psychoanalytical working group in Salzburg. I was asked to give a lecture there. My topic was Janov's book: "The Primal Scream." It was not well received. I was expelled from the study group and refused to graduate. I would have had to do twenty hours of analysis, that's all. I had brought this as a condition from Vienna. I then went to Janov and one of his leading students in the USA for nine months and did Primal Therapy. That was a great experience for me.

Interviewer: But these were also very negative experiences? Like an abuse of power?

BH: It made me feel sad. But on the other hand, of course you get an incredible freedom in such a moment.

Interviewer: That you can suddenly go in a new direction? That one can escape the rules and rituals that a therapeutic school entails?

BH: Yes. You don't have any inner obligations either. Later I made a second attempt. I wanted to be a transactional analyst. They turned me down too.

Interviewer: Why?

BH: I was told that I had not gone through the normal training, although Rüdiger Rogoll was my supporter and a respected teacher of Transactional Analysis. This was my last attempt to belong somewhere. It was painful, but healing, and above all incredibly liberating.

The strange thing was that later the tables turned again. I had a certain reputation through script analysis, which I had offered for many years. The Munich Working Group for Psychoanalysis wanted me to offer Script Analysis for their training candidates, because they still have to learn something in two other procedures. This working group then recognized me as a psychoanalyst as well. I also got a license as an analyst from the Bavarian Medical Association.

Interviewer: After the episode of psychoanalysis came family therapy? How did the professional training continue?

BH: We both started family therapy together in Snowmass in the USA. Then hypnotherapy and NLP joined in. These further trainings are closely connected with you, because you later brought important hypnotherapists and NLP therapists from the US to Germany. What emerged with Erickson's work and NLP, I immediately adopted and integrated. These were and are valuable experiences for me. The further



training in Snowmass in family therapy with Ruth McClendon and Les Kadis and the Reddings, those were beautiful and fruitful times.

Interviewer: *When you look back which people you have met in the field of psychotherapy have impressed you the most?*

BH: Ruth Cohn certainly, then in Snowmass Ruth McClendon and Les Kadis. Of the hypnotherapists, Jeff Zeig, Stephen Lankton and also Stephan Gilligan were important to me. From Transactional Analysis it was Fanita English, before that also Hilarion Petzold. And of course in the beginning the group dynamics facilitators in South Africa, whom I have already spoken about. With regard to Family Constellation, Thea Schönfelder was also important. With her I had my first experience as a representative.

***New Beginnings in the Late Eighties:
Bert Hellinger Writes Books and the First Major Events Take Place***

Interviewer: There was a time in the late 1980s when people sat in your classes and said, "Bert, why don't you write a book?" Scripts were passed around with quotations of what had been picked up in courses. Some of them had collected them later. What you had developed suddenly became a huge movement.

BH: But I had already finished, so to speak.

Interviewer: *You were in retreat. I was under the impression that you were going to go into your quiet retirement life in Ainring. Suddenly you were experienced as if you were going to take off again, and you did.*

BH: First of all it was important that Gunthard Weber published the book "Love's hidden Symmetry". That opened up the field into the wide world. It was not yet the time for me to do that myself back then. That Gunthard did that was a great achievement. Then it was suddenly clear: "Now I'll do something too." I began to write the book "Orders of Love". You know how I did that?

Interviewer: *We had sent you the videos of the course in Cologne, which you held for me in 1992 at the university in Cologne. We recorded the whole course on tape, because we wanted to have a look at your work afterwards.*

BH: I sat down and transcribed the videos, which was very difficult because the sound was very bad. What came out was the first part of the book "Orders of Love".

A little later von was invited to a course for family therapists, which was also recorded. This video became the basis for the second part of "Orders of Love." Shortly afterwards there



was a congress in Garmisch, which Wolf Bütig had organized. I gave the lecture "Of Heaven that makes sick, and Earth that heals". At this congress I also offered a course and said: "I'll take up to 35 participants." But 350 registered. What should I do now? I said, "Then I'll give the course with everyone." Earlier, a woman came up to me and asked, "Do you mind if I record this course?" This video became the basis for the third part of "Orders of Love," which was also the breakthrough to the major events. Everything happened as if by coincidence.

Interviewer: It wasn't something you planned?

BH: It happened, and suddenly it was a challenge.

The Critics and their Ties to the Group

Interviewer: Can I go back to belonging to groups? The psychotherapists who attack you, especially the systemic therapists, defend their field and, when they attack you, they are completely at peace with their conscience. In your case you were able to leave the field of the Order and the Church. Instead of remaining in the community of the Order and the Church, you went further, but did not let yourself be bound by them. What made you so independent? Is it something like a need to follow an inner movement?

BH: That is more complex. I had the advantage that I also learned other professions. In South Africa I took the teacher's exam and had an alternative there. I felt that I had a completely different kind of independence as a result, and the others felt the same. Therefore they could not intimidate me. This alternative was something very valuable for me.

Now imagine those who only learned one profession, or those who finally became psychoanalysts after ten years of learning. They may realize later that there is something else, but they can't get out of what they have developed for themselves. They are then in a similar situation as many priests. They have no alternative, because in their group an alternative is not tolerated. As soon as they strive for something else, they are excluded from this group. They then represent the positions of their group to the outside world also in the sense of a struggle for survival. A lot of criticism of Family Constellation must be considered from this point of view. Their criticism often has little to do with Family Constellation itself. Family Constellation is not even looked at or examined more closely. One immediately rejects it, because one instinctively feels that it can be a danger for one's own group and its survival.

Interviewer: Many expect you to take a stand on such criticism. I understand that some expect you to be different.



BH: Yes, exactly. I generally withdraw when someone wants to gain power over me. I am accused of not accepting criticism. I do accept criticism, but not a claim to power over me. Behind many criticisms is the demand: "You have to leave your position and follow me. Why don't you do it the way I want?"

If it's criticism in the sense of: Let's take a look together at what works there and what is helpful here - then the other person speaks of an experience and seeks an experience, and I speak of an experience and seek an experience. Through the different experiences we enrich each other. Each one has given something to the other despite criticism - which actually only means here, despite other experiences. For me, this is a valuable exchange in which I can grow and develop. But if someone says: "You have to listen to me and follow my arguments, they are better and more correct than yours" - what do they want then? They want to gain power over me. I withdraw from that.

Interviewer: *This withdrawal reminds me a lot of your father. When I imagine how he escaped party membership, it must have been something like that. He simply wasn't available, he withdrew.*

BH: That's right, I never thought of it that way. Maybe I learned it from him. I can feel a good connection with him there.

Bert Hellinger's Faith and Religious Movement

Interviewer: How would you describe your faith?

BH: In the meantime I have no faith anymore. On the one hand, faith means that I follow an idea of God or what is said about God or as a revelation from or about God. That I believe this to be true and arrange my life accordingly. But even without a faith of this kind, there is a spiritual movement towards something greater. This movement is the actual true religiousness, the movement towards something hidden and greater. This movement can be found both with many believers, wherever they are, and with many others who have no definite faith. They go into this movement towards something and look in it beyond the narrow, the obvious. For many people the religion is bound to certain images of God. But it also exists detached from such images. The movement towards something greater is the same in all religions, independent of certain images of God. That is why it also exists outside the religions.

The question is whether the many images of God are compatible with this religious movement, or whether after some time they oppose this movement, perhaps even lead it into the absurd.



In what is proclaimed as religious, there are for me a lot of contradictions. I have investigated this. If you take the sentence seriously: "Everything is moved" - from where is it moved? From something outside of us. This movement is creative because it causes something. But according to my conception, there must be an original movement or an original force from which every movement comes. Whether this original force can be called God, I do not know. There might be something in between, but that does not matter to me. What is important is that every movement, whatever it is, is seen as being controlled by something beyond it, by something creative. This creativity is directed towards the movement and its direction, it must be, because it cannot be a movement that is directed against itself at the same time.

If you take this seriously, everything that happens, even the so-called evil or terrible or violent, is moved by the same cause. This creates a different horizon. The distinction between good and evil can then no longer be maintained. Questions like: "How can God allow this to happen?" become irrelevant here. For me, it's about agreeing with this perceptible movement as it is. For me, this is religious. In that sense, I am very religious. This consent does not need an image or a belief. Everyone can experience this directly in their soul.

Good and Evil, Hitler

Interviewer: The pairs of opposites "good and evil" were created at some point as an orientation. In our minds they are fixed values.

BH: I must face good and evil with the same posture, because the same force is at work in both. When I do this, this difference no longer exists. If you can endure it not only in your mind but also in practice, it is an incredible purification and achievement at the same time.

Interviewer: *The controversy arises from the practical application. As long as you philosophize about it, it wouldn't matter. After all, it is not a new realization that good and evil ultimately lead to unity. But if you apply that to any person in practice, for example a serial killer, SS-officer, or Hitler, everything resists.*

BH: Hitler is a test. Many who are against him look at Hitler, and their own souls often follow the rejected very secretly. I look behind him and beyond him and see that he too is confronted with



an inevitable fate. To take this seriously, that is religion for me.

Criticism versus Dialogue

Interviewer: Is there a parallel between retreating when all the lines of criticism are directed at you, and retreating before the claims of the Nazis in your youth and later the claims of the Order or therapeutic schools?

BH: There are certain similarities. But because I see how important the field in which a group is moving is for the group, I can't condemn others who are in another field or say "They're worse or better." They're just in a different field. Nowadays I view this as neutral in terms of value.

Interviewer: Sometimes it hits you when people treat you that way. Or are you so far away from it? Some of them are people who have come close to you personally, who have profited a lot from you and Family Constellation, and who are against you today.

BH: I also see them as part of a field and do not experience it as a personal attack. I can leave it like this.

Interviewer: Mostly or always?

BH: Allow me to remain human here. This perfection would be terrible for me. But to face it in this serene way is a constant achievement, a constant challenge. I have to adjust to it again and again. But that does not exclude the possibility that I will face a conflict as well.

Interviewer: That also means to respect the opponent and take them seriously.

BH: That's part of it. War is the father of all things. It is also the father of peace.

Interviewer: Can Hellinger also be a warrior?

BH: I've shown this a few times in my life, and I'm staying on that path.

Breuer, Heinrich. Nelles, Wilfried. Roos, Theo. "The Life of Bert Hellinger Interview." *News*, www.hellinger.com/en/bert-hellinger-the-original/bert-hellinger/the-life-of-bert-hellinger/#accordion-can-hellinger-a-iso



Section 2: Facilitation Skills



2.1 Keys to Being a Great Family Constellations Facilitator

Some key components to being a great facilitator. This list was compiled through a worldwide discussion by Family Constellation facilitators a few years back. There are no official standards to facilitate Family Constellation work here in the U.S.

Unlike many healing modalities you can learn and master academically, you can't do this with Family Constellation work. Mastery of Constellations requires practice in the Field honing your intuition, learning the language of Souls, developing your presence and doing personal growth work.

To be great...

1. A background in psychotherapy is not essential. However, you need to be able to work with trauma and support people dealing with trauma.
2. Spiritual Frame of Reference ~ Spiritual growth practices ~ Connection to the other side.
3. Facilitator development and skills
 - a. Commitment to continued study, learning and growth
 - b. Self awareness/solid relationship to self
 - c. Self confidence/humility balance
 - d. Awareness and relationship with one's shadow
 - e. Vulnerability: Sitting in the not-knowing
 - f. Ability to let go of control (openness to explore and being led)
 - g. Stays calm and centered in chaos
 - h. Strong trusting in one's intuition
 - i. Being able to say "no," to stop a constellation, to say "no" to working with a client, etc.
 - j. Patience and trust in the field
 - k. Non-judgmental (Loyal to all)
 - l. Open heart
 - m. Has accepted one's parents
 - n. Acceptance of one's own fate
 - o. The healthy healer: Has let go of outcome, need to solve, help
 - p. Ability to act with empathy not sympathy (not identified with victim)
 - q. Has taken the perpetrator into their heart and can recognize their humanity
(Through honoring fate, acknowledging what is, recognizing the bigger situation at play)
 - r. Knows own limit and refers to other professionals when appropriate
 - s. Openness to peer supervision and feedback



4. FC concepts and knowledge ~ Understanding core Constellation concepts ~ Hellinger's Orders of Love
5. Working in "The Field"
 - a. Reading the field
 - b. Distill representatives thoughts, feelings and sensations into appropriate healing statements (Soul statements)
 - c. Intuiting and wisdom regarding where to stop a constellation
 - d. Being okay with messy endings
 - e. Recognize when support is needed in the field
 - f. Letting the field control (trust and patience)
6. Working with the Focus Client
 - a. Trauma awareness and skills – Recognize and assist clients
 - b. Ability to stay aware of and connected to client
 - c. Supporting clients with integration
 - d. Awareness and skills with creating ritual for client integration
 - e. Good follow-through and follow-up
7. Working within the group
 - a. Explain concepts in a good, easy to understand way
 - b. Creating a field of safety
 - c. Maintain connection with group – recognize group needs (rest, breaks, support, explanations)
 - d. Recognize the needs of individuals representing



2.2 Accepting One's Parents: Being an Effective Facilitator

“Unless we honor our parents we are losers in every way. In life, relationships, health, success, etc., for we deprive ourselves of the support that comes from our ancestors over the generations, through them to us on an energetic level.” Bert Hellinger – Rachael Weeping for Her Children

As a student of Family Constellation work, it's very important you do the personal work too, particularly around accepting YOUR PARENTS. This will make you a great helper for your clients. You will need to do this to get past your unconscious patterns and blind spots. And remember, accepting your parents is not a one-time shot, it's an ongoing focus necessary for you to come from **wholeness** in your facilitation and life.

Making peace with your parents does not require a physical connection, this may not be healthy for you. But it does require you to see them with love and compassion and hold them in your heart. This training provides you every opportunity to do this work, to see your lineage from a compassionate point of view. To deeply grasp how your parents and relatives were influenced by *their* life circumstances. It is my great hope that this supports you to love and accept them.

When we can say this, we have done the work - “You are my father, you are the right father for me, I love and accept you as you are.”

When you bring your relatives—living and deceased—into your heart, you free yourself from your family patterning and liberate yourself to live life without the family burdens. When you have a preponderance of **positive family energy** coming into you, you can work miracles in life.

Additionally, by embracing those in your family who have been rejected, you embrace those parts of yourself – For you are them. You then find greater peace and joy in life.

Accepting your parents transforms your relationships and offers you a fulfilling life. You move your family's destiny forward rather than repeating old, stale patterns. It also grounds you in compassion, which is essential in supporting others to attain a similar sense of wholeness.

It is necessary for facilitators of Family Constellations work to focus first on healing their relationships with their own parents and family systems to truly guide others in this trans-formative work.



2.3 Honoring the Client's Family – Loyalty to All

One of the greatest developed skills of a Family Constellation Facilitator is being non-judgmental towards a family and their circumstances no matter how members of a family acted or what they did. Not only this, but a great facilitator holds the client's family in their hearts with love and respect. This is stronger than being non-judgmental. Facilitators have no standing to judge the client or the client's family, nor take sides. Nor does a facilitator have the clarity of vision or comprehension to understand what we are seeing at a soul level - it is arrogant to think otherwise.

Facilitators create a context of safety for their clients when they look beyond the client and see the parent's story too. A facilitator should look even deeper and see the magnificence of this person's ancestry. A facilitator bows to "all" of the client's family. They say "yes" to the client and "yes" to the family, and then the field can guide without facilitator influence. **In this way, the facilitator is a safe helper.**

It's normal and natural to feel for people who have suffered something terrible. It affects us as well. When we consent to the situation exactly as it was, we gain strength and can sense that the client too can gain strength through their consent. Then the person does not need to be consoled.

Ultimately, for facilitators to do this from the bottom of their hearts they must have embraced their own families, their families fates, and become a "yes" towards their life and circumstances.

The following are excerpts from Bert Hellinger's book *Rachael Weeping for Her Children* emphasizing in his words the responsibility of the facilitator in a constellation:

Hellinger to group: *Before we begin today, I want to say something about love. A therapist works with love, but of a different kind than we are used to. It's a love that is very close, and at the same time is distant. In order to work from this particular kind of love, the therapist has to undergo a kind of cleansing in two ways.*

First there is a cleansing of himself or herself (touches his own heart) of previous knowledge, ideas, prejudices and fears. This is essential to create the openness required by this work. In coming to Israel, for example, I had to cleanse myself of my own fears, which I am sure you can understand, in order to face whatever issues might arise.

The other cleansing is to free the people with whom I work from my thoughts, fears, and



aims. Then, there can be an encounter that is very deep and very rewarding for everyone... (65)

Whenever somebody talks about his or her family or sets up a constellation, I inwardly place myself next to the person who is excluded. I don't side with the client; I side with the excluded people. I never look at the client as such. When I look at the person, I look at the whole family. I hold an image of the whole family. Then I can sense who is missing, or who has been forgotten, or who has not been honored, and inwardly I stand by that person." (90)



2.4 Hellinger on Becoming Whole

By: Bert Hellinger

(RW 202) **Participant:** “Does the key to happiness always lie in the family? You kept saying during the day that we are very linked to our father, mother, sisters, brothers, even our grandmother and so on. So happiness for me, for her, for everybody is: “Go to see your relatives, ask them, talk to them, (Participant in a questioning tone) and you find your happiness? Can’t you find happiness with just your friends?”

Hellinger: “The question is not one of happiness, it is a question of feeling whole, (silence in the room) that’s the question.

Hellinger: “If you exclude one of your parents, you feel ‘half’ a person, you feel reduced. You may not know exactly what you are feeling. People use phrases like ‘not fully alive,’ ‘empty inside,’ ‘not strong,’ and so forth. In order to really consent to yourself as you are, you have to consent to both of your parents as they are, exactly as they are. Beyond this you have to give a place of honor to all those who belong to your family, both living and dead. If you do this, and they all have a place in your heart, you feel complete. As soon as you have reached this point and feel complete, you are free from your family. Then you can develop on your own because you are supported from behind by your family. Prior to making this step, you will still have to struggle with issues of the family. The purpose of this work is to create the opportunity or the space for people to reach this level of completeness.”

Participant: “What is it like to feel complete – if you are living in peace with everybody else in your family?”

Hellinger: “It means that you acknowledge each one who belongs to the family. Sometimes people are excluded, or they are despised, or they are rejected. The result is that you feel incomplete, or part of you feels rejected or despised. Only when you have included all of them without any moral judgment, only then can you feel complete, and only then do you have your full strength, and only then can you carry on as you want to.”

Participant: “What if you keep doing what you want and they don’t support you?”

Hellinger: “The solution does not depend on the behavior of your parents. It doesn’t depend on the behavior of other members of your family. You can achieve this completeness without them changing in any way. If your father is a rejected person, for example, you integrate him as a rejected person. You say, ‘Yes, you are my father, and I take you as you are.’ The effect of this is that those aspects of his personality that you rejected do not become felt as part of yourself.



When you take your father into your heart, the parts of him that you were afraid of remain outside. If you try it you will find out.”

Participant: “And then accept him as he is?”

Hellinger: “Not only accept, you love him as he is, that’s even more.”

Another participant: “...I am curious whether a person who feels rejected by his or her family can understand the reason for it and find ways to change it?”

Hellinger: “If you refrain from defining what has happened in the past, and look at yourself and the other members of your family. Look at where they come from, where your mother comes from and where your father comes from, and look at their particular destiny and see them as people, with all their entanglements, just like yourself. Then you become more humble. When a man complained to me, ‘My birth was difficult and my mother didn’t care for me immediately after the birth,’ I asked him, ‘was your mother in danger of dying?’ He said, ‘Yes, but she didn’t care for me.’ (Hellinger reflecting on the constellation) He didn’t even look at his mother. I told him to look at his mother and tell her, ‘I’m so happy that it turned out well for you and me.’ He had to look at his mother with love and understand that it was not possible for her to care for him immediately after his birth. This widens your view and in this way reconciliation is often achieved.”



Section 3: Orders of Love



3.1 Orders of Precedence

1. Everyone has a right to belong to the family (stillborns, abortions, miscarriages).
2. No one is allowed to be excluded for any reason whatsoever: criminality, abuse, immorality etc.
3. Everyone must carry his/her fate alone regardless of its severity. No one is entitled to carry what belongs to someone else.
4. Those who come first in the system have precedence.
5. Parents hold a higher position because without them, a child could not survive.
6. The former partners of the parents or grandparents come first. By their leaving the system a place was created for you and your family to exist.
7. The order of giving [taking care] flows from earlier to later.
8. Those who come first [parents, teachers, mentors] give because they have already taken.
9. Parents give to children because they have already received from their parents.
10. Older give to the younger ones.
11. The oldest child gives more and the youngest receives more.
12. In return, the youngest often takes care of the older parents because he/she has received the most.
13. Older children often carry more in the system than later children.
14. Only children always carry from both sides.
15. Siblings often express with each other what is unexpressed in the system [incest, emotional distance].
16. What is passed on [life force] cannot be owned. Parents merely pass it on.
17. Nothing can be added to this life force, or omitted from it...it just is. Therefore it cannot be rejected, but must be taken in totality. It does not matter who our parents were or how they were, the same life energy flows through all parents. With regards to passing on life, they all do it the same. In this transmission of life, a special fate, hard or easy, is also passed on to us, which we must accept.
18. We have only two parents...the best parents...they cannot be better.
19. When we start a new family [children] we take care of them and not what comes behind [parents, siblings].
20. A child is the responsibility of both mother and father.
21. The tie between parents and the most recent child is strongest and has priority over any earlier bond.
22. If one of the parents has a new child outside of the marriage, she/he must enter the new system to take care of the child.
23. The child's bond is of the same strength to mother and father even if conception was a brief encounter or a rape.



- a. The parent [mother/father] who is able to honor the other parent in that child should raise the child.
 - b. When two people divorce, a male child is usually better raised by the father [once the child is twelve] and a female child by the mother.
 - c. If neither parent can care for the child, the next best choice is the grandparents or other relatives of the mother and father-siblings, aunts and uncles.
 - d. Foster parents are a good alternative when they respect the existing bond with the true parents.
 - e. Adoption is beneficial only in extreme cases. The adoptive parents always have to know it is not their child. The child must always remain connected to the biological parents for its genes and its fate. Again, adoption is best done within the family system. If that's not possible, the child should at least stay within the community.
 - f. If a woman adopts out of a feeling she has been cheated by life, she does not agree with her fate. This has a different energy than an adoption done out of the love and care for children. Hellinger has found that this type of adoption brings with it a consequence; she may lose her relationship.
 - g. When a couple has a child already and adopts, they are often looking to replace a missing child or children in one or both of the families. In an adoption, the biological children must come first, and should be treated that way. If the adopted child is treated equally, the biological children often become angry with the adopted child or with the parents.
24. If the wife's husband adopts her child while the father is still alive, the child loses his/her roots and strength. The missing father will be searched for unconsciously in the next generation.
 25. The partner comes before the child. The partner takes first place, and the child comes second. This is because the child's well-being depends upon the strength of the parent's partnership. As well, the child owes its very life to that partnership which came first.
 26. If a parent puts the child first it damages the relationship with the partner, and is a burden to the child.
 27. When parents separate, the love of their own child must take precedence over the love for their new partner.
 28. If a child is born out of this new partnership this child takes precedence.
 29. Parents should not share the details of their love relationship with their children.
 30. What is between a man and a woman is special, private and does not belong to a child.
 31. When two people come together, each must leave his and her family origin. This happens not just in a physical sense but across all dimensions, and yet at the same time, both parents must allow the power of their family-of-origins to move through them. If they can hold both positions, they can acknowledge the fullness of both family-of-origins [theirs



and their partners]. Then together, they can forge their understandings and values built on, but not embedded in what came before. “Dear Mom and Dad, I have to leave something back with you to make my relationship anew...how you taught me to raise a child...what you believe in, etc. I respect how you have raised me, but I have to leave some of it behind in order to get close to my partner.”

32. When we marry the individual, we marry his or her family, religion, culture, etc. We must honor all that he/she brings; the delights, the difference and the difficulties.
33. The woman always has more “soul weight” than the man when she has children. During pregnancy, childbirth and nursing, she risks her life for the child. She is closer to the process of life and death, closer to the earth. When the man takes care of the woman and the children by protecting them, securing the home, supplying what they need he earns his balance. That is why Hellinger says that the woman should follow the man to his home. The man serves the feminine [the woman, the children, the home]. If a man goes with a woman to her home, she gains more weight, and he has no way to gain balance. He becomes light and insecure in his role. He may have affairs or leave the relationship as a result. The man must feel the strength of his weight for there to be a balance. He must feel needed by the family.
34. If partners decide not to have children, their bond is weakened. They may, however, join together in a task that equals the child in creativity to gain strength. If they are unable to have children, this difficult fate, if carried consciously, joins a couple together and brings them closer.
 - a. If one partner does not want a child or is infertile, he/she must let the other go.
 - b. Women who consciously decide to not have children, who are aware of their loss and agree to the decision, retain their femininity. “That which I did not choose has a positive influence when I honor it.”
 - c. Growth comes when a person is willing to accept the pain and loss associated with what has been given up [motherhood/fatherhood].
35. When partners speak harshly or reveal secrets about their former partners, they burden their current relationship. When a former partner is denigrated, the new partner knows on some level that he/she will suffer the same fate at some point in the future. The new partner always feels solidarity with those who came before him/her, because he/she is not different from them. This solidarity may not allow him/her to completely love or trust the new partner because of previous injustices done to former partners.
36. The bond in the first relationship is stronger than the second [perhaps even when there has not been sex]. With each new relationship, the bond weakens. The love in the second relationship may be greater and deeper, but the ability to stay is weaker.
37. If one partner wants marriage and the other does not, it corrodes the relationship.



38. An extramarital affair during childbirth years brings with it the risk of a pregnancy, the risk that a new tie will replace the current one. Jealousy or competitiveness is understandable in this context.
39. When one partner requires special care [perhaps due to an illness, handicap, disparity of resources, etc.] he or she can maintain equality by giving more in a relationship. This partner must also be willing to let the other one go.
40. Entanglements influence our choice of partners. Most people find a partner who helps us to see what has not been resolved in our family.
41. Forgiveness on the part of the child toward a parent requires that the child step out of his or her place, which creates a distortion of the order. Like love, forgiveness flows down.
42. Forgiveness on the part of one partner toward the other is felt as arrogance and endangers the relationship.

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3.2 Orders of Love- Right Relationship Between Parent and Child

A child's acceptance of their parents – exactly as they are

According to Bert Hellinger, children must accept their lives exactly as they were given, this is one of the orders of love. This is imperative to the child having a bountiful life. A child hoping to leave something out of the life they were given, or wishing it away causes them lifelong problems.

A child is a combination and re-presentation of their parents. A child must affirm their parents for who they are. After all, imagining different parents, we would be different people. Our parents are the only possible ones for us. If our parents were any different, we would not have been born.

Children affirming their parents as they are is a very deep and profound movement. It implies our agreement to our life and fate exactly as it was given by our parents with all its limitations and opportunities.

The affirmation of our parents just as they are is a sacred act. It expresses our readiness to give up false expectations that exceed or fall short of how the life our parents gave us really is. This sacred act extends far beyond our parents, and so, in affirming our parents we must look far beyond them. Into the distance from which life itself comes to us, and in this we bow to the mystery of life. When we affirm our parents as they are, we acknowledge the mystery of life and say YES.

Imagine this scenario and experience how it feels in your body. Picture yourself facing your parents... then deliberately turning away and saying, "I want different parents." "I don't like how mine are..." "What you gave me, first of all, wasn't the right thing, and secondly, it wasn't enough... You still owe me." Those who say the above words turn away from life and feel empty and have great difficulty finding peace within themselves.

Compare the effects of the above with its opposite.

Picture yourself bowing to your parents and saying to them, "The life you gave me comes to me at the full price it cost you, and at the full price it has cost me. I take with it everything that comes with it, all of the limitations and opportunities." "You have given a great deal to me and it is enough. I take my life from you with appreciation and love...I say yes to my life and thank you...I'll take care of the rest." Now mentally bow and say, "I leave you in peace." These



affirmations, when said authentically, open the heart and create a movement toward peace and greater connection.

Some people fear that in fully accepting their parents, they also take on their parent's wounds, they act as if they could take only the parts they want. Fearing to embrace the wholeness of life, the wholeness of our parents, we lose the good. Saying "yes" to who our parents were (are), we embrace life's fullness, as it is and as it was given to us through our parents.

Finally, in fully taking in and accepting our parents, we become strong in life. We have full energetic resource and strength at our backs. The flow of love comes into us and supports us. Yes, we may be impacted by some of the things that challenged them, but this pales in comparison to having an entire lineage at our backs, which is the gift we receive through fully accepting our parents.



3.3 Basic Orders of Life

1st Basic Order - The Same Right

All who belong to our family have the same right to belong. As soon as a member of the family is denied or refused this belonging, disorder arises with far-reaching consequences.

Examples:

The most obvious example is when a member of the family is killed. The most common way of doing this is abortion. Whatever the justifications given for it, in the soul of the perpetrator, here especially in the soul of the mother, it has far-reaching consequences. It also has far-reaching consequences in the souls of other family members.

Another form of exclusion is when a child is given away and put up for adoption. Or when a child from another relationship is kept secret and thus excluded. This also applies to hidden aborted children.

When a family member is excluded because there is shame. For example, a severely handicapped child, or a member who adopts a different faith or is guilty of something.

In Original Hellinger® Family Constellation, it becomes apparent that forgotten children who are not mentioned also belong. For example a stillborn child. But also a child that died prematurely, i.e. a miscarriage and a child that already died in the womb.

Who belongs to the family whose members have the right to belong? In Original Hellinger® Family Constellation is revealed which persons belong to our family and therefore must be acknowledged as members. In addition to the biological relatives, there are often other people for the solution of a problem.

What are the consequences if a family member is denied the right to belong in this way?

The consequences of exclusion

Where there has been the exclusion of a family member, a movement is created in the family to bring back the excluded or forgotten member and give them back the place they deserve. Until then, the member is represented by another member. The excluded person takes possession of this member without being aware of it. They make themselves noticeable in the family through



this member. This member then also feels excluded. They take over the feelings and the symptoms of the excluded member and finally their fate. In Family Constellations we call this an entanglement.

In an Original Hellinger® Family Constellation this entanglement comes to light. It can be lifted by "bringing back" the excluded family member. It is noticeable that the entanglement usually involves a family member who was in no way responsible for the exclusion. Often they come from the next generation or the generation after that. They are chosen by another force for it, beyond our ideas of guilt and innocence. In this sense the entanglement seems impersonal. It has the whole in view. It wants the restoration of order, that what has been separated is reunited with the others.

Many problems in the family - family here in the broadest sense described above - arise from the violation of this order. So it turns out that the same right of belonging is given and enforced by a higher power.

2nd Basic Order - Precedence

The second basic principle of life, the order of precedence, demands that everyone in the family take their rightful place, which is theirs alone. This order of precedence is a hierarchical order.

That is, in the family there are some who are higher and come first, and others who are lower and come after them. The order of precedence is determined by the time of belonging. Those who were once a member of the family take precedence over those who came after them. Thus, the parents come before their children, the first-born child before the second, and so on.

If a person who joined later elevates themselves above someone who was there before them, they violate this order of precedence. Everyone in the family has their own rightful place. Nobody can and must dispute that place, for example by elevating themselves above it or trying to displace them from their place.

The hierarchy is often violated in our culture because it is recklessly ignored by many with reference to personal freedom and the right to develop according to one's own ideas. The consequences of this violation are devastating. They determine success and failure and often life and death. And they show that this is a natural order, which no one can violate without serious consequences for themselves and others.

In Original Hellinger® Family Constellation, the violation of the hierarchy comes to light. Its restoration is the prerequisite for a successful and happy life.



3rd Basic Order - Balance

The basic life principle of balance between giving and taking is determined by our conscience. It serves the interaction in our relationships. As soon as we take something from someone or receive something from someone, we feel obliged to give them something as well, something of equal value. This means: We feel indebted to them until we give them something in return and thus settle the debt. After that we feel free towards this person again. Because conscience will not leave us in peace until we have reached a balance.

Giving and Taking with love

If someone gives me something and I balance it, for example by paying the full price for it, the relationship is over. Both go their separate ways again. It's different between lovers. In addition to the need for balance, love comes into play. This means: As soon as I have received something from someone I love, I give them more than the same or equal back. This makes the other person feel indebted to me again. But because they love me, they also give me more back than the balance demands. In this way the exchange of giving and taking between the lovers grows and with it the depth of their relationship.

Disorders in Giving and Taking

However, the order of giving and taking is also disturbed if I give more to the other person than they want or can give back. Many consider it a special love when they shower the other with their love. For example when they try to give more than they can cope with. In this way they bring the harmony in their relationship out of balance. Afterwards, the other person has a difficult time restoring the balance. The consequence is that the one who has been given too much becomes angry and leaves the relationship. Thus, the deviation from balance causes the opposite of what the giver had hoped for. Couple relationships in which one gives more than they take must fail. The same goes for those in which one takes more than they are willing or able to give.

The demand for the balance between giving and taking does not apply in the parent-child relationship. Who can give something of equal value back to their parents? Instead of giving something back to them, one passes it on to others. Especially to one's own children, but also in many other ways in the service of life.

Balance in the negative way



We experience the need for balance in the same way, often even more so when others have harmed us. Then we also want to harm them, in the sense of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Strangely enough, both sides are waiting for this balance. Not only the victim who has been harmed, but also the one who has done something to them. The perpetrator wants to get rid of their guilt by paying atonement. Because they feel that what they have done has gone too far.

The need for balance even in the negative way is insuperable. We must give in to it. If we try to suppress this need and overcome it with noble virtue, we endanger the relationship. By forgiving, the other person comes out of the relationship from equal to equal into a relationship from inferior to superior. The result is similar to situations in which the one showers the other with love by giving more love than the other can give back.

The best way to balance in a negative way is not to hurt the other in the same way or even more, but to hurt them a little less. This means: one takes revenge, but this time with love. Suddenly the other person is surprised. Both look at each other and remember their former love. Already their eyes begin to shine and the exchange of giving and taking in the positive way starts all over again. However, both have become more cautious and treat each other more attentively. As a result of this balance their love has deepened.

Movement Towards The Mother

After our birth, the next decisive moment is the movement towards the mother, now as one facing us, who takes us to her breast and feeds us. With her milk we take life outside of her.

What makes us successful here and prepares us for later success in our lives and in our profession? To take her as the source of our life, with everything that flows from her to us. With her we take our life. This taking is active. We have to suck to make her milk flow. We must call for her to come. We must rejoice in what she gives us. She makes us rich.

Later in life, it becomes clear: whoever succeeds in taking their mother completely in this way will be successful and happy. For just as someone relates to their mother, they also relate to their life and their profession. As far as they reject their mother, they also reject life, their work and their profession.

Just as a person rejoices in their mother, so they rejoice in life and in their work. Just as the mother gives and gives them more and more, if they take from her with love, so their life and their work gives them success to the same extent.



The one who has resentments against their mother also has them against life and against happiness. As their mother withdraws from them as a result of their reservations and their rejection, so life and their success withdraw from them.

The movement towards the mother

For many people, taking the mother is prevented by an early experience. They experienced an early separation from their mother. For example, when they were given away for a period of time, or when the mother was ill and had to leave for recovery, or when we were ill and she was not allowed to visit us. This experience resulted in a deep change in our later behavior. The pain of separation and the helplessness without her, the despair of not being able to go to her where we would have needed her so much, leads to an inner decision.

For example, "I'm giving up on her." "I'm staying by myself." "I'll keep my distance." "I turn my back on her."

Interrupted Movement & Its Consequences

The early interrupted movement towards the mother has far-reaching consequences for later life and for our success.

How does this manifest itself in detail? When such children later want to approach someone, for example a partner, their body reminds them of the trauma of early separation. Then they stop moving towards the partner. Instead of approaching the partner, they wait for him or her to approach them. When the partner really gets close, they often find it hard to bear their closeness. They reject the partner in one way or another instead of welcoming and accepting him or her happily. They suffer from this and yet can only open up to the partner hesitantly, if so, often for a short time. They have a similar experience with their own child. They sometimes find it difficult to bear its closeness.

Behind almost every trauma is a situation in which a movement that would have been necessary was not possible, so that we remained immobile in it as if rooted or paralyzed.

How is such a trauma solved? It is solved in our feelings and in our memory if we go back to this situation in spite of all fear and inwardly recover the movement that was prevented or interrupted at that time.



What does this mean for an early interrupted movement towards the mother? We go back to the situation of that time, become the child of that time again, look at our mother of that time and, despite the emerging pain and the disappointment and anger of that time, take a small step towards her - with love. We pause, look into her eyes and wait until we feel within us the strength and courage for the next small step. We pause again until we succeed in the next small step and the next small steps, until we finally fall into the arms of our mother, embraced and held by her, finally one with her again and with love for her.

Later we check, also here at first inwardly, whether we succeed in this movement with a beloved partner. We look into their eyes, and instead of waiting for them to move towards us, we take the first small step towards them. After a while, when we have gathered enough strength, we take a second step. In this way we continue to walk towards them, slowly step by step, until we take them in our arms and they take us, until we hold them and let them hold us, happy and for a long time.

A Movement Towards Success

An early interrupted movement towards the mother later proves to be a decisive obstacle for success in our work, in our profession and in our company. Here too, it is important that we move towards success instead of waiting for it to come to us. For example, when we wait for the salary without first delivering the corresponding performance, when we push others forward instead of taking action ourselves and retreating rather than approaching someone and a task with joy.

Every success has the face of the mother. Therefore, here too, we first approach our success inwardly and go towards other people, ready to do something for them, ready to serve them, instead of hesitating and standing still and waiting for them to move. Thus, we walk towards them, we walk towards our success, step by step, and at every step we feel our mother lovingly behind us. Connected to her, we are prepared for our success and arrive at it as we arrived at our mother. First we arrived at our mother and now at our success.

Conscience

Many consider conscience to be the highest and final authority to which we must conform in every situation in life. This has to do with the fact that our survival is related to obedience to conscience.



Every family has its own conscience. With the help of our conscience we directly perceive what we have to do or not do in order to be allowed to belong to this family. If we follow the instructions of this conscience, we have a good conscience. This means: We feel certain that we may belong.

If we go against the instructions of our conscience, we have a bad conscience. We feel guilty. What is the exact feeling when we have a bad conscience and feel guilty? We are afraid that we might endanger or have lost the right to belong to our family.

Bad conscience is what drives us, to change our behavior in such a way that we regain good conscience, meaning that we are sure again of our right to belong to our group.

The main error with good and bad consciences is that we think our conscience has general validity, that is, not only for us, but for all people. That is why many people regard their conscience as the voice of God in their soul.

When we consider that people who come from a different family have the same idea, even though the instructions of their conscience differ greatly from the instructions of our conscience, we understand the difficulties that arise when two people refer to their conscience. They want to force the other to follow their conscience instead of the other's.

Conscience In The Family

Every family has its own conscience. With the help of our conscience we directly perceive what we have to do or not do in order to be allowed to belong to this family. If we follow the instructions of this conscience, we have a good conscience. This means: We feel certain that we may belong.

If we go against the instructions of our conscience, we have a bad conscience. We feel guilty. What is the exact feeling when we have a bad conscience and feel guilty? We are afraid that we might endanger or have lost the right to belong to our family.

Bad conscience is what drives us, to change our behavior in such a way that we regain good conscience, meaning that we are sure again of our right to belong to our group.

Someone is excluded from their family if they contradict the standards of their conscience. For example, if they join a group that has a different conscience. The exclusion is justified with the good conscience of the family and demanded by it. This sometimes goes so far that this member is killed. Or a woman hides a child and gives it



away because it is considered a disgrace in her family to have a child out of wedlock. Or she aborts this child out of fear of her own exclusion.

Here we see how life threatening a good conscience can be. Conversely, when a woman gives away a child under these circumstances, or when she aborts a child, she wants to free herself from her feelings of guilt in the sense of balancing giving and taking by atoning for it. In other words, she does something to herself. She might get sick and want to die.

But not everyone has to atone for it themselves. It is enough for another person to atone on their behalf. This too is a movement of conscience. The atonement does not have to be personal.

Who wishes for this atonement? The "God of Conscience." All sacrifices offered to him, especially all child sacrifices, serve to reconcile him. That is, they serve to compensate for an exclusion. Those who are willing to accept atonement bring blessings to those for whom they sacrifice themselves.

This is a displacement of compensation in the sense of: first the sacrifice, then the blessing. This movement of conscience works behind the attempts of children to save their parents by wanting to become ill or die in their place. At the same time this movement of conscience is the basic movement behind every tragedy. However, here it is connected with a violation of the hierarchy, in which a subordinate takes the place of a superior without being aware of this violation of the hierarchy.

For what reason? Conscience assures them that they thereby earn a greater right to belong to their family.

Conscience In The Couples Relationship

The disorder that conscience can cause in a couple can be seen in the fact that each partner tries to convert the other to their conscience. They measure the behavior of the other according to their conscience and judge it as good or bad. This applies to both partners. It reduces mutual respect and love and leads to endless arguments in many relationships. Especially when it comes to how the children should be raised.

The "Yes" in the couple relationship



How can we free ourselves from the disorder of conscience in our couple relationship? By recognizing the partner and their family and their conscience as equal to ours. So we tell them: "I love you as you are, exactly as you are. I love your mother as she is, exactly as she is. I love your father as he is, exactly as he is. I love your family as it is, as equal to mine." With this we have taken a step beyond the confinement of our conscience, a step of love.

We achieve the same with our children. Here we can check, above all, whether we have succeeded in this step. For example, if we tell a child inwardly and even openly: "In you I love your father as he is, and I'll be happy if you one day become like your father." Or: "In you I love your mother as she is, and I'll be happy if you one day become like your mother." What happens to the child then? It will be happy. Because it loves both parents the way they are. These sentences have another effect. The child becomes free for its own path.

Conscience and Love

Whoever follows their conscience rejects others. In order to be allowed to belong to one's family, they must consider others, who are different because they have a different conscience, to be less good, and consider themselves better than them. Thus, conscience is opposed to respect and love for others who are different. All distinctions between good and evil and between the chosen or rejected, or between heaven and hell, come from conscience.

This has to do with the fact that we create our God largely according to the standards of our conscience. That He therefore loves only those whom our conscience loves, and excludes from His love those whom our conscience excludes from our love. Of course, also the others who have a different conscience have a God who follows their conscience. They too exclude others by invoking their conscience and their God. For example us. In this way, the good conscience of some and the good conscience of others becomes a dividing line that separates people and peoples and religions. Their good conscience sets them against each other. It justifies the worst cruelties against others, for example in religious wars.

Conscience And Love

The following Orders of Love are easy to check in daily life. We can immediately perceive whether and to what extent they apply.



Giving and Taking

The Order of Giving and Taking is dictated to us by our conscience. It serves as a balance and thus the exchange in our relationships. As soon as we take something from someone or receive something from someone, we feel obliged to give them something as well, something of equal value.

This means that we feel indebted to them until we give them something in return and thus pay off the debt. After that we feel innocent and free towards them again. This conscience does not leave us alone until we have balanced the situation.

We feel all movements of conscience as guilt or innocence. If someone gives me something and I balance it, for example by paying the full price, the relationship is over. Both go their own ways again. If I pay too little for it, the relationship continues. For once, by continuing to feel guilty towards the person. On the other hand, through the person who still expects something from me. Only when I have fully balanced, are we free of each other.

Giving And Taking With Love

It's different between lovers. In addition to the need for balance, love also comes into play. This means that as soon as I have received something from someone I love, I give them more than the same or equal. This makes the other person feel indebted to me again. But because they love me, they also give me more back than the balance demands. In this way the exchange of giving and taking between the lovers grows and with it the depth of their relationship.

Disorders With Giving And Taking

A disorder is: I give less than I took. This also applies vice versa, if I give more to the other person than they want or are able to give back.

Many consider it a special love when they shower the other with their love. For example, when they try to give them more than they can cope with. In this way they bring the harmony in their relationship out of balance. Afterwards, the other person has a difficult time restoring the balance.



What is the result? The other person, who has been given too much beyond the balance, will leave the relationship. Deviation from the balance causes the opposite of what the giver had hoped for.

Couple relationships in which one gives much more than one takes must fail. So do those in which one takes more than one is willing or able to give. For example, when the person is disabled. However, there is also a balance when the disabled person recognizes that they have to take more than they can give back and, instead of making demands, they thank the other person from their heart. Gratitude also serves as a balance.

The Balance By Passing On

We cannot always balance by giving something of equal value back to the other.

Who can give something equal back to their parents?
Or to a teacher who has helped them for years?

We feel a lifelong debt to them. Many want to escape the pressure of this debt by refusing to take more of it. They make themselves poor because the pressure of this debt becomes too great for them. They become refusers of life instead of taking it to the fullest.

There is an easy way out to balance in a beautiful, fulfilling way: Instead of giving something back, we pass it on to others. Especially to our own children, but also in many other ways in the service of life. Everyone feels well, the givers and the takers.

The Balance In A Negative Way

We also have the need for balance, often even more so when others have harmed us. Then we also want to harm them, in the sense of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

Strangely enough, both sides are waiting for this balance. Not only the victim to whom something has been done, but also those who have done something to them, and in this sense have become guilty towards them. The victim is looking for revenge. The perpetrator wants to get rid of their guilt by atoning for it.

But what happens in reality? Does it come to a balance? Or does the victim usually do something worse to the perpetrator? What are the consequences?



The perpetrator feels: This went too far. So they search for compensation from their side, this time as the victim. To compensate they do something bad to the other one again. Often more than it serves the balance. In this way the balance increases in the bad way. Instead of loving each other, they become enemies.

Revenge With Love

The need for balance even in the bad way is insuperable. We must give in to it. If we try to suppress this need, we endanger the relationship.

By forgiving, the other comes out of the relationship from equal to equal into a relationship from inferior to superior. Real forgiveness can only be achieved mutually. For example, by both not returning to the past, not even in thought. It can be over forever.

The easiest way to get out of the vicious circle of more and more mutual injuries would be for one person to hurt the other a little less instead of hurting the other the same or even more. In other words: they too take revenge, but this time with love. Then the exchange of giving and taking can begin anew in the good way. Usually both have become more careful and are more attentive towards each other. As a result of this balance, their love has deepened.

The Will To Exterminate

Deep in our soul there is an archaic will to survive from the time of human development, when the survival of one's own group depended on destroying the other group that attacked them. None of the other group was allowed to survive. Later wars were also fought in this way. It was not only about defeating the other group or fending off its attack, but, in order to be protected against it, to destroy it to the last member.

We find an example of this in the Bible when God commanded the Israelite tribes, when they invaded Canaan to conquer it: "You shall kill them all, men, women, children and the cattle, as a holocaust for Yahweh." Modern examples of this are the attempts to exterminate an entire people, the so-called genocide, and the attempt of the National Socialists in Germany to exterminate the entire Jewish people, including all children. The will to exterminate in us is kept in check by the rule of law and public order. It protects us against the will to exterminate of others, and protects them against our will to exterminate. As soon as public order collapses, it breaks out again unchecked.



How does this will to destroy manifest itself in our relations? For example, what goes on in our soul when a partner has hurt us? Do we only want to hurt them in the same way in order to balance it again? Or do we often even wish them death because of a little thing inside and want to destroy them? The will to exterminate is the background and the driving force for the escalation of many harmless injuries in couple relationships.

When we know about the power of the will to exterminate within us and remember its origin, we become more cautious. We balance something harmless with something harmless and prefer to balance with a little less than with a little too much.

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3.4 New Family Constellations - Forces Of Love

These Forces, identified by Bert Hellinger in the course of his practice, are as inexorable and its effects as evident as the force of gravity may be. They reveal themselves in experience through the phenomenological work of family constellations and through their effects in our everyday lives. Bert Hellinger referred to them as “Orders of Love”, and always spoke of the importance of assent, of saying Yes to what is, as prior to them. Brigitte Champetier refers to them as Forces of Love, for they move everything that exists forward toward greater, unconditional, love, and includes Assent as the first one.

The Force of Assent

When we assent to everything as it is, and every one as they are, we acknowledge deep down that everything is wanted the way it is by a greater force, even if we don't understand, and this immediately puts us in tune with life allowing success to enter. We are immediately in harmony with the other forces of love, flowing forward toward a greater love. To flow with it is to allow abundance and well being, it is to move toward our highest realization.

The Force of belonging

Everyone has the same right to belong, no matter what

When someone was/is excluded (murdered, aborted, rejected, hated or forgotten) from the family system (whether a dead ancestor or living person; whether a blood relative, or someone external to the family that made room for someone else -such as a former partner, or a perpetrator to a family relative, or a victim to a family relative), someone else from a later generation is unconsciously compelled to occupy his/her place. Someone from a later generation will attempt to include the excluded by unconsciously reliving his life and misfortunes, following the excluded into death, perhaps carrying his anger, his desire to kill, or replicating a tragic death, becoming a victim perhaps for love of a victim that was, or atoning for someone who did not assume the responsibility of his/her actions. The powerful attraction that these excluded exert on us, is Love.

The greatest misdeeds, like the smallest, are done out of love, blind love. This is a kind of love that takes us out of our place, as we rise above our ancestors, believing that we can help them that way, as if we were their elders, or parents, for instance. But this furthers exclusion (on becoming them, we continue not to see them), until someone in a later generation finally integrates the excluded, without judgment, with love: enlightened love (now we see). Thus



Hellinger claimed, from his experience with family constellations, that Karma can be healed, now, with love (enlightened love).

Family Constellations help us bring the excluded into our range of vision, restoring their belonging within our hearts and the system, thus bringing peace to them and us, furthering our human growth, and bringing us closer to the healthy, successful, compassionate and loving persons we are meant to be.

The Force of Precedence

Those who came before (our ancestors, our parents, our older siblings, the founder of a company or organization, employees who have been there longer...) have a preeminence over those who came later, when the latter give owed respect to the former, the former serve the latter.

Family constellations reveal that in the family unit, the man/husband has precedence according to function, for he looks after the mother-child unit. The woman respects the man, and the man serves the feminine.

Hellinger observes that there is another hierarchy at work, one according to function (i.e. in the couple relationship, the man, who when respected by the woman, serves her; in a hospital, administrators, then doctors, then nurses...) When both hierarchies are respected (longer membership in the system and function), the system succeeds. One other hierarchy matters here also, as noted by Brigitte Champetier, one according to training/education (in relation to the task at hand).

This priority shows spatially in constellations in such a way that older members of the system, or those who have priority in terms of function and/or level of training/education, are placed from right to left in successive descending order (placed by whom? this is the arrangement where representatives feel right, where the energy field places them). Hellinger observes that in everyday situations, from meetings to meal gatherings, when participants place themselves respecting that order, everything runs more smoothly.

The order between systems, however, is different to that between individuals in a system: the most recent system has a priority over the previous ones. This means, for instance, that as soon as a sperm fertilizes an egg -as soon as a new life is created- that male and that female belong together to a new system that comes before their previous one, with all its far reaching consequences (while former individuals, like previous partners, have a precedence and are owed respect by the new ones, or a child from a previous relationship will have precedence for his natural parent over this parent's new partner). New systems have a priority over the older ones,



who shall make room for them (for example, our new family unit has priority over the family where we came from).

The Force of Compensation

There is a constant need for balance, opposites need each other to move forward (through balance and reconciliation). Balance is sought for, but not achieved, thus Life moves forward (perfect balance is still). The greatest quantum of energy that propels Life forward and us in our human growth happens when opposites fuse (i.e.: the reconciliation of victim and perpetrator; the union of man and woman).



Section 4: The Importance Of Intake



4.1 Introduction to Intake

A great information source is your client's intake, **this is just as valuable as clues in the Field**. You start working on the constellation during the intake.

Most of our clients know the issue and the root cause - sometimes they do not. Many of your constellations can be solved in a good way, simply through your conversation with your client. Who died, what happened, why did the family leave the homeland, etc.

When I do an intake with a client I am speaking with them personally for 30-45 minutes. I am asking questions such as, what is not working in your life, how will your life look better if you get a good result from the Constellation, etc.

When I do an intake I am looking for patterns. Say someone comes to me and says I suffer from depression. I will ask,

“Was your mother or father depressed?”

The answer *“Yes, my mother was depressed”*

I now know the issue is “probably” on the mother side (BE OPEN to being wrong about this)

Next question,

“What happened to your mother?”

Answer *“She was beaten by her mother”*

Now I know I need to go back farther into the lineage. Something happened to grandmother to make her an abuser. I need to continue tracking this back until I find the root cause of the family wound.

Next question,

“What happened to your grandmother?”

Answer *“She came over from Ireland when she was a little girl”*

Now this is probably the main wound. I will probably need to set up Ireland, why they left, the family left behind, etc.

Regarding the Constellation I will probably set up the client and depression to start.



Deeper Into the Intake

While the example above is very brief, I am usually asking all kinds of questions to get a full picture of the family history. Do you have brothers and sisters - how are they doing in life? (Are they depressed). Do you have children, how are they doing in life? What happened to your mother during her lifetime? If you were not depressed, what would you be doing in life? What were the BIG events in life? Did anyone die young? Etc. Your intuition will guide you and will become stronger as you practice.

This Is Not A Psychotherapy Intake

This intake is not about their emotions and their story. You may need to tell your clients this. Say, this is a different type of intake. I am looking for the BIG facts within your lineage. People are conditioned to tell a psychological story. You may have to take charge and guide the process very directly. This will be hard for many of you as you may want to be caring and compassionate. Sometimes it is right to listen, sometimes listening will stop from getting the information you need. Learn to feel the difference.

The Objective

The objective is for you to get a complete overview of the family history. You will want to know who was strong and can be supportive, what happened, who died young, where are the people from. Etc.

You will also want to know the level of trauma the client holds within their body. HOW MUCH YOUR CLIENT CAN HANDLE. This will dictate how you proceed with the Constellation. If the client has a lot of trauma and minimal support, will you bring supportive forces at the start of the Constellation? Will you maintain better connection with them during the Constellation, will you choose not to go as deep? These are all important things to know.

Learning about your client's trauma level is imperative. Many people can hide this from you upon first meeting. Your intake is the best opportunity to ascertain this. I know when I do an intake if the client has a ton of mental illness in their family, if their parents died when they were young, if this is generations of sexual abuse, all of these, are indications of how much trauma your client is coping with.

It is important that facilitators learn and integrate these frameworks. As always though your intuition is the most important guide in determining how to direct the intake and facilitate the Constellation.



4.2 Family History Considerations

Questions to ask:

- How did the parents get to know each other?
- How old were they at the time?
- How old were they when they got married?
- If they didn't get married, or if they later separated or divorced, what was the reason?
- Did the mother have important past loves, fiancés, or husbands?
- Did the father have important past loves, fiancés, or wives?
- How many siblings do you have (including half brothers or sisters)?
- How many siblings does your mother have?
- How many siblings does your father have?

An early death in the family is often one of the most important causes of entanglements.

- Do you have a sibling who died young? (Younger than 30; stillbirths count as well)
- Did your father or mother die when you were younger than 15?
- Did any of your siblings have a special “fate?” (Examples of special fates can be found below.)
- Did your mother have any siblings who died young?
- Did your father have any siblings who died young?
- Were there any siblings on your maternal grandparents' side who died young?
- Were there any siblings on your paternal grandparents' side who died young?
- Was there anyone in the family to have a child younger than 15 years old die?
- Did any woman in the family die in childbirth, from the consequences of childbirth or did she sustain any injury in childbirth?

Crimes, gross injustices and guilt as a consequence of actions have an effect on the family over several generations.

- Was there any family member who committed murder or manslaughter?
- Did any member of the family commit sexual abuse?
- Was anyone involved in war crimes? In what way?
- Was anyone cheated out of an inheritance? Or did they inherit something unjustly?

Special fates in the family have to do with someone being shut out of the family, harsh personal fates or loss of the biological parents or the homeland



- Was there anyone in the family who committed suicide?
- Was anyone the victim of a crime?
- Was there anyone who was mentally or physically handicapped?
- Did anyone spend time under psychiatric care or in a psychiatric institution?
- Did anyone spend time in prison?
- Did anyone in the family go bankrupt?
- Was anyone homosexual?
- Was anyone shut out of the family in any other way, for any other reason (alcoholism, gambling, etc.)?
- Did anyone emigrate?
- Were there children born out of wedlock?
- Was a child given up to foster parents or relatives?
- Was anyone adopted?
- Was anyone driven from his homeland; did anyone flee from his homeland?
- Did anyone have parents of two nationalities?
- Was there any other type of tragic fate?
- Do similar fates exist somewhere in the mother's or father's family?
- Do similar fates exist somewhere in the grandparents' families?
- Do similar fates exist somewhere in the great grand parents' families?

Finally, it is worth finding out about those things in the family that would rather be kept secret. It usually has something to do with a crime or it is something embarrassing, having to do with sexuality:

- Are there family secrets?

From Bertold Ulsamers book *The Healing Power of the Past*



4.3 Intake to Set-up

(What to know and look for)

Presence – Mentally connect with the client, connect with yourself, should you get confused don't be scared to stop and take some time to recollect & reconnect.

Issue/Struggle - You need to know the client's issue. This should be very clear to you, if not then find this clarity. They should be able to clearly articulate the issue in just a few sentences. Sometimes it will take a while for you and the client to get clear regarding this, take the time necessary.

The Client's Goal - What is the client's goal? How will their life look different if they get a good result from the Constellation? Knowing this will give you a direction to take the Constellation.

A Helpful focus – It can help us to remember that we are looking for, “What stopped love from flowing down within the system?” For example: Why was grandmother unable to see her daughter? Why did dad want to leave?

Feeling in your own body - You should develop an ability to feel in your body what is important, what has the most energy. You will begin to develop an ability to feel in your own body who is missing, perhaps you will not be able to feel the client's mom, or you will not be able to feel the client's dad, etc.

Our Loyalty – Remember, our loyalty is not to the client, but to the entire system. We must be loyal to every member of the family if we are to facilitate clean constellations. Bert Hellinger would say that his loyalty lies with what or who is excluded from the system, or what is missing or hidden within the system. Feel into what works for you, but remember, everyone gets a place, even the greatest perpetrators.

The Story - Allow as much “story” as you feel comfortable with, but the resolution will usually not reveal itself in the story, but in the facts. For example: mom left, dad died, etc. With some clients you will have to reign in the story as it can be a distraction.

Who to set up - You will need to know who to set up. It is always better to start small and then build on this. For example, start with client and issue, client and daughter, client and illness, just the client, mom and dad, etc. Sometimes you may not bring the focus client's representative in at the beginning of the constellation, you may want to look at the relationship between mom and dad first, then bring in the client and see how it shifts the constellation. From here you can build bigger, say mom collapses on the floor, you may want to then either, ask more questions about mom and her life, or you may want to bring in her mother and father, or perhaps just her mother.



The Big Issues - Recognize the big issues that could be represented: mom died, we left our homeland, dad was in war, there was a huge fire, they lost everything in the depression, there were 3 miscarriages, grandma was locked up in an institution, uncle Joe went to jail, our family were slave owners, mother had an abortion, my parents were ultra religious, etc,



4.4 Hellinger - Start Small

Don't bring in too much when setting up a constellation

From Hellinger in *Rachael Weeping for Her Children*:

“You may have observed that I ask very few questions when people come up to work with me. I don't permit them to tell me their story. Now imagine what would happen if I allowed them to tell me their whole story, how much strength would be left by the end to work with? If a person is allowed to define his or her problems extensively, it is like hypnotizing the therapist until he or she agrees with a particular point of view, in which case the independence of the therapist is compromised.

If everybody in a family were allowed to tell a story, you would be unable to work. For me the questions are reduced to outward events only, for example: Marriages, children, deaths in the family, and special destinies or fates. I only want to know what happened, nothing else. We don't discuss the characteristics of a person, whether strong or weak, or good or bad. We don't consider the person's opinions about family members. These things don't matter at all for a constellation. I only need the facts, and with these few facts I set up the family.

There is something else, if a person has told me several facts, I test inwardly where the main strength is, which word carries the greatest strength and force. It's very easy if you allow yourself to be guided in this way. You can sense where the real weight is and what is important. You take up that one issue and that's what you work with.

When a constellation has been set up, first you watch carefully, and check which next step would carry the most weight. Take for example, the constellation where I saw the father was looking away from the family, as I led him forward in that direction. That was the next step. As a therapist very often you don't know any more than that, you only know what the next step might be. You follow that awareness, and out of that, the next steps develop, bit by bit. You start it very little and then enlarge it incrementally, but never more than is necessary for the person. You don't have to deal with the whole family, or to solve all of the issues at once. If you try to deal with more than one thing at a time you get confused.”



Section 5: Working in the Field



5.1 Working in the Field - Don't get Overwhelmed

(A transcribed presentation by Jack)

Jack: I was leading a constellation recently with four different threads. It went on for about 3 hours. It was a lot to hold.

Look at this entire screen and imagine that in every box of the screen there is a different representative. You got mom, you got grandma, dad, death, perpetrator, whatever. Imagine looking at this entire screen, and in every frame there is a piece of the puzzle in front of you. And you - as the facilitator - are navigating that. You are navigating that, the client, the field itself, I'm remembering the issue of the client, the goal that the client wants to work towards. And I am looking at all these different relationships, at all these different connections. That can be absolutely overwhelming. That can be **ABSOLUTELY OVERWHELMING**.

It is true that it has taken me years to get to the point of being able to hold all of that in a really pretty good way.

With that said, part of the reason I don't get overwhelmed is because I'm not trying to figure out this entire computer monitor at the same time.

That's way, way, way too much.

Now, what I realize in my growth as a facilitator that I now do is very simple. I am doing an intake with my client, talking with my client, and I begin with setting up one or two reps. I set up a rep for the client and then I am setting up a rep for "Depression" for example, to see where the field shows me it wants to go - relative to the client's issue, which the client shares with me as in "Yes, I'm feeling depressed."

Then the only thing I'm doing at that next moment is finding one more piece. You've all seen me do this. I do a check in with the client, I do a check in with the client's rep, I do a check in with the other rep, "Depression".

And "Depression" says: "I'm looking over my right shoulder and I'm scared."

So now, all I simply do in constellation work is ONE piece.



I bring in another rep. For example: “New rep, please come in as the Rep “Behind the shoulder”. The intelligence that’s here will guide us to one most important next movement. So I do that next movement. And then someone shows up back there, collapsed on the ground. And they are saying: “Someone is perpetrating against me.”

Next movement: I bring in the “Perpetrator”. I work that. Then there is one more clue that comes in. Like “I’m feeling disconnected from all of this.” Another clue.

I am simply doing one step at a time. I’m not trying to figure everything out at this point. I am simply trying to get all the puzzle pieces and put them on the board, those that are necessary to play the game. Once I FEEL like I have all the puzzle pieces, and this might go back to great great grandmother and something that happened to her, it feels to me like these are all the puzzle pieces that are necessary to work on the client’s issue, such as “I’m feeling depressed.”

I’ve got all the pieces on the board. Now all of the squares are taken by the reps. Again, looking at that all at one time, trying to figure that out, can be overwhelming.

At that point, almost always - and it’s NEVER always in anything in constellation work - almost always I simply go back to the oldest relationship relevant to the issue. So I’d go back to the great great great grandmother, perpetrator is in the field, and I look at this relationship.

Note, I am NOT looking at 12 different screens at the moment.

I’m simply wanting to bring healing and resolution to this ONE relationship.

When I bring that to this one relationship, then great great great grandmother might say: “I am at peace. I want my great great great granddaughter to be at peace.”

And then I move forward to the next relevant relationship. Usually, it’s probably going to be chronological. But I’m starting farther back in the past and moving my way forward to the present. And I’m only doing it one relationship at a time. I’m not trying to figure things out.

At that point I generally have a good idea about what needs to happen overall. But it can still get overwhelming when we are looking at 12 screens and thinking “What am I going to do?” So what I normally do, is to start with the oldest relationship. Resolve what needs to be resolved there.

Do I care about the client’s rep at that moment? Not very much. I do care. But I’m not going to get pulled into overly checking in with the client’s rep.



It creates problems when we are trying to work on 12 different relationships at the same time. So I really bring my focus to the oldest relationship. Great great great grandmother is fine. Now, she can see her daughter. Now, Great great grandmother is seen. Now, let's work on that relationship. It's like that "Slinky", that toy that takes one step at a time.

I offer that as a way to help you all conceptualize a way of not getting overwhelmed.

I do one step at a time until I feel like I have all the pieces on the board, then I go to the oldest relationship in the lineage, and I start working out that relationship. Sometimes that relationship doesn't need to be worked out. Sometimes it just needs to be SEEN. And that's really intuitive learning.

You just get in there, just like a surgeon, and you ask yourself: "Does this part, does the spleen need to be dealt with?"

"No, the spleen doesn't need to be dealt with. It was just good for me to see it to know what is going on within the system."



5.2 Energy, order, reality

Energy, order & reality are helpful focuses to guide you when working in the Field. Answering the question, where do I go next...

Energy

With energy, a facilitator attunes to the greatest point of energy within the constellation. This is usually the Field showing wants to happen next. (Also remember what had the greatest energy or “hit” while doing the intake.) An example of “energy” is a representative in the Field strongly feeling anger toward her husband; this anger demonstrates a lot of juice/potency to explore here. Examples can also be more subtle, such as a husband’s representative staring out the window or at a spot on the floor; even though there is no stirring or motion being expressed, a facilitator develops a feel for this being the point of energy. It is up to the facilitator to read and interpret the energy in the Field. With practice, this focus speeds the constellation along with a natural flow allowing clients the greatest benefits possible.

(From Rachael Weeping For Her Children pg. 64/5) Hellinger: “When a constellation has been set up, first you watch carefully, and check which next step would carry the most weight. Take for example, the constellation where I saw that the father was looking away from the family, and I led him forward in that direction, that was the next step. As a therapist, very often you don’t know any more than that, you only know where the next step might be. You follow that awareness and out of that, the next steps develop bit by bit. You start with very little and enlarge it incrementally, but never more than is necessary for the person. You don’t have to deal with the whole family, or to solve all of the family issues at once. If you try to deal with more than one thing at a time, you get confused. The principle of minimalism applies here.”

Order

The second lens to look through is whether representatives are in correct order. For example, if the mother is leaning on her daughter, this is not the natural order, and speaks to the underlying wound dynamic within the family system. As a facilitator, ask yourself the following questions to determine the significance of order in the constellation:

What is out of order? Why is it out of order? Is someone missing who is supposed to be in a certain place of order?



Many times the origination of the clients challenge are rooted in things the clients knows nothing about, when you pay attention to anomalies of order in the constellation, hidden dynamics are identified and healed. In most constellations it is necessary for the facilitator to shift the out-of-order dynamics into right order. See details about this in “4.0 Orders of Precedence” & “Moving Representatives in the Field”.

Reality

The third lens a facilitator must use - The factual reality beyond the client's story (Their subjective experience.) This factual focus is primarily based on the question “what happened & to whom?”

Every client has a story about what happened and why. How they did not get their needs met and who is to blame. Every client's parent, their mother and father, has an equal wound-based story. All of these stories on a psychological level are VALID.

However if their psychological story would have brought them healing, they would have already been healed and not be coming to your event.

The lingering psychological stories do not bring healing, they may bring some comfort and relief from the pain, but long term resolutions are not found here.

Our job as facilitators is to stay away from the psychological story. It can help us discern where the wounds and issues are within the family, but they will not provide the solutions.

We need to stick with the reality. Who died, who left the family, who was ostracized, why did the people leave the homeland, etc.

(We will discuss this quite a bit more in class)



5.3 Examples of Healing Statements

“The language of the Soul does not seek to deny that wrong was done, nor does it seek to deny that it was a terrible thing. However it highlights the undeniable truths that have been overlooked in such situations owing to the pain and shame...” ~ Unknown

When working in the Field, the facilitator generally has 2 tools to bring healing and resolution: (1) through moving representatives spatially in the Field into correct “orders” or positions that are healthier and more balanced, and (2) through uncovering the soul truths of what is impacting the system in the form of healing statements. Healing statements bring awareness to the love and reconciliation impulse within the system. In their most clear form, they take our stories of pain--what happened and what went wrong, and convert them into a clear, loving awareness regarding a much bigger perspective, a soul’s-eye view of the family, relationships, and system. **Healing statements convert psychological stories into soul truth.** Once we see and experience soul truth, relationships change and grow, we are freed of burdens, and greater future possibilities come into our lives.

Converting stories into soul truth is one of the most difficult skills for facilitators to grasp, and yet it is undoubtedly one of THE most important. When facilitators are checking in with representatives in the field, most of the time the representatives are expressing **the story** about how they feel or what happened. It is a facilitator’s job to distill this story and bring the soul truth into awareness.

The facilitator will take in what a representative states and search within him or herself for the diamond (soul truth) within the story. (Note, this distilling is a learned skill and one in which you will improve with much experience) Once the facilitator taps into an awareness of this “diamond” or “soul truth”, they then test it out in the field by having it spoken by one of the representatives. A facilitator can then ask the speaking representative or the one receiving the message if the statement landed as true. This impact on the representatives is a facilitator’s barometer of the accuracy or truth of the statement. If the statement does not land for the one who spoke it and the receiver, then the facilitator knows they were at least slightly off the mark. The facilitator may choose to either ask them “is it a statement close to this, can you refine it?” or the facilitator can begin again through re-checking in with the representative, or by moving to a different part of the field and exploring there.

The following are various examples of healing statements to help a facilitator get clear about the distilling process. Again, learning this distilling skill from story to soul truth is one of the most difficult components to grasp in family constellation facilitation, and one of the most important. Mastery comes with experience, intuition, wisdom and time in the Field.



The Following are examples of simple Soul Statements which are appropriate to use in certain situations. In Soul Statements the “story” is being simplified to core facts.

Lost children - When a family system has lost a child (including aborted or miscarried children) many times family members will have difficulty integrating, grieving or honoring this loss. This will affect not only the parents, but their children and possibly even grandchildren as well. The following healing statements relate to this loss:

A parent whose personal love for life has diminished may say – *“When you died, I no longer wanted to go on living. I wanted to join you in death. Now I see this is no way to honor you. I will live fully and carry your memory in my heart.”*

A parent who cannot face the loss of a child – *“It was so difficult when you left, I could no longer look at you.”*

A parent who could not grieve a lost child subsequently became unavailable for her living children – *“Now that we have grieved and honored your brother-- once more we can see you.”*

A grandmother made a mistake and one of her children died. This grandchild was carrying guilt out of blind love for the grandmother. The grandchild’s statement was: *“Dear Grandmother, I respectfully leave the guilt with you.”*

Parents bring their daughter to a constellation. The daughter compulsively pulls her hair out. The constellation indicates that the daughter is expressing her mother's pain regarding a deceased child – The Husband says to the wife, *“I see that our baby boy died. We mourn together.”* The Daughter (client) says to her mother: *“I’ve carried this out of love for you.”* Mother and Father say to their daughter, *“You’re father and I will carry this, just be our daughter. This is not yours to carry.”*

Early loss of a sibling (including abortions, miscarriages, and adoptions) – In addition to the parents having trouble dealing with the loss of a child, siblings will also have trouble dealing with this loss. This is most pronounced if the parents do not fully grieve the loss of the child, in which case the siblings will honor their brothers/sisters by carrying part of the wound for the parents. This can show up as the siblings having difficulty thriving or they might have impulses to join their brothers and sisters in death. The following soul (healing) statements speak to this issue:

Perhaps a child who experiences depression might say to his deceased sibling – *“I’m sad that you couldn’t stay because I’ve missed you deeply. I see now that I have carried this sadness as a way to honor you, but I see that living fully is the best way.”*



A sibling who has struggled with impulses towards death may need to say – *“Wait patiently for me, I shall come when it's my proper time and not one moment before. I will see you again.”*

A child who has difficulty thriving in life – *“Bless me as I live life fully and carry your memory in my heart.”*

In this real life example a mother gave her first child up for adoption. Her second child came in for a constellation struggling with not being able to be happy in life. It was recognized in the constellation that she was loyal to this sibling who was given up, this is what she said: *“Dear brother, I am sad that you had to leave because I've missed you deeply. I take you fully as my brother and give you a place in my heart.”*

Past relationships – Unresolved past relationships often create blocks for people pursuing current or future relationships. No matter what the circumstances were for a relationship ending, it is important for people to honor their past relationships, and for a place to be made for them in their mental and emotional system.

When there has been a divorce, if it is acrimonious, many times one partner will not be able to show respect for the other. Here is a positive statement towards honoring the opposite partner – *“It is a shame that our marriage did not survive. I will take all that was good between us and give it a place in my heart.”*

An angry former wife comes to a constellation workshop. She is expressing rage and frustration about her former partner. Her healing statement is: *“It causes me pain that things went the way they did, because I loved you very much. I take all that was good between us and give it a special place in my heart.”*

If a parent rejects the former partner the children will feel this and be negatively impacted – *“I honor the part of you that I see alive in our children.”*

A parent says to a child – *“I honor the part of your father that I see alive in you dear son, and it is good to see.”* In this way they are accepted and freed from carrying any burdens.

One partner says to the other as a way to honor something good that came out of the marriage/partnership – *“Thank you for the gift of our children; without you I would not have this blessing.”*

Victim and Perpetrator – Family Constellations takes an unconventional approach to dynamics involving a victim and a perpetrator. The focus of the facilitator in this circumstance is on the healing of the whole system, rather than protecting the victim. Healing statements in this dynamic are focused on tapping into the universal love that is possible between all humans,



despite painful circumstances that have occurred and also speak to a bond between victims and perpetrators.

In the following example a woman was raped. She carried a deep hatred of the rapist and was unable to let this go and move forward in her life - *“I see clearly now that your family is burdened by this, and this is a heavy fate you carry.”* With this statement she begins to recognize the humanity of this man and begins to let go of her need to hate, freeing her to live fully.

Many times adults have a repressed sexuality or significant wounding around their sexuality. In these cases the sexual energies may be carried by the children, who may act out these repressed, wounded parts of the parent. In this example a brother was sexually abused by his sister. His healing statement was: *“I allowed it out of love for you. You are still my sister, no matter what.”* This is the recognition of the fact that there is love between them and that they still have a familial bond.

Great, great grandfather who was a slave owner says to his great, great grandson (the client): *“The guilt is mine, all of it. I alone carry the consequences. Leave it with me.”* Client replies to great, great grandfather: *“I respectfully leave it with you”* and bows. Client to slaves: *“Yours was a difficult fate, I shall now live my life fully in honor of you. I give you a place in my heart.”*

Role Reversal – The relationships between a child and their parents is one of the core relationships in Family Constellations work. There is a natural order in family systems in which the parent provides support to their child. In some situations, this order can be reversed which can create a lot of dysfunction in the system if not resolved. Healing statements work to regain the proper order within the family system.

When a child is acting as the parent and the parent is acting as the child, it can be very helpful to have the child state to the parent *“I am just your child, you are the big one and I am just the little one.”* This statement can wake parents up to the inappropriate dynamic.

Excluded Family Members – When members of a family have been excluded the children who come into the system will carry this pain as a way to balance what or who was forgotten or ignored within the system.

A client experiences extreme sadness in life. During the intake it comes to light that the client has 2 uncles that suffered a difficult fate. (They were twins, one uncle dying early in life then the other was institutionalized), client experiences extreme sadness in life – The client says to one uncle, *“Beloved uncle, I’ve missed you terribly.”* *“Dearest uncle, I’ve carried your sadness out of love for you.”* *“I take you as my uncle and give you a special place in my heart.”* Client to both uncles: *“Yours was a difficult fate and I now respectfully leave your fate with you, my grandparents and mother. This is not mine to carry”*



James's brother died in World Trade Center attack, he and his family attend a constellation. This was their conversation within the field –

Living brother to deceased brother: *“The day you left us was terrible, it was difficult to let you go.”*

Deceased brother to living brother, *“You have a family dear brother, this is my fate and they need you.”*

Living brother to deceased brother, *“I shall leave you with the dead and go to my wife and family.”*

Deceased brother, *“It was my fate, there was nothing anyone could do, I had to leave.”*

Living brother to his sons, *“This is my brother, you're uncle. He left us early, but he still belongs to you as your uncle.”*

These examples bring the stories into their right place. It is the facilitators job to distill the story into Soul level truth...

Orders of Love - This example is reflective of a situation that is out of proper order. Any time a child is involved in the affairs of the parents it is problematic. You will see this when the child is the caretaker to the parent.

Story: *“Mom, I have been very angry with dad. I do not like how he is treating you I wish you would stand up to him more. I will stand up for you, but I wish you would do it too. I think you should leave him.”*

Soul statement: *“Mother, I am deeply sorry for disrespecting your decisions. It is between you and dad and it is none of my business. I am only your child, I will let you carry this.”*

Previous Partner - The following example illustrates a situation in which one partner is not available for the other. In this case there is the energy of a previous partner involved. This former relationship has not been healed.

Story: *“I am still hung up on my childhood sweetheart who committed suicide. I can't let her go for this would be disloyal to her and I love her. I am resentful that you want me to do more for you and always be there for you. I am giving you all that I can.”*

Soul statement: *“Today I've realized that I've been looking at Joanna all this time. For the first time I truly see you and this feels really good.”*



Abuse - When there has been significant abuse in the family the family relationship becomes deeply strained. We can see this with physical, verbal or sexual abuse. If this occurs, it is very important for deep soul level healing to occur. The following speaks to this. Depending on the level of abuse, a soul can lose their right to belong to the family system. Abusive parents will always be mom or dad, but they may no longer have the right to parent. The field will show us if this is the case.

Story: *“Father, you abused me and hurt me deeply, I hate you. Because of you my life is a mess. I will never have a good relationship and I don’t want you as my father any longer.”*

Soul Statement: *“Dear father, I allowed it out of love for you. You are still my father, no matter what.”*



5.4 Soul & Healing Statements

This is the compilation of a Facebook conversation about Healing Statements. I think this conversation and the comments by subsequent facilitators can be valuable as a learning tool. Below is my original post, followed by the comments.

My original post:

“Facilitating - One of the hardest things to learn are the Soul/healing statements.

I've come to the conclusion that a difference in Soul statements and psychological statements is Soul statements are truth based and rooted in love, while psychological statements are wound based. (And both have a place at times)

It's taken me years to learn these. Yes, I can go with the traditional Hellinger statements such as "you are the right mother for me," etc but many times these are not exactly right or what is needed.

How have you learned these? Resources, aha's or understandings?

I think this is the hardest thing for my students to learn

I'd love to hear your thoughts”

Jack

Maik Jungrichter the only way to really feel what is needed in the constellation with your client is always to go on the journey for yourself. stop learning, stop teaching, stop helping, stop saving but rather start meditating, go on experiencing constellations for yourself again and again, hundreds thousands of times. in these times even though statements aren't needed. Bert already said that the old classical constellations are over. forget about statements. step of the throne of the saviour, step of throne of the church, still pretending to know what is right or wrong. step of the high chair an lay down deep on the ground. bow in front of your clients, bow in front of mother earth. Wholehearted

Jack Blackwell Well, I actually find statements work and so I'll continue using them. I feel they carry a vibrational energy that provides shifts. Whether I use statements, sound healing, horses, whatever. These all shift vibrations.



Jack Blackwell Maik, I feel you are speaking to in incredible state of surrender here (and not knowing), am I correct in this?

While I love this thought I also think there is still learning for facilitators. I can not lead a Constellation with no knowledge of the process or any training.

I think there is a balance of learned skill and surrendering to the mystery

Maik Jungrichter Good one!

Dan Cohen I find the later teachings of Bert and Sophie Hellinger highly problematic. I have discussed this before and don't want to rehash this here. Just to say I do not subscribe to Hellingers' pronouncements in their later years.

Anni Mukkala-Stinn This is what I understand from you. That the dogmatic kinds of statements are troublesome. I wonder if the process that moves the work from the mind to the heart, as I would say, is appropriate? I find it to be the way that the field has taken the work.

Esben Jørgensen I think it depends on what plan you facilitate from. Where is your consciousness

Heiki Eesmaa I think it's helpful to recognize as well that canned phrases and psychological statements often move the constellation forward as well. The difference between these and Soul statements is more in the inner feeling qualities that are somewhat subjective, but often:

- feel deep not in a metaphorical but very literal way: these words go to the bones
- feel earthy rather than spiritual.

It is helpful as exercise to make up very literal truth sentences: "I am looking at you" "I cannot look at you". Observe inner changes as well as representative changes. Don't talk about things that you would like to change or that have not been revealed by representatives or the client yet.

Avoid words that have a heavy layer of interpretations to them like "love".

Be concise.

Give reps permission to change the sentences and when in doubt, instruct "say this only if this sounds true".



Whenever a representative resists saying a sentence, drop all your assumptions about what's going on in the system and start over from a blank slate.

I recall one of John Payne's books had a couple of chapters on sentences that are one of the few useful sources beyond Hellinger I've found. If you don't know the book I mean, I can look up the reference.

Jack Blackwell Yeah, all of my students read John L Payne's books - super helpful in this regard. The examples are priceless

Jack Blackwell "feel deep not in a metaphorical but very literal way: these words go to the bones" - I like this.

Also as you mention checking in with reps - "say this only if it sounds true" I also sometimes add, or change it if you need to.

Jeffrey Rich For me, Healing Statements are statements of the deep truth that emerges from the dynamics that we can see in the constellation. It's what we can very clearly *see* there -- they are also the dynamics that have not been included in the heart of the client. The healing statement is usually at odds with the story the client has about what they *think* is happening. When we can see it, name it, and welcome it into awareness exactly as it is, *that* is a true Healing Statement. For me as facilitator, it's usually a revelation. I have to let go of any story I have and let the deep truth really rise.

Anna Reposi to facilitate the constellation with soul is very difficult to learn if person hasn't channeling attitude . There are people "natural channel", people that can improve that with different way (ThetaHealing, reiki, etc) , there are people that can't achieve . the last one will be a psychological constellator (and probably he/she drive the constellation as he/she think must be) . Bert always said us (during the training) . I can't teach nothing to you , I can just pass to you my experience . Bert was an amazing and powerful channel , but never try to teach that . He knows .For that many people (in Europe at least) follows training in Constellations but not so many works with that . The mission is an amazing goal , but also very difficult to achieve in a soul way

Leslie Nipps The BEST resource for me and my students for learning the distinction between "nice" or "canned" statements and truly healing ones (including when Hellinger's are just right for the moment) is from pp. 224-5 in Love's Hidden Symmetry, where Hellinger outlines the distinction between Primary and Secondary Feelings. Good healing statements are always primary. Ones that don't work (even when they are true) are usually secondary. When students can get a feel for this distinction (including in ordinary life, where this distinction is constantly useful), they really start getting ahold of this. Hellinger makes the point that secondary feelings



tend to spin and repeat, while asserting helplessness, which to me signals trauma states. Ursula Franke makes this explicit in this chapter from her book *In My Mind's Eye*, which can be found on Jane Peterson's website. It's another critical piece of writing I insist my students read and understand. She also connects it with interrupted reach. Pure gold.

https://www.human-systems-institute.com/.../Franke_2003...

Jack Blackwell Thank you SO MUCH Leslie, I am excited to check all these out.

Heiki Eesmaa Yes! I think there's a temptation to say "you know in your heart what to say" (or something) which is true at a very general level and thus not very useful. Primary feeling is definitely the key.

Jadina Lilien And to add to that Heiki, words said within the constellations are part of the entanglement. The healing statements are from a source of clarity. The untangling

Heiki Eesmaa Love this formulation! I will now listen a bit more freshly :)

Leslie Nipps I've often said, secondary feelings are the finger pointing at the moon, the primary feelings are the moon itself. So if you can listen to the reps' report from secondary feelings, without judgment, you can often find the "moon" - the primary expression - inside the words...

Michaelene Ruhl Best for me is what I receive from the field while working with someone. I use the learned healing sentences as a foundation and build from there. The field tells us what we need to suggest/invite the seeker to say just as it lets us know where and how to move the constellation physically.

I often offer the statement, "If it feels right, I invite you to say..." A lot of the times they come up with their own version of my sentence that is clearer for them - in their own words. I believe you have to trust the seeker too and what sits best with them and shifts them. Very often with just the mere mention of the sentence you can feel and see the shift in them. It is empowering for them to find their own words too, especially if they were often silenced or do not know how to use their voice.

Jack Blackwell I think this is great. Learn the standard versions and then let go and let the Field lead.

Helping us to start to grasp the difference between Soul language and psychological language.



I find many times representatives will interpret what they feel/sense through the language of psychology and I will need to distill it into a Soul statement and have it restated to test for accuracy

[Vivienne Lucksom](#) I agree, [Michaelene Ruhl](#).

Having only been a representative, I personally find it jars me out of a deep state to hear too many words. There's potent silence from which movements from, of and towards the soul follow and flow. I can trust that listening more deeply (for me) will show me the next step.

I guess having the facilitator really be in tune with the client and the field would lead into a more attuned listening and thereby a more attuned guiding?

[Jadina Lilien](#) [Vivienne Lucksom](#) thank you!!!! Silence is intelligence. I trust the Silence to know what needs to happen

[Vivienne Lucksom](#) [Jack](#), I also have a feeling that silence protects me in a way from uttering words that I am not ready to hear or say. It might set in concrete half-truths or half-baked concepts that I cannot grasp. I also have the sense that my soul 'knows' and at an energetic level will settle into what feels right.

[Gunilla Boivie](#) So interesting, earlier today, I found the notes from my first training in 2010 and translated all sentences to my language (Swedish). Had totally forgotten that they were there. From my rational self, I find this the most difficult. But when I am there facilitating, I just connect with the field and say what comes. And check with rep if it feels true etc.

[Jack Blackwell](#) My challenge is figuring out to teach this the best way I can

[Noreen Benning](#) I follow Bert Hellinger guidelines and some statements but mostly follow my own guidance and intuition connecting to their Soul and the field, Source. It helps when people have practiced with their intuition. My work with Reiki, energy, and meditation has helped me to trust my intuition which helps in constellations as well. Everyone has this gift. It just takes practice. We find starting with a meditation helps this too.

[Rachel Alexandria](#) Tbh, I always suggest healing statements based on what's flowing in from my intuition/the Field. I don't have any memorized statements—they don't feel genuine to me.

[Marja-Liisa Tallermann](#) I think its very important to be able to read and understand the Field and the energies and dynamics happening there. I also check in with the representative and ask them, if it feels true to say that. I think constellations are evolving



and changing like we are and its important to trust yourself and the Field, not only the books or what someone used to say in this or that case. At times we wait in silence and at time the statements are perfect. Trusting yourself and the Field is the key here <3

[Rachel Alexandria Marja-Liisa Tallermann](#) agreed. My favorite thing to start out a group with is the clear guideline that EVERYTHING is voluntary. I invite them all to be tuned in to what feels true and right for each of them. Such a gift that constellations gives.

[Anni Mukkala-Stinn](#) To wait in silence as we move in our hearts, not in our minds, not thinking but observing and in a meditative stance, we open ourselves to the great knowing of the field. I firmly believe we as facilitators need to have a spiritual practice where we let go of our own ego thought patterns and learn to just listen. Often, in quiet meditation if we ask a simple question, an hour can pass before a thought comes. If we have meditated an hour and no thought comes, then we can wait a bit longer. Sometimes a thought comes and perhaps no thought comes. Perhaps the thought comes later, in another way, perhaps. Patience and slowness are characteristic of waiting for the field to give us what it is that is needed. If we are rushing, it is perhaps just our own mind creating a quick solution that may not have gravity.


I do sometimes use some basic words but hopefully there is more. Something that as we move slowly in the field comes to us in a way that is not of our thought process. I think to teach that kind of knowing of the heart is key to movement.

I often do constellations in my mind's eye for individuals and in this process, I often find imagery fills the work. These are often images that move the system toward a new way of being. I think it is also important to be with the whole system and not just with the individual, although that is sometimes what the field shows. It seems to me there are few rules, but to listen within for the next movement. Our connection to the field is nourished by trust. We learn to trust the field by being in it and observing the movements the field offers. Trust is key. If we get anxious and go into our heads to pull out a statement, then we have left the field. It will come if we wait. And if it does not, then perhaps it is not needed.

Patience, practice and trust.

[Ellen Benfatti](#) Acknowledge what is. I learned this from the beginning of my training. You are the wrong mother for me. Acknowledge what the client feels first....then introduce You are the right mother for me. Also I was taught that to the measure an individual can accept their mother is directly linked to their container to hold love unconditionally. I've also learned through my training that the mother is usually the first person to break our hearts. Just the individuation process alone as a child has to see themselves separate from Mother is not easily digested. A sibling being born can be enough for a child to feel a rupture in their relationship to mother. This



is a big topic. Acknowledge what is. Then introduce the language of love. You are the right mother for me. Just verbally saying these statements creates an opening for a new movement in the family soul. 

Larry Honig I agree , start with where they are . Otherwise it sets up a lot of confusion and resistance.

Leslie Nipps Resistance = something has not been included yet. Client resistance is ALWAYS the system's way of indicating something hasn't been included yet. I love the way that naming things as the system is experiencing it now ("you are the wrong mother for me") can free the system to say the opposite without feeling pressured. This is often the place new facilitators get snagged, and leads to the stories about clients "feeling forced." We're trying too hard to get to an outcome, and we're skipping things that need to be included first. So, I always teach my students, resistance = something isn't included. Then, get curious about what hasn't been included yet..

Ellen Benfatti Also introducing simple statements regarding the client's place within the family can also be helpful leading up to you are the right mother for me. For instance if your client was the first born just having the client say I am your firstborn child and two more came after me can be a bridge. If they are an only child just making the statement I am your only child can be a bridge. I have found over the years just stating the facts can open the field in a powerful way leading us to those powerful statements connected to the language of love.

Leslie Nipps Perhaps I am in the minority here. I find enormous value in memorizing certain healing sentences that have a strong field and a certain universality to them. (To be fair, it's not really a memorizing process; it's more I hear it, and it goes right into my soul and memory and stays there.) My clients and students know that I "create" my own healing sentences, too, but I also love the tried and true ones. Whenever I pick up one of Hellinger's books again, or watch another facilitator, there is usually one sentence that hits me in a strong, true way, and I tuck it away with the others I've gathered over the years. I remember at Stephan Hausner's workshop a few years ago being really struck by his use of having the client say to the parents, who may have struggled in their relationship: "I see what it cost you. I leave the burden with you. Thank you for my life." That was one I have used many times since then to great effect, especially for children of divorce or other severe parental estrangement. And recently, reading Hellinger's very old (and somewhat outdated) book Farewell, I was reminded of these sentences from the living to the dead: "I will be with you eventually. But not now. Please look kindly upon me as I stay for a while." I've found many instances in which this was just what was needed. I counsel my students to listen for the ones that really land in them, and to build up their library of them for future use, one at a time....



Illi Adato Key subject, thank you **Jack**. What brought 'home' the skill to construct healing sentences or Systemic Truths as I like to call them, was a four year learning journey with Judith Hemming one of the greatest masters/craftswoman of Systemic Statements. The way I teach the skill to my students is first through a deep understanding of the Systemic Orders which then can offers an insight into hidden dynamics and therefore assist in bringing these out to light.

Heiki Eesmaa As far as canned statements go, one of the best ways to organize them is around chief dynamics like: "I will carry this in your stead." In this case the dynamic is also the sentence. The training I went through had a list of 15-20 main dynamics and what can I say, they actually have been useful.

Yollana Shore So much wisdom in this question and responses. Just wanted to reflect that I appreciate the distinction between psychological healing and soul healing as you have outlined it here, Jack. It makes sense to me and is helpful. I hadn't come across that distinction in my training.



5.5 Indicating Element

Facilitators: The Indicating Element in Family Constellation work - Do you use it?

I doubt it because I made it up

When I am conducting an intake I always ask 2 questions, the standard ones...

1. What's the struggle in life you're bringing &
2. How would your life look differently if you received a good result from the Constellation?

Here's My Concern:

I'm worried as a facilitator that I may miss the mark...

... ANYTHING I put into the Field will show progress and a direction

But did I really heal/shift the client's presenting issue?

For a few years now I've started my Constellations with an Indicating Element.

Let's say a client comes to me wanting "healthy relationships"

I don't start the Constellation with mom and dad,

instead I start the Constellation with a representative for:

the client, and

"healthy relationship" (HR)

I want to see the dynamic between the two representatives:

Is my client chasing healthy relationship around The Field?

Are they running from HR and not open to it?

Does HR turn into the client's mother?

I want to know what HR is for the client and how they respond to it.



With a standard Constellation, if the client has a presenting issue and if we start with the client, mom and dad, it can be very difficult to know if you have fully hit the mark of the client's issue.

You could have done a great Constellation, the client may leave happy, but their issue may remain untouched.

For example, I remember once I did a Constellation around laughter:

Why do I have a HARD TIME laughing in life?

The facilitator did a standard Constellation, and I ended up hugging my father and grandmother...

Did anything happen to my issue around laughter?

NO! This is a problem.

Why not put a representative for Laughter in the Field?

When we put a representative for the issue in the Field,

we can gauge the clients relationship to said issue...

Is it getting better?

Is it getting worse?

Are they getting closer?

Is anything changing?

This is what I call an Indicating Element.

When an Indicating Element is in the Field,

... it indicates the progress of the Constellation relative to the client's presenting issue.

This is really important.

Two Variations Of The Indicating Element

An Indicating Element can either be

a Positive Indicating Element or



a Negative Indicating Element.

One way of thinking of this. Is the client wanting to move towards something, creating connection with it OR are they wanting to let go of something.

In the previous Healthy Relationship example...

On intake, the client could say

I want a "Healthy Relationship" == a Positive Indicating Element

or they could say

I always attract "Bad Men." == a Negative Indicating Element

In the first example when using a Positive Indicating Element,

I will (usually) set up the Client and the HR before proceeding with other representatives.

HR says "I do not feel the Client is available for me or wants me"

Other representatives are brought in, .. the Constellation moves forward

Towards the end of the Constellation, things seem to have progressed

I now check in with HR and the client

They both speak to improved connection and readiness for one another.

This produces a good result.

In the second example, I start with a Negative Indicating Element: the Client and Bad Men (BM)

They immediately show chemistry .. and the poor relationship dance commences

I bring in more representatives and proceed

Things are moving forward and the Client is shifting and changing

Now towards the end of the Constellation the representative for BM says,

"I'm not wanted here any more, I think I want to sit down"

The Client's rep says, "I don't want him any more, I'm not interested"



This is the Indicating Element in action.

While I do not use this 100% of the time, I probably use it 80%.

Regardless of the issue presented, whether it is depression, money, a relationship or more there are two things I always want to know...

I want to know the client's relationship to their issue

I want to know how this relationship changes/improves as the Constellation progresses.



5.6 Moving representatives in the field

Again, the 2 main ways to shift the energetics of a client's constellation are moving the representatives in the Field spatially or using healing statements to uncover soul truths. I see new facilitators emphasizing healing statements as their tool without considering physical positions, cues, and movements.

In practice, I have found it is helpful to use each method about 50% of the time. By paying attention to one's intuition and the different dynamics within a constellation, a facilitator will develop attunement to the best way to shift the energies in the Field.

Here is an example of a healing movement instigated by a facilitator to shift the Field energetics. A mother and son are standing very close to one another with the father significantly off in the distance. The facilitator surmises that this positioning of mother and son is too close. A question then pops into their mind, *"What if I move the father into the proper position next to his wife, what happens to the son?"* The facilitator moves the father next to his wife, the son's representative then exclaims, "Wow, now I feel free to move away from my mother and I feel so much better." This is a common example of a healing movement.

As a facilitator, one way to approach moving a representative within the field is to say: "I'm going to test this, let me know what comes up, and if you want, you can immediately turn or move back to the position you were in previously." This way we are not forceful, but suggestive in working with the comfort-level of the representatives in the field. (If the representative will not move in a direction requested, this is important information also, do not force this). Another way of testing position in the field is for the facilitator to say: (to a daughter in the field) "I'm going to move you right next to your mother. Does this feel better or worse?" If the representative says it feels worse, the facilitator can say: "Okay, move back to where you were before." The facilitator has learned that this was not the correct healing movement because the representative felt worse. Or perhaps something needs to happen first.

Moving representatives in the field is an experience of trial and error. Each time a facilitator attempts something they learn more valuable information about a client's system. There is as much insight gained by the facilitator who moves a representative and the representative resists or feels worse as a movement in which the representative simply states "yes, this feels better here." There is no right or wrong, there is only information gained. Once we have enough information regarding the client's system we will be able to create the right resolution for them.



5.7 Proximity in the Field & Correct Order

It is important for facilitators to be aware of the physical position/location taken by representatives in the field. By noting the physical positioning, a facilitator can see inappropriate dynamics and lack of order in a system. For example: "*Is a child standing behind their parents?*" When a child's representative takes a position at the parent's back a facilitator may note the child is supporting their parents, not the other way around, indicating a case of "role reversal."

Is a woman standing to the left or right of her husband? When working with a couple, it is helpful to note if the woman is standing to the left or the right of her partner as one side is more dominant than the other. Female representatives often report they feel better standing to the left of their partner. However, if a man has no support behind him and is not connected to his male lineage it will often feel better for the woman to stand on the man's right, displaying a position of being in control.

A facilitator may be able to illustrate this dynamic and shift it by bringing in male representatives behind the man to support him, at which point a woman might report feeling better standing on the man's left. What facilitators find is that this positioning helps the woman to relax and let her guard down. Often this relaxation feels like a relief, a space for greater femininity, and the possibility of greater connection becomes apparent.

Here are some common things facilitators notice regarding position & lack of order.

- ~ Children supporting their mother or father (standing at mom or dad's back).
- ~ Mom having first position (husband stands to wife's left).
- ~ A former partner hasn't accepted the end of the relationship. They stand where the current partner should be.
- ~ A woman who puts her son before her husband (son and mother stand side by side) with no position or space for the husband.
- ~ A husband standing outside the circle, looking away from the family.
- ~ A mother on top of her daughter.

When facilitators notice these inappropriate dynamics their job is to get the system back in right order. Usually representatives in the field will report that they feel better once correct order is achieved. These correct orders, "orders of Love" are based on the discoveries of Bert Hellinger through the thousands of Constellations he has facilitated.



5.8 Representatives in the field: Where/what are they facing, what do they see?

Once representatives are brought into the field one of the first things a facilitator will notice is their positioning and direction they are facing. This is usually your **FIRST** clue from the Field, **indicating who/what they see or do not see.**

Some of the first questions a facilitator can ask the representative are: *Where are you looking? Who do you see or not see? Who are you aware of or not aware of? Are you looking **at** something or are you looking **away** from something?*

Facilitators may turn to a representative to learn what happens for the representative when they see someone or something they have been avoiding or not seeing. These are important questions and strategies to gain insight into the dynamics of the system. As a facilitator you are always looking for the puzzle pieces (clues) to energetically put things back together.

An example: If a facilitator asks dad where he is looking, this answer will tell us where dad's attention is or what dad is avoiding. Is dad's attention on mom, is his attention on his children, is his attention drawn outside the family circle towards something else? When we ask dad, "Who do you see or not see?" We learn if dad is aware of his wife, of his two sons, or is dad looking at something else and not available for his family? When asking dad if he is looking towards something or away from something, we learn if he is potentially distracted by something outside of the family or if he is possibly avoiding something he does not want to see within the system. Asking these questions gives the facilitator crucial information.

Other dynamics related to where a representative is looking.

Let's say that dad is not looking at anyone within the family, he does not see his two sons and he is not aware of his wife. Dad is looking out the window intently, when the facilitator checks in with dad, they inquire "Are you looking at something specific?" Dad replies "Yes, he is looking at a specific part of a tree." Facilitators might infer from this that dad is looking at someone or something from his family past. The facilitator is not sure, so they bring in a representative from outside the circle into dad's line of vision. If dad is impacted by this representative and there is a connection, a facilitator has learned that dad is looking at something, though they may not know what. It could be a previous partner, a tragic event, or it could be the country the family left when dad was young. Facilitators can infer from this that on a very deep (unconscious) level, dad is distracted by something outside the immediate family that blocks him from being present with them.



Another variation; we check in with dad as he looks out the window and states, “I do not see anything. My vision is all blurry. I am not aware of anyone around me.” This likely conveys that dad is simply unable to be present. Perhaps dad is showing up as completely checked out. This is also important information, now facilitators may need to learn what happened to dad or what was the trauma that has him showing up this way.

Dad could also state he is looking out the window because he does not want to face what is going on behind him. He states that he is aware of his wife, but does not want to look at her; it is too scary for him. In this example, we may need to bring in support for the dad so he has the courage to look and begin reconnection.

Looking at Death

A remarkable thing that family constellations show are souls looking at the dead. This shows up as a representative looking down to the floor at a specific spot. When this occurs facilitators will usually bring in a representative to lie in this spot. The facilitator will then learn more about the connection between the representative and the deceased person.

To gain more insight the facilitator can ask the client if they know of any deaths or loss in the family (including abortions and miscarriages) that may not have been grieved or dealt with appropriately. A representative can also be looking down towards the floor as an expression of sadness. The difference between representatives who carry sadness and those who are looking at the dead is that those who carry sadness are downcast while those looking at death are looking at a specific spot. Again, when a representative is looking down at a specific spot it almost always indicates looking at a death or at the dead.

Out of love for the family – Souls will look

Souls will look at trauma and pain in order to bring balance and harmony to the family system. What is not grieved or looked at by a previous generation will be looked at by future generations in order to bring this balance. This is done out of love and necessity, though there can be resentment around this. We call this "blind love" when we are doing something for another Soul that is NOT our responsibility.

When someone is looking at the deceased, facilitators must discern whose responsibility is it to look at this death or loss. If it is not this particular soul's responsibility, then the facilitator must bring in the appropriate responsible person or party.

Here's an example: If a client's older brother dies in an accident when young, it is not the younger brother's responsibility to mourn, or look at this loss, it is the parent's responsibility. However, if the parents will not, or can not look, then this brother or someone else later in the



system will carry the burden of looking, in this way they remember the brother and he is not forgotten.

It is very common for representatives in the field not to see everyone else within the system. People's wounds have a profound impact on their ability to see and be present. A person who has grown up with a loving family and supported during his or her life, can face tragedy with strength and resiliency. This person is able to look at pain while grieving and honoring the loss.

When representatives do not show up in the field with the strength to face loss and grief, the facilitator's job is to learn why and to create a healing environment where they are strengthened to look. It is also the facilitator's job to make sure that the **appropriate representatives** are looking.



5.9 Bringing A Client Into The Field

When to bring a client into the Field is important and has ramifications. Every facilitator does this slightly differently. Some facilitators have the client in the Field almost the entire Constellation, some do not bring the client in at all. You will find your own way around this.

The way I work is to bring the client in towards the end of the Constellation, when there has been resolution and things feel complete and fairly stable. I do not bring the client in every time, perhaps 50%. This feels good to me.

What I have seen

I have seen reps in the Field look directly at the client in the chair and speak to them directly. When this happens I take this as a clue from the Field and work directly between this client and the rep. I will either do this for a period of time or for the entire Constellation.

I've had reps tell me "the client should be in here" or "The client should feel this." When this happens I honor this.

I have brought the client into a happy wrapped up Constellation and had them say, no I can't accept this or feel this. Perhaps they break down and start crying, not accepting the results of the Constellation. Now you have to deal with this. This is a problem.

I've seen facilitators work with the client (in the Field) and their trauma. I've seen this overwhelm the clients and they end up with a negative re-traumatizing experience.

Some Rules I have

When a client is fairly unstable I will generally leave them out of a Constellation unless I am absolutely sure they are feeling solid and stable. I am speaking to a client with a weaker ego structure/level of trauma. I have made the mistake of bringing someone in and the Constellation finishing structure melts down once they come in. Now I have to make this better.

If I do not trust the client's ability to see clearly. Perhaps they seem to have big, strong blind spots, then I will almost never bring them into their Constellation.

This is an intuitive decision

Like all FC practices there are no hard and fast rules. The best thing you can do is attune to the Field and follow it's dictates. I've learned all of this by making mistakes. I've made many of them. This is okay, it is the path of learning and mastery.



Remember, you are learning one of the most potent and beautiful Soul healing modalities in the world. It will challenge you and ask a lot of you. Be your best, know there will be mistakes and still move forward, bringing your gifts. The world is waiting for you...



5.10 Ending a constellation

“Some constellations end with a pretty bow and some do not. It is not ours to decide. As facilitators, it is our role to honor the constellation and the fate of those involved.”

~ Jack Blackwell

Endings in Family Constellations

Sometimes constellations end in a big group hug. The issue has shown up and been resolved, everything has been worked through, representatives are feeling good, love is flowing and the client is happy. This is a great result.

Other times, a constellation will end without an overall resolution, there has been movement in the field that seemed important for the client to see and feel, but things are left unfinished. The constellation shows that there is still work to be done, perhaps subsequent constellations or perhaps there are insights the client needs to integrate first.

Then we also have the challenging endings, constellations that need to end but there has not been resolution or a healing movement. Perhaps there was a limit on time. Perhaps the facilitator did not set up the right representatives to reach a resolution. Perhaps the client was not ready to do this deep work. Whatever the reason for the constellation not working it didn't and yet it must end. In this case, the facilitator does the best that they can to bring stability to the field and then close the constellation.

Facilitators will experience a full range of these possibilities. As always, the choice to end the constellation should be directed as much as possible by the energy of the field.

A “no” in the Field

In the following example the constellation was complete even though there was not a full resolution. A woman came to a workshop in order to heal her connection with her mother. Her constellation revealed many layers of her mother's trauma from abandonment to abuse. The facilitator experimented with multiple movements to help alleviate the mother's trauma, some of which worked and some didn't. When the facilitator attempted to bring the representatives for mother and daughter closer together, there was a clear “no” in the field. This was as far as the constellation could go. Although the constellation ended with the mother and daughter still disconnected, the client received tremendous insights and a new feeling of compassion opened in the client's heart. It was a process, the ending wasn't necessarily what was fully desired, but it



was all that the system and the field would allow at the time. This client was satisfied with the outcome.

Leaving the Client with a Certain Image

Sometimes, the Field will dictate a point of energy within the constellation that a client needs to see and be left with; the Field then dictates that the constellation ends. The Field shows that this ending will be the most beneficial in service to the client. A common example is when a client states they want to connect with their parents and that they feel that their parents are not open to this connection. Perhaps the field shows that it is the client who is resisting this connection. It could be Soulfully important for the client to see that mom and dad are actually very open to connection and that the client is the one resisting.

In this example, picture the constellation ending with this image of mom and dad waiting with open arms and the client's representative refusing to budge. This constellation could be a radical rewrite of the client's story. The client may need time to take in this information while processing and opening to this new image. This is not a situation facilitators decide with their minds, we do not know where the constellation should end; this is a felt/intuitive experience of where the field wants to leave things.

The Facilitator Challenge: Feeling When to Ending a Constellation

Knowing when to end a constellation that does not have an obvious resolution (such as the group hug) can be tricky. Facilitators naturally want a positive result for their client and in wanting this positive result, there is a risk of acting upon an unconscious agenda. That unconscious agenda could be for a certain resolution, perhaps the reconciliation in a romantic partnership, or all of a person's personality aspects joining together. It is very important for the facilitator to make sure that they are not following their own agenda, but listening to the guidance from the field.

A block for facilitators, especially new facilitators, in properly ending a constellation is when they don't trust the field or themselves. A facilitator may try to push the constellation farther than it wants to go, even though the constellation may actually be complete. When a facilitator tries to push a constellation farther than it naturally wants to go, problems will start popping up in the system: things will get messier, representatives will not feel as good, more emotional distance between family members will appear, etc. These dynamics are indicators of a destabilizing energy occurring in the field. Things are getting worse the farther the constellation goes. When the facilitator recognizes that they have gone too far they must try to wrap up things as quickly as they can and on the most positive note possible. Every facilitator will make this mistake of over-facilitating, it is part of the learning curve.

Stability in the Field



A constellation should always end in a place of stability. What this means is that in checking in with all the representatives, they respond “I am okay to leave it here.” There’s nothing in the field that is still intensely burning, there are no representatives in the field who might state “I still feel really bad”, or “I’m still really upset.” If there are still loose ends it is important for a facilitator to address these and bring as much stability as possible. I have seen facilitators end constellations without checking in with the representatives or closing a constellation with representatives in unstable, unhappy places. I do not believe that this is good for the system or the client. Closing the constellation is sort of like putting out a house fire; if there are still hot spots, don’t walk away yet. If there are still hot spots, work with these representatives to reach a sense of acceptance and closure (perhaps temporary closure) with what has taken place in the constellation and acknowledge what remains to be done. For example when speaking to the representative for the father, “Dad, I know that this is not finished and there is more work to be done, is it okay if we leave it here?”

A Happy Ending: How is Your Client?

If it has been a good constellation for your client with a positive ending, they are probably in a good place emotionally and not needing much support. Always inquire as to the state/experience of your client when exploring ending the constellation. Ask them, “Is it okay to leave it here?” Hopefully they feel good and are in agreement to “leave it there.” It is still always a good idea to check in with your client a day later and make sure that they are feeling good and were served by the work.

Not a Happy Ending: How is Your Client?

If the constellation ended abruptly or ended with the client in a difficult emotional place, more emotional support will be needed. At these times the client may be sitting with a strong emotional reaction, this reaction will be even stronger and feel more unresolved depending on how the constellation ended. If the constellation ended poorly and your client is experiencing difficult emotions, it is important to check in with them immediately after the constellation and support them in their integration process. The facilitator’s role at this point will be to check in and hold a supportive space for what the client needs to express. If the client is upset, the facilitator should commit to supportive follow-up and take responsibility and acknowledge if the constellation didn’t go well. It’s best for the facilitator to be authentic and not try to make things seem better than they truly are. If it was a messy constellation and there were mistakes made by the facilitator they need to acknowledge this (Perhaps not immediately after the constellation but later) because a client will feel the lack of authenticity.

Perhaps the facilitation of the constellation was great and yet the client is still very upset, It could be appropriate to let the client sit with their experience for a day or so, at which point the



facilitator can follow up with a call or meeting to check in with the client about discern whether a positive experience could emerge through a dialog (vs. working in the field). The facilitator should follow their intuition about what would be the best healing step for the client.

It is important for a facilitator to take these extra steps to insure the client's mental safety. These extra steps show that the facilitator is aware of their pain and cares deeply about the client's experience. Many times this will be all that a client needs, but if they need more the conscientious facilitator will make all the difference in the world.



5.11 Triage On An Incomplete Constellation

There are times when you will have to end a Constellation and it will not be complete and the client will not be in a good place. I liken this to surgery that is unfinished and yet, the patient must be sewn up. Perhaps the surgery can continue tomorrow, but there is no time today.

What are you going to do...?

What I've Done

I've found myself in situations like this various times, it is uncomfortable, but you must do what you can. The person's energy field is open, you must find a way to settle this before closing the Constellation.

One of the easiest & best ways I've found to do this is to bring in supportive archetypal forces. You can bring in the Angelic realm, Divine masters, Nature, Love and more. These will help settle the Field and the clients energy.

You can simply move representatives into correct order, sometimes this will help things feel better, but if the representatives are resistant this will not work.

Attuning To Your Client

The most important thing is to stay connected to your client. Feel where they are at. Support them in feeling a sense of energetic resolution. Using the Field to do this will have the strongest support for them.

If possible stay in connection with them immediately after the Constellation and in days following. This lets them know they are loved and cared about.

This will happen to you at one time or another. Having thought about this ahead of time will support you in handling the situation. Also, not shirking from it, but meeting the situation and your client with an open heart is really coming from a place of your strength.

Trust what happened and why it happened, the perfection of this, but also know we as facilitators do make mistakes. I have found my greatest learning from Constellations like these. Perhaps you will too.



Section 6: Definitions and Concepts



6.1 Definitions and Concepts

Definitions

Blessings

Receiving a blessing from family, community or those in a position of True Authority is a powerful Soul and energetic movement. Blessings convey an energy of freedom, granting a person an energetic conveyance of forward movement. Blessings free and support Souls to move forward and bring their unique gifts to the world. Blessings are to be revered, prized and respected.

We have the ability to create this energetic movement and support our clients. This is powerful medicine.

This "blessing" gives clients permission to walk forward from family loyalties and entanglements. There are many different forms this can take, such as: blessing a person to move forward in life, to love deeply, to do it differently than our parents did, to be successful at business, to not carry illness etc.

This approach addresses the human tendency for those in wounded family systems to try to fit in (belong) by doing things the same way their parents or ancestors did. By receiving the family's blessings, clients are able to shift loyalties, enabling them to reconnect with love and do life differently than previous generations.

(Soul truth - At an unconscious level within the client, these loyalties and blind loves feel right and appropriate, even though they may impact the client negatively. The truth demonstrated from this work is that at the Soul level it is usually not appropriate to subjugate or demean one's life in order to fit into their family system - belong.)

Entanglements

The concept of an entanglement - A connection or bond to someone within the family system that marginalizes our life. When we are entangled with them we will be in connection with their unresolved issues, pain and fate. In this position our life is not our own for we are trying to solve, act out or re-present their unresolved life challenges. You can imagine this as us being tied to an anchor in a rough ocean.

Some examples of entanglements



- A descendant who is loyal to a stillborn child who was never talked about or grieved. This descendant is entangled with the stillborn child and acts out in a way (energetically) that reminds the family of this loss, honors the child who did not come into life and gives the family another opportunity to face their unexpressed pain and grieve appropriately.
- A son or daughter can be entangled with a parent's previous love partner who was not acknowledged or honored for their place in the parent's life. This son or daughter acts out dysfunctional dynamics until the previous partner is acknowledged, and their place within the system honored.
- Perhaps a descendant is entangled with an uncle who made money in unethical ways. This descendant is always going broke and struggles with money as a way to atone for the wrongs of this uncle.

Entanglements are a form of blind love. It is a facilitator's job to support clients to see these connections (entanglement) and find a (Soul based) Higher Vibration way of honoring the ancestor and issue. The most common healing movement is to hold the ancestor and their issue in the client's heart, to speak about this openly or within the family.

Another way a facilitator can help is to create a ritual the client can do at home, helping them integrate what they were shown and felt within the constellation.

Role Reversal

(The child parents, the parent is the child)

One of the most common and inappropriate dynamics we'll see as facilitators is "role reversal," parentification in psychotherapy. This is when the child parents and the parent is the child.

When we see this we know we are working with parents who lack support. These parents cannot rely on their own parents, community or partners. When this support is missing the parent can look to their child to get emotional and support needs met. This dynamic puts a great strain on the child and causes great wounding. The child ends up suppressing their own needs to be there for their mother or father. (This is done out of love for their parents). The children will find it more difficult to get their needs met as adults in intimate partnerships, though they will try and meet everyone else's needs. Representatives for these children report losing the opportunity to simply "be a child," This is a great loss and comes with much pain.

Facilitators will also see children taking the place of partners. The child can become daddy's little girl, or momma's little boy. This can lead to an inappropriate, sexualized dynamic (physical and/or energetic) between a parent and the supportive child. This dynamic can also create a rift between the child and the parent of the same sex, whose place they are filling.



An example, if the daughter takes mom's place by being daddy's little girl, the daughter will then have difficulty relating to and connecting with mom. In the Field we may see the child is not able to look into their same-sex parent's eyes, and the child can express intense feelings of guilt, shame or arrogance towards the same sex parent. This can be apparent through the physical positioning of the child in the Field. Rather than the husband standing next to his wife in a supportive, connected position it's the child who stands in this supportive, connected place.

The Constellation may illuminate this dynamic by the position of the child in the Field. In the case of an absent partner the child may feel most comfortable next to the parent (side by side), if the child is making up for a missing parent we may see the child take a physical position behind the parent. The healthy position for a child is to stand in front of the parents with their backs to them while facing forward, while parents support them from behind.

To restore the correct order between parents and children the representatives in the field can be guided through healing movements and statements. A healing movement that is appropriate and has a powerful positive impact is to resolve the issue of the lack of support for mom or dad. A facilitator can also use healing statements such as "I am only your child" or "You are big, I am small" or "I am only your little boy, not your husband" this helps the parents see the inappropriate use of the child, which helps to restore the proper order.

A challenge for facilitators when working with this dynamic is that a child who has taken on a parental or caretaker role may experience an inflated sense of BIGness. The feeling of power and even arrogance that comes with this can be difficult for the child to relinquish. A statement reflecting this might be something like "Dad likes me better than Mom. I'm his girl". Almost invariably beneath this inflated bigness is deep pain and a longing to be cared for by the parents as a child. It is essential to resolve this feeling of "bigness" in order to heal this dynamic. This frees the child up to "just be a child" and to experience healthy intimate partnerships in adulthood.

A final thing facilitators may notice when working to heal this dynamic is that children placed in these roles generally do not trust their parents to meet their needs. There is immense pain in a child not having their needs met, so they suppress their needs. To re-open to one's parents and risk feeling the pain of needs being rejected, or not met, is terrifying. Children fear this vulnerability and as a facilitator you may need to work this dynamic very slowly, allowing the child to slowly and gently open up to being a "little" child again.

Support

There are times when a facilitator will need to bring supportive energies into the field to help with the constellation process. These supportive energies are incredibly varied ranging from mom and dad, to Angelic energies, to countries to nature and animals. The support a facilitator



chooses to bring into the field will be based on what is occurring within the constellation, the facilitator's intuition and what a facilitator believes will best serve the client, along with what type of support the client will be able to receive.

These supportive energies help move the constellation and positively impact it in many ways, support can help clients to see what they have been avoiding. For example, a client who is unable to look at their lost child may be able to look at the deceased child and grieve when their parents are brought in for support. Supportive energies can be brought in to assist those in the field experiencing severe trauma; this may be a spiritual or angelic force to bring healing and comfort. Supportive energies give representatives strength to face difficult circumstances, they provide them strength to face heavy responsibilities, they give the confidence to open long-closed hearts and the courage to move forward and pursue futures and dreams.

Some clients will express that they do not have sources of support in their lives. They perhaps think of families, and husbands, and communities and they come up blank. A facilitator may need to think outside of traditional boxes to find the right support for these clients. Support can be archetypal for the client such as love, strength, or courage. This support can be places in nature, animals the client has a close connection to, religious and spiritual archetypes, beautiful geographical places, or a favorite vacation spot. It is the facilitator's job to find this appropriate source of support for the client and one that the client can most readily accept.

Bringing in support is an intuitive skill. There are not any specific rules or structures indicating when to bring in support. Generally, the guideline should be to bring in support when something of a supportive nature is missing and a re-experiencing of this support would allow positive movement in the field.

Blind Love

A common pattern that arises in Family Constellations is "blind love". Blind love is similar to entanglements, and has its roots in loyalty, yet it's subtly different. Blind love is an unconscious and unhealthy way of demonstrating love for family members that presents itself in a dysfunctional pattern. Many times a blind love will emerge in a system if a person is blocked from openly expressing love for a family member, such as in a case of hidden loyalty, or an excluded or otherwise rejected family member (especially parents). People will always find some way of expressing love for those in the family, even if it is in an unconscious and ultimately self-destructive way. An example, there was a client (a young boy) who developed issues with his feet. This client was unable to openly express his love for his father because of the acrimony between mom and dad and his loyalty to his mother. When his dad fell off the roof and broke his foot, the boy later began to develop severe foot problems, on a deep level showing his love for dad.



One of the intrinsic desires of the Soul is for connection; if someone can't have a healthy form of connection in their family system, they will generally establish an unhealthy way of showing their love, known as "blind love." Blind love is not the highest form of love, and people will often experience blocks in their life if they continue to carry out patterns of blind love.

The pervasive statements a client will make in a blind love pattern are "I'll do it like you" and "I'll do it for you." They will then subjugate themselves to the prevailing family pattern(s). For example, carrying on patterns such as alcoholism, depression, abuse, relationship challenges, suicidal tendencies etc. because that is how others in the family system behaved. There is a belief within the person that if they behave the same way as the rest of the family with the same patterns, dysfunctions, and dynamics that they will belong, they will have a place. However, Family Constellations demonstrate that blind love doesn't serve anyone, and that at the Soul level there are much better ways to connect and demonstrate love. (Though in truth there are times a client may have to change the way they show their familial "blind love" and risk belonging.)

In facilitating resolutions in blind love scenarios, many times the best way to help the client honor their family and ancestors while releasing dysfunctional patterns is through carrying their family member in their hearts, contrasted with doing it like them. On a Soul level this can be the highest way to honor the family (but of course there are no absolutes). Clients also bring honor to their families and systems and free themselves from blind love patterns by respecting family member's paths and fates. The awareness of this new way of honoring and loving the family members can free the client up to do it differently.

Loyalty

"Children are loyal to their parents – to their father and mother equally. Out of loyalty to their parents, they repeat similar fates and similar misfortunes."

Bertold Ulsamer - *The Healing Power of the Past*

As a facilitator, it is important to watch for and be aware of a client who is blocked from connecting with a representative or archetype – especially when there is a sense that they should be able to connect. Often this occurs when the client has a hidden loyalty that is stopping them from making this connection. A common representative statement that reflects a hidden loyalty is "I want to love her, but I can't." or "I want to connect, but I can't." For example, a man who is loyal to the women in his family system might have to disconnect from the men in his lineage; this unconscious loyalty could even result in the man feeling disconnected from his own sense of masculinity.



Hidden loyalties can be with family members or with a person's community or tribe. A family loyalty is when there is strife between family members, and a person becomes polarized and disconnected from someone due to loyalty to others in the family. For example, a woman loyal to her mother will cut herself off from experiencing the love of her father after her parents divorce – she is loyal to mom. A cultural example of loyalty is that of Nazis who committed unethical acts out of loyalty to their party and nation. This can happen in reverse as well, such as a Mexican immigrant who cuts her ties off from her National heritage and has difficulty accessing creativity in life. Another example of loyalty we find in this work is loyalty to victims or perpetrators. We can be so loyal to one or the other of these that we are completely unable to see the other side's perspectives.

All of these loyalties are deep and unconscious, when they are illuminated in the field they can be a revelation to the client, and ultimately be healed. When a hidden loyalty is resolved, the outcome will enable a representative to stay connected with whomever they were loyal to, and also to the person whom they cut themselves off from. What this work shows is that ultimately the soul truth for all people is that liberation comes through transcending polarizing loyalties and being able to consciously love all people within their system regardless of the circumstances.

Belonging

“Children seldom if ever risk having a happier, more fulfilling life than that of their parents. This is because if a child were to have a happier life than his mother or father, in a sense it would feel, deep down, as if he were a traitor”

~ Bertold Ulsamer - *The Healing Power of the Past*

At a deep level, a person will do almost anything to belong within their family system. Belonging is one of the most important things to people and they will do whatever it takes, even imitate dysfunctional family patterns in order to maintain their position within the family. To stray outside of family norms can threaten a person's most basic need to belong. Many times people will limit their potential in order to fit in, be accepted, not be threatening, and to express loyalty to one's family. This can come in many forms such as carrying mother's pain, allowing father to sexualize them, hating like their family does etc. To honor a person's need to belong, people will subjugate or sacrifice their own success in life - similar to the personal sacrifice you see in blind love and misplaced loyalties.

As facilitators, it is important to be aware of this deep part of human nature (the need to belong) that can block people from living the life that they want to live. Family Constellations provide an opportunity to reveal issues of belonging while helping clients to release the dysfunctional dynamics which may be tied in with the need to belong. What Family Constellations



demonstrates is that on a soul level (most times), a person's family members want them to succeed and thrive, even if it means doing it differently than the family has done it in the past.

For example, in a situation where a client says "I can't be happy in my marriage because my mother was not happy in her marriage." The mother's representative would be guided to say something along the lines of: "My precious daughter, I gave you life and I want you to have ALL the happiness in the world. Marry, be prosperous and thrive. And carry your father and I in your heart as you do this. Take the gifts of life we have given you and make us proud." The facilitator's role is to help the client see that on a soul level, their family only wants the best for them. By having this experience within a constellation, a person can transcend their dysfunctional ways of behaving in order to belong within the family system. In the constellation they can be liberated to live their life to the fullest with the support of their family on a soul-level.

The truth is that if someone wants to create a life differently than their family, they may have to act in ways that threaten their belonging. They may even be rejected by their families depending on their actions, and this may be the right thing for them to do. The soul level view within the constellation will show the correct movement for this person.

What or who is excluded?

One of the things that Hellinger says is that his loyalty as a facilitator is not to the clients, the issue, or the system-- his loyalty is to what has been excluded in the system. Family Constellations show that what has been excluded from a person's family system will be energetically recreated by future descendants in order to help the family system attain wholeness, balance and harmony. Examples of things that are often excluded are: pain that was never acknowledged, betrayal that no one talks about, unethical acts of ancestors, an early death, leaving one's homeland, etc.

Facilitators need to explore the client's ancestral and family history to find out details of anything that might have been excluded from their family system. If it feels right intuitively, a facilitator can bring a representative of the excluded person or issue into the field as a way of repairing damage that's been done to the family system. This process can help the client access the love at the core of all family systems in making peace with whatever or whoever had been excluded. By bringing back a missing part of a family into a system, it restores the full feeling and connection of love.

"I do it in your place"

"I do it in your place" is a specific example of blind love where one soul cannot deal with something that is too painful, and another soul from a later generation will do it for them. This



can be called carried emotions. For example, a child whose mother lost children that she never grieved will come into the system and metaphorically look at his/her deceased siblings. They will do this in different ways such as not living their life fully or having suicidal thoughts. They do what it's their mother's job to do out of blind love. However, at a soul level it is the Mom's responsibility to hold that pain.

Another example of how this can show up is "I will feel it for you." If mom cannot feel her anger, yet at a deep level she is very angry, one of her children may carry this for her expressing anger for all to see. However, in this example, it is actually the mother's anger that is being represented. Children will carry these emotional burdens for the system in order to create a sense of wholeness. They do it out of blind love, yet it is truly the other family member's responsibility to carry it.

What Family Constellations show time and again, is that each soul has to carry their own weight, and that they are responsible for their own mistakes, decisions, and pain. At a soul level, it is inappropriate and even disrespectful for another soul to come in and do it for them. In the example above, it is disrespectful to the mother's strength for her child to hold the pain for her. It puts the child in a position of bigness, and the mother in a position of smallness that is out of the natural order of things. As a facilitator, it is important to recognize this pattern and guide the client to release this form of lower love. Often the representative will give this burden back to the appropriate family member, and can experience incredible liberation from this simple act.

(See 6.3 Miranda Constellation for an example of a related constellation)

Fate

Sometimes facilitators of Family Constellations must simply honor that it is a soul's fate to carry a burden or struggle. This is in direct contrast to the concept that soul's must carry their own weight. Remember, in Family Constellations there are no absolutes. Facilitators may try to create reconciliation when one Soul in the family is carrying something for another only to find that there is nothing they can do to facilitate a movement-- the Soul will not give it back. Here a facilitator can consider that perhaps the soul is actually supposed to carry it; such is their fate. In such a case, the facilitator's role could shift to guiding the client to a space of acceptance rather than trying to heal the situation. When dealing with an illness at the end of a long life, the movement may be for the client to accept their fate. This could be the healing. What if there were tragic and untimely deaths within the system? Again, many times the healing comes through simple acceptance of a hard fact-- the death/loss was painful, it was their fate, and it must be accepted.



Group Conscience

Group Conscience is a subset of loyalty in which a person will display beliefs or actions to be loyal to a group that might hurt or limit themselves or others. It is helpful for a Facilitator to recognize the social groups that someone belongs to in order to provide insight and identify ways that group conscience might be affecting them. For example, a feminist may be unable to “let go” with her husband because this wouldn’t be socially accepted by other feminists. Another example could be a Union Worker who has tremendous difficulty seeing the needs of the company. Someone with group conscience will likely feel like they are doing something exactly right according to the group rules, but these rules can often be inhibiting them from pursuing other possibilities and can lead them to harm others to be loyal to their group. Think Nazi Germany and the KKK.

When it seems like there is a hidden loyalty, the facilitator can look to see if it is related to a group conscience dynamic. If it seems that this is the case, an easy way to see what the group conscience is, and its effect would be to bring in a representative of the group. For example, bringing in a representative for “feminism”. A facilitator would then check in with how the dynamic of this social conscience affects the client and other representatives in order to show the cost of that group conscience on the system. For example, this loyalty may be stopping the client from having something that they want in their life, or blocking an experience of love and connection between representatives in the system. Exploring this dynamic in a constellation will help to guide the client in examining and choosing if and how it can serve them to strive for belonging in the group.

To support the client in healing a group conscience dynamic, a facilitator could have the group representative give a blessing to the client to move beyond the group conscience. This often looks like the representative for the group giving the client permission to move on with his/her life. There are going to be times when the client doesn’t want to leave the group, thus this blessing movement can help to reconcile this polarization. This is important because if someone just breaks from a group, they are not dealing with the energetic problems there which can lead them to find another way to honor the group. This process can be very helpful in helping to bring awareness and resolve these loyalties in a way that is conscious and ultimately liberating for the client.

Family Soul

“What is suppressed within a family does not disappear, but rather ‘floats’ around within the system, awaiting an opportunity to emerge.” Bertold Ulsamer – The Healing Power of the Past

Family Soul is a concept in Family Constellations that represents a collective energy integrating the beliefs and experiences of all past and present ancestors; it is sort of like a “group mind” that



all families have. Often a Family Soul will harbor wounds that will be carried on by future generations. What we see in Constellations is that the continuation of these wounds is an attempt by the Family Soul to create resolution. Like we see for Individuals and Family Systems, the Family Soul ultimately seeks wholeness and balance. For example, if the pain of one generation is not honored, then the pain will be re-lived by future generations so that it will be honored. Family Souls can also carry healthy patterns such as love, strength and leadership. These kinds of healthy patterns are likely the outcome of a balanced/whole Family Soul that is able to provide a strong, supportive energy for healing on both individual and systemic levels.

As facilitators it is possible to help a client bring awareness to the patterns within their Family Soul and connect to its strength. As stated above, the family soul is moving towards wholeness and can lead a client to beliefs and actions that themselves would create resolution of the family's collective wounds. A facilitator can bring in a representative for the Family Soul either to bring awareness to the patterns that need healing, or to provide support for the individual or system to achieve healing. Choosing to bring in a representative for the Family Soul is an intuitive decision on the part of the Facilitator in times when it seems that something more is needed than bringing in individual representatives.

Identifications

In a constellation, identification happens when a representative identifies with another member of their family system who has died, been excluded, or is otherwise absent from the system. This can include both direct family members, past partners and anyone who has earned a place within a family's system, anyone who is missing and needs to have a place for a system to be complete. What will often happen in this kind of dynamic is that a family member from a future generation will identify with the absent person as a way to carry the wound forward for healing. However, just like in other misplaced loyalties, it is inappropriate for the younger representative to take on this identification and can lead to inappropriate energies between the identifying representative and one or more members of their family system.

To reveal identification in a constellation, a Facilitator can have a representative for the absent person switch places with the younger representative who may be identifying with the absent member. If it is indeed a case of identification, the representatives will have the same expression and way of relating with both representatives despite the switch. For example, if a woman loses a partner, but later gets remarried her son may identify with the lost partner. The Facilitator could have the lost partner and the son switch places in constellation to reveal if the woman has the same affinity or emotional relation with the lost partner's representative as she did with the son's.

Another way that you can see identification in the field is by noticing a bond between two representatives within a constellation. This bond could be expressed by the representatives



looking longingly at one another, or otherwise expressing affection toward one another. For example, a woman has a constellation related to her child's behavior. During the intake a lost, unacknowledged uncle, "Uncle Joey" was spoken to as having a difficult fate, uncle joey was not spoken of by the family, a black sheep. Uncle Joey and the child are brought into the constellation and it is apparent that they have a strong loving bond between them, even though in actuality they have never met in life and the child does not know of this uncle. The child is identified with Uncle Joey

Identification can cause problems in a family system because the original wound is not being properly healed or dealt with. Identification puts the person who has to carry this wound for the family in a burdened position, in which they are carrying the wound out of love for the system even though it doesn't belong to them. The solution is to help the identified representative to recognize that the wound is not theirs to carry. It is also important for the absent member to be honored despite their choices and their fate. It is important that they are honored by the correct family members. For Uncle Joey this may be his mother, father and his siblings.

Concepts

Victim and Perpetrator

"I'll tell you something that is very hard to accept. My observation has been that in many Jewish families, the perpetrators are represented because they are excluded. And those in the family who are most aggressive are the most identified with the perpetrators. There is only peace if there is integration, and if the perpetrators are dismissed to be with their victims."

Bert Hellinger – *Rachael Weeping for Her Children*

As long as perpetrators are rejected someone will carry their fate

In Family Constellations work, dynamics that involve a victim and a perpetrator are often perceived in a way that is contrary to societal beliefs. The work shows that victims and perpetrators have really strong bonds, and that at a soul level, they can both experience deep healing by being brought together in a constellation. This is true of the victim's and perpetrators' families also.

An example of this would be a drunk driver who killed a girl, and the victim's family who is weighed down by grief for their daughter and hatred for the drunk driver. The family's pain will be passed down throughout the family lineage until they can take the drunk driver into their heart, and see his/her humanity. Another powerful example of this healing movement is when Jewish families are guided to see the humanity of Nazi perpetrators (it is not enough for the Jews to only honor the Jewish victims, they must also honor the perpetrators), or a dynamic between a



slave and slave owner. This movement is not about forgiveness, it is about compassion as a means to liberate a lineage or person from the pain of another human or culture's wrong-doings.

Facilitators have to be committed to the resolution rather than committed to the victim in order to support this kind of healing movement. It may be important that a facilitator set some context for the client so that the client doesn't reject this very foreign approach to relating with perpetrators.

This work also shows that at times when there's a murder within a family, the murderer loses the right to belong to the family system. A representative of a murderer will sometimes leave the room where the constellation takes place, reflecting the concept of "right order," bringing relief to all. It is good for facilitators to be aware of these patterns when dealing with dynamics that involve victims and perpetrators.

(An important and subtle twist to the above is when a Soul loses their right to belong to the family system, it does not mean that they lose their place (or title), they are still mom, dad, grandpa, etc, a subtle but important difference. A specific example of this is an abusive mother who gives up her child. The constellation may show that this woman has lost the right to mother the child, or to be close to the child, however she never loses her place as the child's birth mother. She is always the mother who gave her child life.)

(See 6.2 Hellinger on Nazis and Jews for an example of a related constellation)

Forfeiting One's Place

There are rare times in a constellation when a family member has done something to harm another in the system at which point it can be appropriate for the perpetrator's representative to leave the constellation. That person will always retain their role in the system (as father, grandmother etc.), but it is out of respect to the remaining members of the system that they forfeit their place in the family system. When this occurs, it will often produce a greater sense of peace for all of the representatives—including the perpetrator.

An example of this dynamic was in a constellation where the client's mother had died. Neither the facilitator nor the client had direct information about the father's role in his wife's life/death, however the father's representative was inclined to leave the room during the constellation, and none of the other representatives felt comfortable with him there. When the facilitator experimented with this, everyone in the constellation felt better when the father's representative had indeed left his place in the field.

This dynamic could be informed by a known history of some kind of abuse, or it could be inferred by a representative who is unable to feel comfortable within a constellation and/or is focused on something outside of the constellation (perhaps a door). The facilitator should



proceed with caution, asking the representative if they want to leave the constellation, and sensing whether this is indeed the appropriate movement for everyone in the field.

There is a great metaphor about this dynamic from Francesca Mason-Boring's book

“Notes From the Indigenous Field: Family & Systems Constellation, Ceremony & Ritual” in which she shares a story told by a Native American elder about the honoring of those who lose their place:

We used to gather acorns... When we are through gathering the acorns, we have to look at each one to see if there are any worms that have gotten into the acorn... If we keep the wormy acorn with the rest of the acorns, they will all go bad; they would all be at risk of being ruined. When we find such an acorn, we put it aside.

When we are through sorting the acorns, we take the wormy acorns and pray over them. We thank the creator for making them, and we honor that the life of those acorns took a different path. We take those acorns and we give them to the earth. We don't say that they're bad; we just know that they could harm the other acorns, so we give them to the earth, because she is able to take care of them.

Like the acorns, every soul can be honored, but sometimes that honoring takes the form of being returned to the source. While no soul is “bad”, it can be in a family's best interest for a hurtful presence to be removed in order for healing to proceed.

Abortions and Lost Children

What Family Constellations show about abortion and lost children is that whatever happened must be honored, grieved and accepted, and a place must be given in the person's heart for the child who didn't come to life, or experienced an early death. This must be honored by the appropriate responsible person. Abortions and lost children can have impacts on siblings, grandchildren, and the parents within the family system.

A child born after an abortion or after a siblings early death will carry a lot of pain unless someone deals with it on a soul level and in a good way, usually the parents. If it is not dealt with, the result can be children not living fully. At a blind love level, their subconscious belief is something like “how can I fully live my life when my brothers and sisters didn't get to live theirs?” It may also play out by them having their own abortions or losing children, just like mom did. Parents of aborted or lost children many times are unable to fully love their living child/children with a subconscious belief that goes something like “how can I love you when I



haven't loved and held a space for these other children that aren't alive?" Another profoundly important dynamic of un-grieved lost children may be impulses by later generations or the parents to follow the children into death (see *Impulse to join in death* below).

In these kinds of dynamics, the facilitator needs to lead a healing movement so that the client can take the unborn children into their heart. The client will be guided to hold a sacred space for the deceased children, while liberating the client's ability to be more in love and connection with their lives and their living relatives.

(See 6.3 Miranda Constellation for an example of a related constellation)

Impulse to join in death

Sometimes people who have lost someone dear to them have an impulse to die and join them. This occurs with those they miss deeply and long to reconnect with. What Family Constellations show is that the souls of those who have departed do not want their loved ones to join them in this way. Many times, there's even a discomfort from the representative of the dead at the thought that their loved one would join them too early.

A possible healing movement is to allow the Soul who longs to join the dead, to lie and join them. Many times it will feel good to the Soul to make this movement, however insight will start to hit them when this is not reciprocated by the deceased, or the deceased states that they are uncomfortable with this. This helps the living being recognize that their impulse to join in death is inappropriate.

As a facilitator working with this dynamic, it can be helpful to guide the client in a healing statement such as "I will join you when it's my right time and not a moment before". This small act can help the client release the blind love and longing that's behind their impulse, and will ultimately allow the deceased family member to rest in peace.

Drug addiction and Death

"With many drug addicts a bond to a deceased person can be found. They are being pulled toward the deceased and towards death, and drugs are a means to that end. That is why the desire for the drugs is often greater than the will to quit... The inmate stood there full of pain, facing the deaths of her family members, and bowed deeply before them saying 'I honor your deaths and your fates. Please be happy for me when I live on.' In this constellation it becomes visible how a person can feel guilty due to the bond with dead family members-Survivors guilt. The power and will to live is almost completely absent in such a person."



“I’m sorry”

Many times in a constellation a representative will realize, at new depths, the pain that they’ve caused or the mistakes they’ve made. Often the desire of this representative is to say the words “I’m sorry”; “I’m sorry I wasn’t there for you”, “I’m sorry I hurt you”, “I’m sorry I left.” What we find in this work is that “I’m sorry” is typically a disempowering statement. The representative hearing the “I’m sorry” will many times say that the apology doesn’t feel good to them and can even want to move away physically. They will often say that “I’m Sorry” blocks connection to the person who apologized to them. What the work shows is that when a representative says “I’m sorry” what they’re usually trying to do is alleviate their own guilt and pain. It’s too painful for them to sit with “I did it”, “I left you”, “I gave you away”, “I betrayed you” etc.. So they say “I’m sorry” in an effort to personally feel better. What is also apparent in this work is that the receiver of the apology feels that through the “I’m sorry” they have to carry a part of the burden, and invariably they express that they do not want this.

As a facilitator, it is important to support the representative who has caused harm to take responsibility, and fully carry their own burden rather than placing this at the feet of the person they hurt. There may be times when “I’m sorry” is appropriate, but the facilitator needs to be sure that the apology is not being given from the representative to alleviate their own pain. A facilitator will know this by the physical experience of the receiver of the apology, do they contract, do they try to move away? What Family Constellations shows is that when a representative can own what they did, that THIS is a healing movement in itself. There is a tremendous strength in owning the choices that were made. This ownership, without apology, by the one who caused harm will often leave the victim of the harm with a greater sense of peace. This is a service to both the betrayer and the betrayed.

Interrupted Movement

An interrupted movement is the result of a thwarted attempt by a child to connect and bond with a parent during early childhood, a reaching out movement for the parent which was stopped. This type of break usually occurs at some point during the first five years of a child’s life and will lead to a client’s inability to move towards this particular parent(s) later in life. This interruption of the movement towards an embrace/bond between the parent and child is first imprinted on the child’s psyche and is then usually repeated again and again in the client’s subsequent close relationships. This will occur until there is a completion of the movement to bond (reconnect) with the parent and this new connection pattern is firmly established.

An interrupted movement will reveal itself in a constellation as an inability between a child’s representative and a parent’s representative (usually the mother) to connect or be in close proximity. A facilitator may notice a child’s representative exhibiting a strong desire to connect,



and yet they will not be able to (this could appear as an inability to move physically closer, extreme anxiety when there is closeness, or perhaps a frozen-ness within the child's representative). As a facilitator, be aware that the anxiety the child's representative experiences when they are in close proximity to mom/dad can be literally overwhelming.

Facilitators can look for this pattern where they sense it intuitively or hear from the client about troubles connecting in intimate relationships or with parents. Questions during the intake can include those about early medical separations, incubators, time away from the mother for a matter of weeks, months, years etc. If we sense an interrupted movement is a factor for the client there are a few ways of working with it. One way is for the facilitator to create a space for reconnection by working with the representatives and/or the client directly. Hellinger will often work with the client (rather than representatives) helping them to reconnect by holding them from his facilitator chair in an embracing, motherly way, allowing them to rest their heads gently against his chest and re-patterning energy from one of disconnection to one of this embrace. Mark Wolynn will place a representative for the mother in the "field" facing the actual sitting client and guide the mother very slowly towards the client and reconnection.

When the facilitator is not directly bringing the client into the field but working through the client's representatives, the healing movement may look a little different. One thing a facilitator may note is that the parent may need to move toward the child rather than the child moving towards the parent and do this very slowly because the child's representative may experience symptoms of strong anxiety. Always have the parent stop moving forward if the child's representative feels like it is too much. Stay in strong contact with this representative to monitor their response and grasp immediately if they need space. Let the child's representative direct the closeness.

Many times facilitators will bring the clients into the constellation to take their own representatives places. Be cautious when doing this for clients dealing with interrupted movements as sometimes the actual client may not be ready for this, and come in exhibiting the signs of interrupted movement trauma. Constellations take time and space to work their integrative magic, err on the side of caution and yet if it feels right give it a try.

Something beautiful happens with this deep soul level reconnection between children and parent(s). An interrupted movement showing up within a constellation provides a chance to repair this early wound, and provides an opportunity to take the next step that allows a shift toward completion of the movement. This healing movement is a departure from a closeness that caused anxiety and fear, to one in which the client can move in and out of connection, at their choice, allowing for more intimacy and healthy connection.

(See 6.4 Interrupted Movement for an example of a related constellation)



Unable to Connect with Parents

A person's most important and vital connection is with their parents. From a constellation perspective, people *are* their parents. In order to be able to live a full and whole life, children must affirm their parents for who they are, regardless of the parent's imperfections and the family circumstances. The ultimate truth is that if we had different parents, we would be different people. We may not even have been born had our parents been any different. As a facilitator, you will see many dynamics which block the connection between parent and child. This document focuses on the instances in which the parent is waiting with open arms for connection and something blocks the child from completing this bond. The following will help you to understand these potential blocks from the child's side and the appropriate healing movements.

Who moves towards whom?

In most cases when there is difficulty in the child connecting with the parent and the parent is open to this connection, it is the child's responsibility to move towards the parent. However, if the block is related to an early trauma (such as an interrupted movement) it may be too painful for the child to move towards the parent, and could potentially cause them to re-experience the trauma. In this unique situation, it can be appropriate for the parent to move toward the child very slowly, following the cues regarding the child's ability to accept the closeness. (Read more about Interrupted Movements above)

Examples...

One dynamic that can block a child from having a healthy connection with their parent is if there has been a case of role reversal, such as being a "momma's boy" or "daddy's girl". Often in this case, we see a block between the child and the parent of the same sex that may present itself in feelings of guilt or shame, or perhaps in the child's feeling of arrogance towards the parent(s). A soul statement in this situation might be something like "I took your place" or "Dad likes me more" putting this arrogance out into the open. In this inflated position, a child might feel "special" and be reluctant to let this feeling of power and specialness go. This desire to hold onto this feeling can be the cause of their disconnection with their parent(s). On a soul level, it is important for children to be children, and to be held by both of their parents. In this dynamic, the child's representative can be guided to say something like "You are my mother, I am your child" in order to restore this important connection. (Read more about Role Reversal above).

Hidden loyalties can also be the source for disconnection between a parent and child. This loyalty can be either to one of the parents, or to someone who was excluded from the system. In the case of being overly loyal to one of the parents, a child might not be able to connect with the other parent. (This loyalty will usually honor the parent the child feels is more victimized). For example, the dynamic would be something like "I am loyal to mom, therefore I can't show my



love for Dad.” If this is the case, what the child often needs is permission from the parent they are loyal to in order to move closer to the parent where there is a block. If they can’t get that permission, sometimes they may just need to break from the parent that they are loyal to in order to reestablish their connection with the other parent.

Here is another hidden loyalty example – A child can be blocked from parental connection if they are identified with someone in the family who was ostracized. Let’s say that in a family lineage there was an Uncle Joe who was a black sheep of the family and that this Uncle Joe was denied his place of belonging within the family and denied his connection to his parents. A child could come along in a later generation, and out of loyalty and love to this disowned Uncle repeat the pattern of his exclusion, at a soul and karmic level re-experiencing this disconnection to restore balance within the system. (Read more about Identification above).

Facilitators can also find a child’s ability to connect blocked based on loyalty to multiple generations of same sex ancestors. Take for example a daughter’s loyalty to the women in a family. Facilitators can find a line of women in the family who carry anger and rejection towards the men in the family. For a female child who comes into this line of women, there will be a strong tendency to join them in the rejection of men and the masculine. This child will have difficulty connecting with her father. This will be due to the tremendous fear of betraying the female line and bond. For this child to openly love her father would risk her belonging in the system as a woman.

A final example given here is one in which a child is unable to connect with their parent because they are afraid that by embracing their parent, they will take on their parent’s burdens and imperfections. This is not the case, however children may believe this on an unconscious level. The truth is that in rejecting a parent we are weaker in life and that by accepting our parents – as they are – we are freed of carrying their burdens and following in their footsteps. Affirming one’s parents **as they are** is a very deep and profound movement. It implies an agreement to life and fate exactly as it was given; with its limitations and opportunities. This affirmation of one’s parents just as they are is a sacred act. It expresses a readiness to give up false expectations. This affirmation and honoring extends far beyond one’s parents into the very mystery from which all life came.

Honoring Past Partners and Relationships

A significant dynamic that impacts families and systems is a lack of honoring of previous significant relationships. This can have many forms. Constellations show that all significant previous relationships must be honored and have an appropriate place within the system. When a past person or partnership does not have a place within a system, or they are unacknowledged, or there is unresolved wounding, it will often impact current and future relationships. A person may



not know what is stopping them from finding the love that they want, but they recognize that something is standing in the way of their happiness. Many times what is standing in the way is a past relationship that has not been dealt with appropriately.

When someone is missing from a relational system future people will carry a torch to honor them. They will do this in unconscious ways that lead to many problems. When a child is adopted and the actual birth parents are not given the appropriate place in the hearts and minds of the adopting child and parents, there will be problems. When a man raising his two daughters marries a new woman and this new woman does not honor the girls' mother, they may act out dysfunctionally until their mother is honored. When the founder of a company loses his company and his contribution is not honored the company will have difficulties, a new wife may not trust her husband if he has not appropriately honored a past significant partnership. A facilitator's work in these scenarios is to help the client see and feel a shift in the constellation when the appropriate honoring place is given to whoever was excluded.

The impact of those not honored, not given a place, or otherwise excluded will depend on the depth and significance of the previous relationships. Insignificant relationships will not impact future systems. When there is an unknown disharmony within the family, relationship, or business system it is important for the facilitator to inquire about significant previous partnerships and relationships.

In a circumstance when there are unresolved emotions from a past relationship, the healing movement is usually to bring this missing or lost love into the field. This will allow the partner to begin to integrate or grieve what this relationship was – good or bad. Additionally, this former partner will usually need to have a place within the hearts of those in the new family system; they will need to be honored to be integrated. This process can free the current partnerships and relationships to thrive.

Death and Loss

Another lack of honoring that will cause problems within a family system and subsequent generations is death or loss. A woman not allowed to marry her first true love, who was forced to marry a man of her parents choosing will have difficulties loving this new man unless this first relationship is looked at, grieved, and given its appropriate place. If a man's wife dies early in their marriage and he does not grieve this loss, any future partnerships will be impacted and carry the weight of this unresolved issue. This could also be carried by future generations, in ways such as "identification" where a future daughter is identified with the deceased wife and carries her energetic signature. The father in this case may relate energetically to his daughter as if she were his former partner. In the mysterious ways of constellations, he may never even have "seen" his daughter, but only his former wife when he looks at his daughter. Even a previous



country that a family or person is from that is not honored can have a significant impact on a person's wellbeing. On a soul level, there is a huge loss associated with leaving one's country of origin.

An example of the soul confusion presented in this scenario could be a wife who's first husband died, and out of loyalty to her deceased partner, she feels that she would be betraying their love by fully loving someone else. However, what is almost always true in this work is that this loyalty is not what the deceased person wants. In this dynamic, the representative will be guided to say something along the lines of "You were my love and now you're gone. I will love fully in honor of you."

Liberating a Wholeness in Love

There are many ways that unresolved dynamics with past partners can manifest in blocks in current relationships. Constellations work is powerful in these scenarios as the past partner does not need to be involved in the person's process of healing these unresolved dynamics. On a soul level, all past loves must be honored and put in their place in order for people to be able to be fully present and available in current and future relationships. By facing unresolved pain from previous relationships, people can be liberated to experience a fuller, more whole connection with those they love.

(See 6.3 Miranda Constellation for an example of a related constellation)

Incest

Some of the material below is taken from Bert Hellinger's commentary in the book, *Rachel Weeping for Her Children*, and the specific constellation, *Now I Withdraw*.

Dr. Hellinger comes from a Psycho-Spiritual perspective and developed his theories related to incest from his work with Family Constellations. The constellation perspective is very controversial and I ask you to be your own judge. Look at the American societal rules and judgments, look to your own heart, and look to what the Family Constellations experientially show you and then be your own judge.

As always, when you are working with deep material like this, stay aware of your client and their ability to handle and take in this information or the constellations movements. Err on the side of caution and gentleness. Trust in the constellation to guide this. **Do not lose contact with your client during this constellation.**



You may also need to speak to your group as the constellation is unfolding about the nature of constellation work and what it shows regarding incest. People may need to have a broader perspective in order to take this constellation in. Do not try to convince people that what constellation work shows is Truth. Let them be their own judges. Let them see the constellation and follow the resonances of their own hearts. When dealing with the past and previous generations, where absolute facts are unknown, **never** express that what the constellation is indicating is an absolute fact. Constellations show desires, patterns, and undercurrents of un-acted upon energies. We don't know. Let your client know this also.

Have confidence in yourself and the field when these situations come up. If you feel your fear arise when dealing with this very sensitive topic do not try to suppress it. Honor this part of yourself, remember and feel your parents behind you, trust in the field. Have faith in the movement of this specific type of constellation, and know that on some level love is a motivating force. Let the constellation guide you.

Tendencies and patterns you will find in cases of incest:

- You may find one parent wanting to leave the relationship or the sexuality of the relationship and the child taking that leaving parents place in a 'blind love' attempt to keep the family together. Hellinger states that the "...typical dynamic of incest, that the one partner wants to leave, and in order to be able to do so, he/she moves the child towards the other partner as a substitute."
- The "innocent" parent may have an unspoken agreement (deep unconscious level) with the parent who wants out. They have a responsibility also as does the 'perpetrating' parent.
- Hellinger states that a couple can not reconcile their relationship after an event like this.
- It can help you as a facilitator to help the parent who committed the incest to see that the child is small.
- Both parents must take responsibility for the incest in order for the child's innocence to be accepted.
- You may need to look for previous un-acknowledged, un-integrated, etc., love relationships. The incested child could be representing a previous partner for the incesting parent.
- The client, or incest 'victim' may need to admit what they gained from this dynamic. Remember there is usually something they are getting from this experience also, even if it is painful and dysfunctional. Hellinger believes that in this ownership of their part of the dynamic the client is free, and will be further freed to experience subsequent intimate relationships. Even with this admission the child still remains innocent. For one thing they did it out of love and for another they were only children.
- Hellinger's three main steps:



1. The recognition of the innocence of the child
 2. An admission that it may have been pleasurable.
 3. That the responsibility rests squarely with the parents.
- In these constellations Hellinger feels it is always necessary for the child to withdraw away from the incesting parent. Trust your own judgment here. Remember we can always try things, explore them and learn if the reps feel better or worse once a shift or new dynamic is presented.
 - There is a bond created through sexuality, even in cases of incest. This bond must be recognized, acknowledged, and honored. (Again it is important to grasp that there is love operating here)
 - Hellinger, “When there has been incest between brother and sister, very often it is a shift from an incest dynamic between the mother and the son and it shifts to the son and his sister.”
 - A question from a workshop participant: “If there was incest with no love and with hate, what about that?” Hellinger’s answer: “The child always loves.”

Remember, follow the constellation. Your constellation will never be exactly the same, but these principles are good to have as a general guideline.

Sample Healing Statements

“*Mother, out of love for you and myself, I will withdraw*” (Rep may need help finding the strength to withdraw)

To clients rep: “Look at your father and tell him, *‘If you want me to do this I agree.’*” Tell your mother: “*If my father wants this I agree.*” (Giving the parent responsibility, recognizing the child’s innocence and their love for the parent, bringing to light the unspoken request/truth)

Tell your Mother: “*I am too small*” “*I withdraw now*” “*Here, I’m small*” “*Later I will be big*” (Helping her to see it’s a child, not a partner)

Father to child: “*The responsibility rests with me, as far as I am concerned you are free.*” (Same from Mother)

Child to parent: “*I allowed this out of love for you.*”

Constellation Work and Illness

Families and the souls within them will always strive for balance. Illness is a way that a Soul can try to achieve this balance. Souls always love and are loyal to the system, even if this love cannot be expressed overtly, the Soul will find a way to show its love. Illnesses are a way for Souls to



express loyalty (Love). This is a form of BLIND LOVE. It is a way of showing love, but not directly and not consciously, but underneath, unspoken, unclear, and not fully owned. In a constellation, one of the facilitator's jobs is to shift what is blind love into the open as a conscious, fully owned, direct love (this is healing to the Soul and system).

A way for a child to feel they belong is to share in the suffering of the system. Children fantasize that it will be good for them to carry this suffering (to find balance) secretly believing that through this sacrifice they create balance and “earn” their place in the system (this belief is fueled by blind love and the need to belong).

What you find here is children attempting to atone for somebody else's issue, problem, transgression etc. within the system. It is usually not the client/child's place to do this atoning. In constellation work, all people are held accountable and responsible for their own choices and fate. There are many times when we do a disservice to others within our system by not honoring and respecting the consequences of *their* choices.

Constellations will generally show us a way to shift a blind love perspective into a conscious, healthy loving connection. However, this is not an absolute; the constellation may simply end in a place of respect for the other. As long as all the souls concerned feel good about the place of ending it is good enough.

As a note for facilitators working with illness, Stephan Hausner states that “often asking about the timing of the onset of an illness or the first sign of symptoms reveals essential clues for the constellation. Many illnesses begin or worsen in connection to significant changes in family life. Examples of such changes would be puberty, leaving school/home/family and turning towards adult relationships and family...”

Examples of Blind Love and how they can relate to illness

- If someone important to the system dies prematurely you can have someone choosing to follow them into death. The core statement would be “I will follow you.” This illness could be a movement towards death.
- Suicidal impulses - If someone in the system wants to die, and this is unacknowledged (let's say mom or dad) then a child could move in this direction for them, acknowledging this unconscious/unspoken energy. The core statement could be “I will do it for you.”
- If mom or dad are sick, a child can be ill to connect with them. This statement would be “I do it just like you.” This could be particularly relevant if this parent is rejected. If the child has rejected a parent, they have no way of openly showing their love for him/her, so they unconsciously show love through imitation.



- A client could unconsciously choose to experience illness as a way of expressing their grief.
- There could be an entanglement with an aborted child. “I will get sick to atone for this abortion” Again, here it is important that the abortion not be hidden and it should be honored and grieved. This will eliminate the need for future generations to act out this injustice/imbalance.
- A trauma/accident occurs and the soul can cause the illness as a way to atone. Say someone is killed accidentally in an auto accident, the soul of the one responsible could create cancer to atone (Blind Love). In a constellation it will show that this is not the best way to atone. It is not best for the responsible party, and it is not the best for the ‘victim.’
- There could be an entanglement with another family member who wronged someone. Perhaps grandpa cheated someone out of his life savings. A soul could carry illness to atone for grandpa’s wrong. A statement in this case could be: “I will carry this for you.” Remember, each person in this system must be responsible for their own fate. Grandpa must carry this for himself; it is not up to the grandchild. This can be reconciled in the constellation.
- If a soul receives a life advantage they do not feel they deserve, the soul can get sick to create balance. Here you will find that the best soul perspective is not one of sacrifice, but one of honoring and holding in the heart. For example: Someone wins a lot of money on the lottery, a blind love response can be, “I do not deserve this and I will find a way to sacrifice myself to compensate.” A higher response would be “I accept this gift, I will hold it in my heart, and I will use it for good.”
- Another example you will see often is when a Mother dies while giving birth, but the child survives. The child will very often have an impulse towards death, to join the mother and to atone. This is blind love. A higher response would be, “I will accept the gift of life you gave me, I will carry it in my heart, I will make your sacrifice of life count.”
- An illness can be used to keep people at a distance, to create the space to be left alone or to help hide themselves from people.
- A person who hates his/her parents may use illness to get even with parents, to get revenge.
- A child could get sick to be seen by the parents.
- A child could be given away, say in an adoption. The parent could get sick as a way to atone for this action. (Self-punishment)
- A child could get sick to bring the family members together. Let's say that the constellation shows that dad wants to leave the family system, a child could sense this and get cancer, thinking, dad wont leave if I have this disease. The statement of truth might be, “I do this so that you will stay.”



These do not need to be memorized. What is important here is to begin to get a feel for these deeper truths so that the inner facilitator wisdom begins to recognize these patterns and they are within easy reach during the constellation. This takes time to develop, but through your continued focus and questioning of these truths you will begin to get a feel and eventually these will begin to come to you naturally, from a place of inner knowing, not from an intellectual understanding



6.2 Christian/Jewish German/Jewish Healing in the Soul

By Bert Hellinger

Presented at the Third International Congress for Family and Humans Systems Constellations, Würzburg, Germany 1-4 May, 2001.

Germans and Jews

"How can Christians, above all the Germans, handle their guilt towards the Jews? What can they do and what must they do, to overcome this guilt and give the Jewish people a worthy place within themselves? And, how can the Jewish people handle the guilt of the Christians and the Germans?"

I have had some experiences in various courses, which indicate how reconciliation may be possible between victims and perpetrators, and, in a larger sense, between Germans and Jews. One of the most dramatic was an experience during a course in Bern. A man set up a constellation of his present family, and then at the end he said he had to add something important—he was Jewish. I responded by setting up seven representatives of Holocaust victims, and behind them, seven representatives for the dead perpetrators. I asked the seven victims' representatives to turn and look into the eyes of the perpetrators. After that, I did nothing more. I left their movements entirely up to them, as they developed.

Some of the perpetrators collapsed, writhing on the floor and sobbing loudly in pain and shame. The victims turned to the perpetrators and looked at them. They helped those who were on the floor to get up, held them in their arms and comforted them. Finally, there was an indescribable love which emerged between them. One of the perpetrators was completely rigid and couldn't move in any way. I put in another person to represent the perpetrator behind the perpetrator. The first representative leaned back against this new representative and was able to relax somewhat. The man said later that he had felt like a finger on a giant hand, totally at its mercy. This was also reported by the others in this constellation. All of them, victims as well as perpetrators, felt directed but also carried by some greater force, a force whose effects were not clear.

After this constellation, I asked all the participants to send me a report of what they had experienced during the constellation. One representative of a perpetrator wrote to me:

"As you placed the seven of us behind the seven victims, I was overcome by a very strange, unpleasant feeling. I intuitively anticipated something bad, even though it wasn't yet clear to me



at that time who we were representing. When you said that we were the perpetrators a cold chill ran up my spine. When the victims turned and I looked at the man opposite me, all the energy drained out of my body. I have never felt such shame in my life. I just looked at him and kept getting smaller as he kept getting bigger. I wanted nothing more than to disappear into a hole in the ground, preferably a mouse hole deep into the earth. Inside I was screaming "NO, NO, NO, this can't be true." I felt a need to apologize, but at the same time an inner voice told me that there was no way to apologize, nothing could be glossed over, I had to carry it all myself. The only word that I managed to get out was "please," at which point my victim took me in his arms. Without his support I would have fallen to the floor in shame. In his arms, my inner voice kept saying, "I don't deserve this, I don't deserve this at all, to be held by him." Luckily, I was able to let my tears flow. Otherwise the whole thing would have been unbearable. After my victim had let me go again, I felt somewhat better. I could vaguely feel the floor beneath my feet and could breathe a bit more freely. At the same time I was aware that he was only the first victim, and there were still many more victims on my conscience. Not just two or three— no, dozens or even hundreds! I strongly felt the need to look each of these victims in the eye, and so to find my own inner peace.

As you put the super-perpetrator behind us, It was immediately clear to me that I alone had to carry the responsibility for everything I had done. There wouldn't be any relief from this perpetrator in the background. I also felt very strongly that it would have been much better to have been standing on the other side and not to have taken on this insane guilt.

My need to look at the next victim got more intense, but in fact, the next eye contact literally threw me to the ground. I couldn't stand up any more and I wept bitterly on the floor. I was totally gone. I was only aware of your faraway voice saying, "Now come slowly back" at a great distance, and the coming back was very slow. There was still too much left undone for me, too many victims not looked at. There was still a powerful urge to bring order into this unfinished business.

After the constellation it took me at least an hour to get fully back into myself again and to feel my full strength.

For me it was truly one of the most difficult roles I've ever experienced in a family constellation. It was also strange the way in which crystal clear thoughts emerged in my awareness. For example, that it is impossible to push the responsibility for your own actions off onto someone else, even if I was only a small cog in the machine. After such an experience, you know there is nothing more to discuss, to argue about, or to explain. It simply is how it is."



In a constellation like this, it also becomes clear that there are no groups, in the sense of these are the victims and those are the perpetrators. There are only the individual victims and individual perpetrators. Each individual perpetrator must face the individual victims and each individual victim must face the individual perpetrators.

What becomes clear - There is no peace for the dead victims until the dead perpetrators have taken their place next to them—until the dead perpetrators have been taken in by their victims. And, there is no peace for the perpetrators until they have lain next to their victims as equals.

If this does not take place, if it is not allowed to happen, the perpetrators will be represented by someone in a later generation. For example, as long as the perpetrators from the last war are denied a place in the souls of the Germans, they will be represented by right wing radicals. In constellations of Jewish families where there are descendant of victims of the Holocaust, I've often seen a child identified with one of those perpetrators.

Souls must reconcile, even victims & perpetrators.

In these constellations, it is also clear that entanglements are only resolved between those who are actually affected, that is, between a specific perpetrator and a specific victim. No one else can step in on their behalf, no one else has the right, the task, or the power to do so. In the constellations, the representatives of the dead victims and the dead perpetrators do not want the living interfering in their affairs. They want the living to stay out of things and they want life to go on, without being limited or burdened with memories of them. From the viewpoint of these representatives of dead people, life belongs to the living, who are free to take it.

I have a fantasy about this in terms of what effect it would have on the souls of Christians if they were to imagine Jesus dead, meeting in the realm of the dead all those who betrayed him, judged him, and executed him. When we look at them as human beings, equal as well in the face of the greater powers which control their destinies, then we have to give them our respect, although this may be a repellent thought for many of us. Above all, we have to honor and respect the greater power behind them and behind us all, as a fathomless mystery. To submit to this mystery in this way—that is something truly religious, and human.

I did an exercise, once, in this connection, with a Jewish woman in whose family many had been murdered. She felt called upon to reconcile the living and the dead. I had her close her eyes and go in her imagination into the realm of the dead. She stood among the six million victims of the Holocaust and looked forwards, backwards, to the left and to the right. Around the edge of this mass of six million dead, lay the dead perpetrators. Then, they all stood up, the dead victims and the dead perpetrators, and all turned towards the horizon to the east. There they saw a white light



and they all bowed down before this light. The woman also bowed down with all the dead, and when she was finished she withdrew slowly, leaving the dead in memory before that which appeared on the horizon, but yet remained hidden. Then she turned from the dead and faced life again.

Recompense

Sometimes the living need to face the dead, to look at them and be looked at by them—primarily, those who are guilty in respect to the dead, but also those who have gained some advantage from the terrible fate of their Jewish neighbors. In many constellations what has emerged is that those individuals, who had been wronged, affected the individual souls of those who had wronged them, or the souls of those who had benefited from those wrongs, and the souls of their descendants as well. This influence continued until the wrong was acknowledged and faced, until the victim was acknowledged as a person of equal value, respected and mourned. When this was done, the cleft could be sealed, and the terrible effects of the wrongs ceased.



6.3 Miranda Constellation

“The men I fall in love with never fall in love with me”

Payne to Miranda: What would you like to work with today?

Miranda: Relationships. It seems that every time I meet a man and start to have feelings for him or fall in love, he leaves me.

Payne: Has this happened often?

Miranda: More times than I like to think of.

Payne: Have you had any significant relationships in the past?

Miranda: That depends on how you look at it. Significant for me, but it never seems significant to them, they always leave.

Payne: Did anything significant happen in your family of origin? Did any man leave? Your father perhaps, or someone else?

Miranda: No, no one. My parents are still married and there have been no really significant events that I can think of.

Payne: Tell me about the significant men in your life.

Miranda: Well, Bobby was the first, that was when I was at University, then there was Charles, Jimmy, Paul and Francois.

Payne: These are all the men you have feelings for, or that you wanted to get serious with?

Miranda: Yes. There have been others, but they were just dates, quite casual relationships.

Payne: Did anything happen that was significant with any of the casual relationships?

Miranda: No. They were just men that I dated, nothing of note.

Payne: OK, well, let us look. Please select a representative for yourself, and one for each of the men you have named: Bobby, Charles, Jimmy, Paul and Francois. Good intake, see how the men she dated felt

Miranda sets up the constellation. Payne instructs her to place the men in a line and to place her representative opposite them, facing in their direction.

Payne to Miranda's Representative: How are things here when you look at these men?



Miranda's Representative: I can't really look at them, especially the first one.

Payne: Well let's try to look at the first. His name is Bobby.

Miranda's representative lifts her head and looks directly at Bobby.

Payne to Miranda's Representative: How does that feel when you look directly at him?

Miranda's Representative: I feel guilty and I have a slight pain here (placing her hand on her lower abdomen).

Payne to Miranda: Is there anything about which you feel guilty with regards to Bobby? Did you have an abortion?

Miranda: Yes, I had an abortion.

Payne to Miranda: What were the circumstances?

Miranda: Well, we were at University together and I got pregnant. I was too young to have a child and I wanted to finish my studies.

Payne to Miranda: And how did Bobby feel about the abortion?

Miranda: He wasn't happy when I had told him that I had an abortion, and we split up.

Payne to Miranda: So you didn't inform him beforehand that you were pregnant and that you were going to have an abortion?

Miranda: No. I thought he may try to convince me to have the baby.

Payne to Miranda: Well, let me work with you directly. Note that he brings her in to work directly

Payne instructs Miranda's representative to sit down and takes Miranda herself directly into the constellation.

Payne to Miranda: Look at Bobby directly.

Miranda: That's difficult to do. I can't really face him.

Payne: Are you able to look at the others?

Miranda: Yes, a little, but it isn't easy. I don't want them to see this.



Payne takes a workshop attendee and places her at Miranda's feet to represent the aborted child.

Payne to Miranda: How does that feel with this child at your feet?

Miranda: I feel terrible.

Payne: Please look directly at Bobby and say to him, "This was your child, and I took it away without your consent. I'm deeply sorry for that".

Miranda: "This was your child, and I took it away without your consent. I'm deeply sorry for that". (Miranda wipes a tear away from her eye.)

Payne: How does that feel?

Miranda: Not good. But I realize that I've been feeling very guilty. I never told Bobby. I grew up in a period when I strongly believed in a woman's right to choose. I never even considered Bobby's feelings at all, I just did it.

Payne: Now look at the other men, how does that feel?

Miranda: It's difficult. I feel ashamed of myself.

Payne: It would seem that you have been choosing men who would not love you out of some kind of penance. **Important to note**

Miranda: Yes, I see that now. A feeling of not being worthy of love.

Payne: Let's do some more work.

Payne instructs the representatives for all of the men except Bobby to sit down and brings Bobby, Miranda and the aborted child together.

Payne to Bobby: How does that feel?

Bobby: Very sad, and I feel a little angry.

Payne to Miranda: And for you?

Miranda: Not good, I can't really look at either of them.

Payne to Miranda: Please look at Bobby, directly in the eyes, and say to him, "You were my first love and I wronged you deeply."

Miranda to Bobby: You were my first love and I wronged you deeply.



Bobby sheds a tear as he receives Miranda's words.

Payne to Miranda: Now say to him, "I accept the consequences of my actions, please leave it with me".

Miranda to Bobby: I accept the consequences of my actions, please leave it with me.

Payne to Miranda: How is that now?

Miranda: It's heavy, but I have much more clarity. I've always brushed this aside as not being so important. Now I realize that I really did deny Bobby the choice over something very significant; a child.

Payne to Miranda: We're not quite finished.

Miranda: I knew you were going to say that, and this is the bit that's going to be the most difficult.

Payne instructs the representative for the aborted child who is sitting at Bobby's and Miranda's feet to lift her head and look up at her mother.

Payne to Miranda: Please place a hand on your child's head and say the following words, "Beloved child of mine, I am deeply sorry. I now give you a place in my heart where you shall always live".

Miranda: Beloved child of mine, I am deeply sorry. I now give you a place in my heart where you shall always live.

The constellation concludes and Miranda sits next to Payne again.

Payne to Miranda: How do you feel now?

Miranda: Had you asked me directly about this, I would have brushed it off as something of little significance, but now I realize that I have been punishing myself for many years because of this. It answers so many questions.

Payne to Miranda: Now you simply need to give your guilt a proper place and live with it. That doesn't mean that you must now "live as a guilty person", because you've been doing that all along, but it does mean that it needs to be acknowledged and carried with dignity. You see, when we carry our own guilt, we gain strength from it. When we deny it, it becomes a drain for us.

Miranda: So, had I told Bobby, would the abortion have been okay?

Payne: In my experience, there are always consequences for abortions. They go against the natural order of things.



Miranda: So abortions are always wrong?

Payne: I can't comment on that. I don't look at what is right or wrong, I simply look at the consequences of events, decisions and actions. It is not useful to use terms such as right or wrong.

Miranda: It's clear to me now that my guilt about not telling Bobby has made me feel unworthy of being loved by another man, hence I chose men who would reflect that. How do I change this?

Payne: By allowing the work we have just done to sink into your Soul. When you carry your own guilt, there is dignity in that and you will gain strength from it.

Miranda: Do I need to contact Bobby and apologize to him?

Payne: Well, that is up to you. But don't contact him if what you are seeking is forgiveness. Remember, you took choice away from him, and also his child. If you ask for forgiveness, you are then asking him to give you something else after you took so much from him. If you contact him, simply say, "I am deeply sorry, I wronged you", and leave it at that. If you leave it like that, it will be easier for him to forgive you. If you make a story out of it and ask him to forgive you, then you are asking too much, and it won't work. No one can absolve you of this guilt apart from you, and you will gain strength from that.

Conclusion

Miranda started with her story, "The men I fall in love with never fall in love with me", but what was the deeper truth that was revealed? It was apparent that, on investigation of her deeper hidden feelings, she felt guilty about events and decisions in the past. She chose men who would not love her, as a form of self-punishment. When we don't investigate our feelings or the significant events in our lives, we can create stories that have no basis in fact. It may be true that none of the men after Bobby fell in love with her, and, in essence, it is irrelevant. What is relevant are our own perceptions and the stories that lie behind them. Owing to the employment of the knowing field in the representational system, we could have investigated further to discover the true feelings of Charles, Jimmy, Paul and Francois; however, of what benefit would that have been to Miranda? The important thing in any investigation is to look at the source; therefore, it was only relevant to work directly with Bobby and the abortion.



6.4 A child's interrupted movement towards his mother or father

From Bert Hellinger's *Love's Own Truths* (p. 59)

John: My name is John. I trained as a teacher, but I have been working for three years as an environmental educator and landscaping consultant – I design gardens. I would like to work here on my physical symptoms. I have constant pain in my shoulders, I get frequent headaches, and I also have a feeling of discomfort in my abdomen.

Hellinger: Here is a wild guess: The headaches are caused by love that was unable to flow because a movement you made toward someone as a child was interrupted and stopped before it reached its goal. Usually it is a movement towards the mother. That's also the impression I get when I look at your face. You look like someone who was interrupted when you were making a movement towards someone. Were you ever in the hospital as a child?

John: Twice. Once for an operation, and was quite early in my life, and then later with mumps

Hellinger: That could be the explanation. When a child's movement toward someone they love is interrupted, it causes feelings of despair and sadness, and frequently of anger, and the child comes to the conclusion: "it's hopeless, there is nothing I can do," and gives up and becomes resigned.

The healing process is to go back to the situation in the past and enable the child to complete the movement. This can be done through hypnotherapy or holding therapy. Do you know what holding therapy is?

John: I have heard it mentioned

Hellinger: Holding therapy can also be done with adults, but it must be done in such a way that you go back to your childhood and the feelings you had as a child. The patient becomes the child "back there" and the therapist becomes the mother "back there." They both go back to the past situation, and the child is enabled to complete the early interrupted movement towards his mother.

John: Do you mean that the flow of my giving and moving towards my mother was interrupted?

Hellinger: That's my guess. Your movement towards your mother was interrupted. When someone who has been interrupted in an early movement toward the mother tries later in life to move towards someone else, for example, a partner, the old memory of the interruption returns, even if it is only on a subconscious level, and the person interrupts the movement at exactly the same point as it was interrupted as a child. Instead of carrying the movement straight through



towards its goal, the person deviates from the course, and a circular movement away from and back to the point of interruption begins. This is an exact description of neurosis. Neurosis begins at the point that a movement toward someone, usually the mother, is interrupted, and neurotic behavior is simply a repetition of this circular movement.

The solution to the problem is implicit in its description. But the solution causes anxiety. Carrying through the interrupted movement to its goal is very painful. It is a painful experience because it is tied up with a feeling of utter helplessness.

John: My sister told me that my parents wanted to visit me in the hospital, but they were not allowed to see me. They were only allowed to look at me from a distance, and they must have cried bitterly. But I can't actually remember this happening.

Hellinger: Now when we look at you, we have a concrete picture. We can see exactly how old you were and how bad you felt just by looking at you.

Bring your chair and come sit in front of me.

John takes his chair and sits down in front of Hellinger. Hellinger eases John's head, which was thrown back, gently downward and forward

Hellinger *to the group*: There was an interruption of the flow of energy here in his neck. Now it can flow again.

To John: Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and go back, far back into your childhood.

Breathe deeply. Resist your feelings of weakness and be in contact with your strength. Carry on breathing deeply and powerfully. Now say: "Please."

John: Please.

Hellinger: Louder.

John: Please.

Hellinger: Yes, like that. Again, louder still.

John: Please. Please.

Hellinger: Stretch your arms out as you speak. You can hold on to me. "Please."*

John: Please...



Hellinger: Say: “Mummy, Please.”

John: Mummy, please.

Hellinger: “Please.”

John: Please.

Hellinger: Say it urgently.

John: Please, Mummy.

Hellinger: Louder.

John: Please

Hellinger: With all your strength.

John: Please. Please.

Hellinger: And now say it quietly: “Please, Mummy.”

John: Please, Mummy.

John opens his eyes

Hellinger: Hello, how are you feeling now?

John: Good.

Hellinger *to the group*: Did you see how bad he felt as a child? He was desperate. It isn't possible to recover what has been lost, but it is possible to learn to complete a movement now that was interrupted and incomplete back then. In this exercise, inhaling is a taking-in and exhaling is a movement towards someone. Bowing down is also a movement towards someone. Okay, that's all.

*** No transcript can convey the emotional intensity of work like this. The entire sequence took about 10 minutes. John's tone of voice and the pain in his weeping attested to the depth and authenticity of his experience.**



6.5 Forfeiting One's Place

There are rare times when someone within the family system does something so heinous to others that they lose their place within the family system. Think rape, murder and the like. These family members still retain their role in the system (as father, grandmother etc.), but out of respect for other members they lose their place. When this person leaves the system, it will often produce a greater sense of peace for all of the family representatives—including this perpetrator.

An example - The client's mother had died of a gunshot wound. Neither the facilitator nor the client had direct information about the father's role in his wife's death (did he murder her?). The father's representative wanted to leave the room during the constellation, he felt he did not belong. In addition, the represented family members were not comfortable with him there. The facilitator experimented with this and everyone in the constellation felt better when the father's representative left the Field and the room.

The facilitator should proceed with caution, asking the representative if they want to leave the constellation, and sensing whether this is indeed the appropriate movement for everyone in the field.

There is a great metaphor about this dynamic from Francesca Mason-Boring's book "Notes From the Indigenous Field: Family & Systems Constellation, Ceremony & Ritual" in which she shares a story told by a Native American elder about the honoring of those who lose their place:

We used to gather acorns... When we are through gathering the acorns, we have to look at each one to see if there are any worms that have gotten into the acorn... If we keep the wormy acorn with the rest of the acorns, they will all go bad; they would all be at risk of being ruined. When we find such an acorn, we put it aside.

When we are through sorting the acorns, we take the wormy acorns and pray over them. We thank the creator for making them, and we honor that the life of those acorns took a different path. We take those acorns and we give them to the earth. We don't say that they're bad; we just know that they could harm the other acorns, so we give them to the earth, because she is able to take care of them.

Like the acorns, every soul can be honored, but sometimes that honoring takes the form of being returned to the source. While no soul is "bad", it can be in a family's best interest for a hurtful presence to be removed in order for healing to proceed.



6.6 Bert Hellinger speaks on Forgiveness

<https://www.annieblockpearl.com/bert-hellinger-speaks-on-forgiveness/>

Forgiveness

Forgiveness, which connects, is hidden and quiet. It is not spoken, but practiced. It is essentially nothing but forbearance. It overlooks a mistake, an injustice, a guilt, and forgets it. In this way, the mistake or injustice or guilt has no bad effects on the relationship. On the contrary. The relationship deepens through the tacit leniency. Mutual trust grows, especially on the side of the one who experiences the forbearance. It allows him to overlook mistakes and injustices and guilt when it is his turn to do so.

It's different when someone says to another "I forgive you"; he is in that moment pronouncing the other guilty. He raises himself above the other and degrades the other. This spoken forgiveness suspends the human relationship of equal to equal. It endangers the relationship instead of rescuing it.

But how is it when the other begs forgiveness? When this plea comes out of pain, at having distressed or hurt us, the mistake or injustice or guilt is more easily forgotten. All the more, when in our own way we were also guilty towards the other. That permits us perhaps a new start, where what happened earlier need not keep returning to us. That is a very humane manner of forgiveness, where both are on the same level, and remain equally low.

There are situations, however, where forbearance is forbidden, because the guilt is so great that it can only be acknowledged by the guilty and suffered by the one who was injured. The extreme case of such guilt is murder, because it cannot be undone. Here the guilty one must stand by his guilt and its consequences, without expecting forgiveness. And the affected one may not presume to forgive, as if he could do that or were allowed to do that.

What happens in the soul of the guilty one, when he expects and requests forgiveness for such a guilt? He loses sight of the victim, whom he has injured in an irreparable way. He can no longer grieve over him. Instead he seeks to escape the consequences of his guilt, trying to impose his guilt and his responsibility for it on the other.

Maybe he even gets angry with the other, as if the other owed him forgiveness. With that he forfeits his dignity and stature to the one who forgives him. Above all, the one who forgives takes the strength of the guilty one, the strength that flowed to him through the acknowledgment of his crime and its consequences.



The one who uses this strength to do and achieve something special for others, Wins back his dignity and in a certain way wins back his place among other people. And what happens in the souls of those who grant forgiveness to such a guilty one? They also lose sight of the victim and can no longer grieve over them or feel compassion for them. Above all, though, they elevate themselves over the guilty ones, making them pathetic and small. They even make the guilty one angry

through their forgiveness, because the guilty one and his deed are not taken seriously. Then their forgiveness nourishes and strengthens the evil, instead of ending it.

But above all, the one who forgives presumes to do something that only a higher power can do, a higher power before whom both the perpetrator and the victim are helpless and whom they serve, each in their own way. Who forgives here, refuses to honor the might of this higher power. He places himself next to it or even above it.

When both perpetrator and victim acknowledge that they cannot escape the consequences of the deed, because both have reached insurmountable limits, they must acknowledge their powerlessness and bow to their fate. That binds them on a deep, human level and smooths the way to reconciliation in the face of this fate

And how should others behave humanely towards the perpetrators and victims?

The humble answer to that is **compassion**. That is a movement and an attitude of the heart from person to person, but also from person to animal, to every creature. We feel it in the face of inescapable suffering and inescapable guilt, seeking to alleviate it through acts of compassion and knowing nonetheless that the suffering and guilt are irrevocable.

And how can we become **compassionate**? By becoming aware, in the face of our own hardship, our own guilt, our own inescapable situation, how often we ourselves depend upon the compassion and forbearance of others. Thus the compassionate and the guilty share powerlessness with those who suffer. Out of this powerlessness they do not judge and neither do they forgive. They remain humble and low. Compassion is silent.

With this I have also said something about love which reconciles. This is a special love, above and beyond that love that wants something. Here love means: acknowledgment that I am equal with all others before something greater. Humility means the same. Forgiveness and forgetting also.

The original article written by Bert Hellinger appeared in German in* Praxis der systemaufstellungen* 1/2002 page 22-23. Translated by Carlye Birkenkrahe.



6.7 Thoughts on Perpetrators & Victims and the End of Revenge

From ISSUE 33 JANUARY 2019 of *The Knowing Field Magazine*

Bert Hellinger

On the eve of this workshop, I looked out from my hotel room at Jerusalem glowing in the evening sun. I exposed myself to this city and to her long history.

Then I sat down and wrote the following text: The Holy City of Jerusalem When will Jerusalem truly become the Holy City that appears in the visions of Isaiah and the Revelations of John? When former enemies of all the Holy wars have become equals in the realm of the dead, beginning with conquests of Joshua and the unification under David and Solomon, through the wars between Israel in the North and Judea in the South, the defeat of both kingdoms by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, the difficult reconstruction after the exile under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, the bloody wars of the Maccabees, the crucifixion of Jesus, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the conquest by the Arabs, the crusades and the new conquests after the last world war. I have a vision in which all return and look deeply into one another's eyes, weep together over what they have suffered at one another's hands, salute one another with dignity and reconcile, leaving the past behind. And the living? They see what they too may expect and so they reconsider their goals and open their hearts to one another. **(Taken from Rachel Weeping for her Children: Family Constellations in Israel, Carl-Auer-Systeme Verlag, 2003, Heidelberg Germany)**

Perpetrators can soften when they are loved.

Perpetrators can soften once they are loved. The campaigns that are sometimes run in Germany and Austria, with the motto: "This must never happen again", often have an opposite effect. Whilst the perpetrators do not have a place in our midst and in our hearts as well, the bad, their bad, still has power. The more they are rejected, the more strength they gain. When they are accepted by us, they can be humans like us again. Only then can they grieve – and also face the consequences, not before.

Something else we need to consider here. Under the influence of our conscience, we distinguish between good and bad. The good ones, they're ours, the bad ones belong to the others. But the others think the same: We are the good ones; the others are the bad ones.

It is also disastrous here, when, looking at such terrible events as the Holocaust and the Second World War and all the crimes that happened then; we attribute all this to the responsibility of individuals. We have the idea that if only we educate our children differently, then this will never



happen again. The overcoming of the past is seen as the responsibility and within the strength of individuals, as if they had the power for this.

In this we completely delude ourselves about the incredible impact of historic events that capture whole nations and force them into something that is largely inescapable for most individuals. For the Germans and the Austrians this was the case. No-one could have stopped it.

It was also inescapable for the Jewish people. Nobody could have prevented or halted it. All were at the mercy of a vastly greater power. As long as we do not look at this greater power and acknowledge it in its horror, as long as we do not bow and submit to it, there is no solution. Therefore in the end the solution is a religious achievement and consummation.

The key to reconciliation between perpetrators and victims is ultimately in the hands of the victims. The perpetrators are powerless until a movement comes from the victims that also allows the perpetrators to move. The perpetrators cannot do this of their own accord.

We also need to keep something else in mind. The dead victims have no peace until they have given the dead perpetrators a place by their side.

This reconciliation proceeds among the dead, not among the living. The living cannot intervene here. When we as survivors and offspring acknowledge that we must not meddle in this, that we must let this process among the dead take its course, we can distance ourselves more easily from this past.

As long as we take sides for one lot against the other, we prevent reconciliation. What are we doing when at official memorials we think of the victims of the last war and what do we need to do when people speak about it? We are expected to take sides against the bad and for the victims. What is the result? Perpetrators and victims cannot come together, because we step between them through our judgment and our way of remembering.

The healing movement towards peace in our soul would be agreeing to both, agreeing to their fate, as it was, whether as perpetrator or victim. Both at once.

Then we also reconcile the murderous dimension in ourselves, our own murderous impulse and the suffering at the hands of others, where we experience ourselves as victims. Both at once. Only when these two sides can come together have we become whole as human beings.

The End of Revenge



The End of Revenge I will do a little exercise with you now. We close our eyes and collect ourselves in our center. We go beyond our body, into the realm of the dead, and we look at the dead of our own family.

Then we look beyond them, at the millions of dead people who perished, who were murdered, who died of starvation and torture. They are all lying there. And side by side with them, also lying on the ground, are the perpetrators – those who killed them, maltreated and tortured them, made them starve to death. There are also the dead from the war. So many: The dead soldiers and the dead civilians.

The many who were murdered, left to starve, tortured. All are dead. The soldiers from both sides are also lying there, enemies to each other: All dead. All the same. None better. None worse. All dead. A huge army of the dead from all sides.

And far beyond the horizon a white light is shining, still below the horizon. One only sees its glow. The dead get up, turn to the light and bow deeply, the dead victims and the dead perpetrators. And we bow with them. All bow in devotion before this light that remains partly hidden.

While the dead remain in this devotion, we get up, walking backwards, and we leave the dead to themselves, the victims and the perpetrators. We withdraw further and further, until we lose sight of them. Then we turn around, we come back into life and we look to the future. Here all revenge comes to an end. **(Taken from The Churches & their God, by Bert Hellinger. Hellinger Publications. 2013)**

END OF ARTICLE

What catches my attention 2-4-19 (direct quotes)

All were at the mercy of a vastly greater power. As long as we do not look at this greater power and acknowledge it in its horror, as long as we do not bow and submit to it, there is no solution.

Bowing, agreeing to Fate.

It is a larger force than individual influences.

The key to reconciliation between perpetrators and victims is ultimately in the hands of the victims. The perpetrators are powerless until a movement comes from the victims that also allows the perpetrators to move. The perpetrators cannot do this of their own accord.



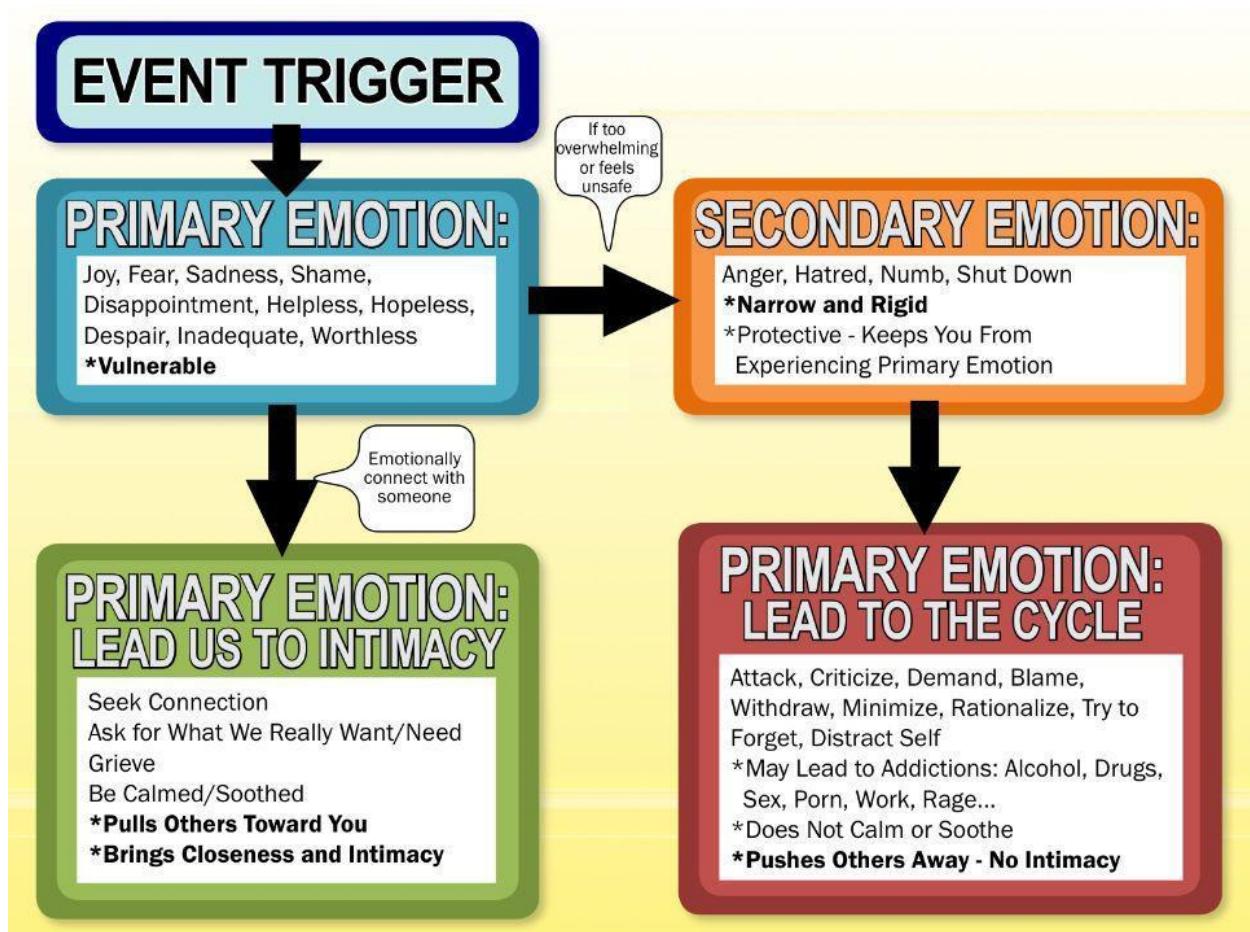
We also need to keep something else in mind. The dead victims have no peace until they have given the dead perpetrators a place by their side.

The healing movement towards peace in our soul would be agreeing to both, agreeing to their fate, as it was, whether as perpetrator or victim. Both at once.

Then we also reconcile the murderous dimension in ourselves, our own murderous impulse and the suffering at the hands of others, where we experience ourselves as victims. Both at once. Only when these two sides can come together have we become whole as human beings.



6.8 Primary, Secondary & Carried emotions



We need to discern the difference between a client's primary and secondary emotions.
Soul/Healing/Truth statements do not come from SECONDARY emotions
Only the PRIMARY emotions will touch the truth/Soul

A SECONDARY emotion is an avoidance of a PRIMARY emotion. For some reason the PRIMARY emotion is TOO PAINFUL and cannot be felt. A SECONDARY emotion is easier to feel/experience.

The problem with SECONDARY emotions is they may last forever and never get healed, because the original emotion is where the actual wound is.



Think of a client who has a heart problem (PRIMARY), let's say not enough blood flow or oxygen to the body.

They go to their doctor about their breathing/oxygen issue (SECONDARY), the doctor puts them on some drug to deal with the breathing/oxygen (SECONDARY) issue, the client feels better in the moment, but the issue is not truly healed, just medicated.

The only real healing will come when the PRIMARY issue, the heart problem, is addressed.

We need to get to the root (PRIMARY/BASE) of our clients emotional issues. They may be expressing rage, but their primary issue is grief. Etc. When working with clients, look for the deeper, hidden emotion.

Perhaps they are NUMB, but under this is rage

Maybe they are happy all the time, but it is a cover, under this is TERROR...

Facebook's emojis can also be closely correlated to primary emotions





Section 7: Trauma & Constellations



7.1 Trauma Work & Family Constellations :

Irreconcilable or Complementary?

By Bertold Ulsamer

I begin with a personal remark: In spite of all the enthusiasm that I experienced discovering family constellations, I was always aware that the approach of family constellations addresses only a certain area of problems, namely those that are rooted within our families. This certainly is an important area, yet not all of our issues stem from this root. Many problems are caused by life experiences unrelated to our families and therefore can't be resolved with family constellations. I perceive constellations work as one wing of the bird. In order to fly we need the second wing. In my years of experience as a facilitator of family constellations I also realized how differently I felt working with difficult issues depending on when they occurred. I am quite capable to deal with horrific events that occurred in former generations such as murders within the family, Holocaust issues or war crimes. However, if the horrors occurred closer in time the work became much more difficult for me. I remember for example how shocked I felt while working in a prison setting when my client had murdered her boyfriend. The idea to work with a person who actually experienced torture in this time feels utterly overwhelming to me. This means to me that there are still parts of my psyche and emotions that have not been cleared by the constellation work and that I must approach in different ways. This explains why the body oriented trauma work developed by Peter Levine has become so important to me. At first I assumed I was taking the trauma training with Peter Levine for my own personal benefit but as my understanding deepens I realize how many connections to the constellations work can be drawn. This new learning continues to influence and enrich my ongoing work with constellations and I want to share some of my insights.

What is Trauma?

The term "trauma" is no longer reserved for clinical discussions but, in the last years, has been well publicized and discussed. In the world of family constellations, however, there is little notice of this term. The following description of the term is based on the body oriented trauma work developed by Peter Levine, who began his work in collaboration to Anngwyn St. Just. This specific approach of body oriented Trauma work, called Somatic Experiencing or SE , goes beyond any prior concepts of trauma work.

The most outstanding difference of Levine's approach lies in his emphasis of the biological roots of trauma. We know three basic reactions to threat from the animal kingdom, all of which are directed by basic biological impulses. If the animal can match the perceived threat it will fight. If the threat seems overwhelming it will flee. This assessment is an instinctive process



that occurs automatically within split seconds of the threat. The cat that turns a corner to face a dog will "decide" within a split second if it can match the threat, in which case it will either posture and hiss or turn to race to the nearest tree.

Beside this fight or flight mechanism, which also forms the basic stress pattern in humans, we observe a third possible reaction: freezing. An animal that experiences a sudden, overwhelming threat to its life may freeze and become immobilized. The mouse caught by a cat freezes in that moment. We can discover this process in humans as well and may understand it as the foundation of trauma. Its basis is the sudden shock, an overwhelming threat and the lack of options to fight or flee. Caught in this dilemma the body freezes. In the animal kingdom we observe the dissolving of such a frozen state as another natural process that occurs when the danger has passed. The animal "reawakens" from its frozen state, often shakes itself or shivers to release the frozen energies and goes on with its life. The effects differ depending on the depth of the trauma reaction. If for example a bird gets lost in my room and I catch it, it likely will freeze. Once I release it outside it will reorient within a few moments and fly away. If I catch the bird a second time the frozen state will last longer and the bird needs more time to reorient. Caught more often the frozen state will last even longer, the bird will not reorient well and may be seen pecking aggressively at its surroundings while trying to return to its senses. And if I continue to catch it, it finally will die of a heart attack.

Humans have forgotten how to naturally reset from the frozen state to the flow of life. Without help we often don't fully return from the trauma. We continue our lives but part of our energy stays tied up in the nervous system where these unresolved energies create symptoms such as anxiety, depression, confusion and stress. (I will not elaborate on the important effects of trauma on the nervous system in this article.)

It is important to clarify that trauma always is an individual experience of overwhelm. From this fact the question emerges of, "How is it possible that one person experiences a situation as a dangerous and threatening moment while another person does not?" We can find three important factors causing the differences:

- A person's constitution which is partly based on the biological make up influences our experiencing greatly. Those with a sensitive nature will feel much easier overwhelmed than the sturdier ones. How much input and threat a nervous system can bear before it floods is individually varied.
- A person's history in regards to trauma plays another major role. The more traumatic situations someone has lived through, the faster he or she can be overwhelmed and reenter the frozen state.



- For those familiar with constellation work it is no news that children take on unresolved traumatic energies from former generations. For example if the parents were exiled from their country of origin during a war, the child will likely carry some of the feelings involved. Now if this child experiences any even minor events in his/her lifetime that resemble the prior events or trigger similar feelings it may cause disproportional shock. Also trauma therapists confirm that unresolved traumatic experiences in the nervous system and consciousness will be carried over into future generations.

Even though we can't speak of "the" traumatizing event, we can certainly name events that frequently cause traumatic reactions.

- First to be mentioned are accidents and catastrophes of all kinds: car accidents, train crashes, earthquakes and death or suffering induced by wars or torture.
- Then there is the particular overwhelm that children suffer such as difficult births, early separation from parents or being abused, the so-called developmental trauma.
- Helpers and therapists who step in to support victims may also be overwhelmed by what occurred and suffer a "secondary trauma".

After any traumatizing event the victim experiences a settling in of a deep anxiety that centers around the fear that the event will repeat itself, either in reality or in memory. If this does happen, the original shock will be re-experienced as the "retraumatization". This strengthens the traumatic reaction and is both harmful as well as strengthening the original trauma.

On the other hand the organism wants to release the stuck energies of the traumatic event and return to its natural uninhibited flow. This causes an attraction to situations that resemble the traumatizing event. For example if someone had a car accident he may find himself frequently in dangerous traffic situations. But as the body does not know how to react any different than the first time the danger for a similar overwhelm, shock and therefore retraumatization is high.

How does the constellation work address trauma?

Even though the term trauma is barely used in constellations work we constantly deal with traumatic events. We encounter it in former generations in the form of war, exile and imprisonment. We encounter it in current situations in the form of still born children, early or accidental deaths or the suffering of children as victims of abuse and violence.

Beyond the realm of families, our work many times includes the dynamics of victims and perpetrators in constellations. You can find profound examples in Bert Hellinger's book "Wo



Ohnmacht Frieden stiftet", where he describes constellations of victim and perpetrator in a rape during war and in a torture session.

In constellation work, we use representatives for the people who are most affected by the situation. These are the one who died and the one who survived in an early death issue or in an abuse issue the victim and the perpetrator. We wait for the representatives to establish contact and perceive each other and work with the emerging themes such as guilt and responsibility. Frequently we discover themes of love and connection and find that the ritual sentences developed by Bert Hellinger prove very helpful in dissolving interfering tensions and stuck energy patterns.

Trauma workers are fully aware that the attempt to resolve trauma inherently carries the danger of retraumatization. Is this true for constellation work as well? Is it possible that a constellation brings up such intense memories and sensations that the client - overwhelmed by the events- returns to the state of shock previously experienced?

When taken a step further, can this also happen to representatives who are standing in for the traumatized client? My colleague, Anngwyn St. Just, a trauma specialist, shared her observations with me. She frequently watched both clients as well as representatives enter the frozen trauma states without the facilitator even noticing it.

I have made similar observations and some other German therapists share my observations, specially Franz Ruppert mentions it in his books.

So, the dangers of retraumatization seem obvious in the midst of the work of family constellations. This danger creates a responsibility for facilitators to educate themselves in recognizing such states of shock and becoming aware of them when they first develop. Looking out for sudden paleness, speechlessness and lack of movement is helpful as these may be signs of a trauma state. You may also observe the person staring to a distant place and not being present in their body. However, complete loss of control and freak out may also be an indicator of trauma reactions.

Most facilitators of constellations seem unaware of this dimension of their work but avoid retraumatization intuitively. Some of the procedures used in constellations act as a protective mechanism that avoid flooding in clients or representatives.

The clients are protected by two such procedures:

- **The use of representatives**
 - When clients see their representatives they see them from the outside, which allows them to dissociate from the experience to some degree, which protects



them from the direct reliving of what happened. The more immediate and direct the hardship is or was, the more protection the client needs. While we usually involve clients directly towards the end of the constellation this does not apply for clients who are in danger of retraumatization. For them it is more important to keep sufficient distance to the events.

- **Respecting the issue and its limits**

- Sometimes the presenting issue is fairly superficial such as a work related issue while it is apparent that there are serious and difficult problems present in the family system. The facilitator may certainly discuss what exactly should be addressed in the constellation, yet it is important that the client's wishes are respected and will not be overruled. Even the best intentions don't give the facilitators the right to open up deeper and more painful issues than the client is ready to deal with. The facilitator who disregards the client's wish and "goes for it" also disregards the protection inherent in the client's knowing what he/she can deal with and may inflict harm.

To protect representatives from entering trauma states consider the following:

Distance

When difficult feelings are encountered during a constellation we often observe that the representatives are unable to look at someone or something. The tension is too intense and they need more space. Simply allow them to move away as far as they need to in order to feel safe enough to look. Space and distance protect from the intensity.

Contact

Facilitators need to stay in contact with the representative, particularly whenever constellations deal with heavy and tense situations. Simply connecting in by language, asking, "how are you doing?" creates connection to a representative who is holding difficult feelings and prevents these feelings from taking over.

Language

Another tool to assist representatives who are holding a burden lies in naming them in well-chosen sentences. By naming the burden we create a small inner distance to it. For example: A father who survived war and imprisonment may create an important distance by stating, "It was too much".



De-rolling

Facilitators need to be well trained to recognize when a representative is in danger of being overwhelmed. The question "can you hold it?" can clarify the situation. If it does not get answered with a clear "yes" the representative needs to be released from the role immediately.

Physical Contact

Whenever the danger of overwhelm becomes apparent and a representative is in danger of either freezing or freaking out, the facilitator may establish some physical contact. I often position myself behind the representative and put my hand on his/her back. This gesture is not to be seen as comforting but as a lending of strength and support so that the representative may stay present with difficult feelings.

All the above-described tools belong in each facilitator's toolbox and are constantly used without anyone ever mentioning the word trauma. However, there are some other concepts and procedures used in body oriented trauma work that might prove very useful to constellations work.

How does body oriented trauma work address trauma?

To describe Peter Levine's body oriented trauma work, called Somatic Experiencing ("SE"), I will mention four basic principles.

Titration: Drop by Drop

It is dangerous to access trauma fast and direct. It can, however, be dissolved level by level. An image describing this process can be found in chemistry: If you add HCL to caustic soda an explosion will occur. If you add HCL to caustic soda in a drop-by-drop fashion they will mix well. Chemistry calls this process titration. You can transfer this image to trauma work by stating that you look at a trauma drop-by-drop. In that way the body does not create "explosion" but is able to integrate the traumatic experience with other positive experiences that are present in the moment. When the trauma occurred too much happened too fast and too intense. Slowing it down, taking breaks and stretching time are therefore important therapeutic tools to process trauma safely.

The natural pendulation of the organism



As both of these states appear, threat and overwhelm on the one hand and resourcefulness and security on the other, we observe a natural movement back and forth from one to the other which

minimum movements that indicate the next change of direction and supports the natural pendulation. A trauma work session generally begins with establishing a resourceful, positive state, then it carefully approaches the outermost level of the traumatic experience. Once the client begins to connect with difficult events or feelings the therapist helps to make sure that he/she only approaches as much of this material as can be handled and supports the naturally occurring return of pendulation as soon as the body initiates it. This way frozen energies let go slowly and the therapist watches for physical signs indicating the release which may come in various forms such as small shivers or hot or cold flashes. Then, it takes time for the client to reorient to the present and it is important to allow sufficient time to establish a positive connection in the here and now before entering another movement into the traumatic state. The therapist waits for the natural movement to occur and is prepared to support the client as he/she enters the trauma state - this time a level deeper than before. It takes a number of pendulations to fully access an experience. How many depends on how intense the experience was as well as how deeply in the psyche it lives. As an example: I had an accident one night that had only minor physical consequences. I was out jogging after dark and collided with someone on a bicycle that had no lights. It took two sessions of an hour and seven pendulations for me to be able to remember the actual course of events, moment by moment without any sign of overwhelm.

Trauma resolution mainly occurs on the physical level

As described earlier, traumatic shock creates a freezing of energies that settles as rigidity in the body. To bring these energies back into motion and reestablish a natural flow the trauma therapist needs a well-trained eye to carefully observe the client's body signals. All release happens physically and small, unconscious body movements inform the facilitator in which way the body moves towards release. Most often we observe flight or fight behaviors.

Consider for a moment what it might feel like to reemerge out of a situation in which you felt shocked and completely overwhelmed. Our first instinctive reaction to such intense threat is generally flight. Our attempt to create distance - both externally and internally - is often accompanied by small movements of our feet. Once enough distance is established and we feel sufficiently safe the next level of reaction may surface in the form of uncontrolled aggression. Just as the bird in the earlier example picked at anything or anybody in its reach, we tend to unleash our aggression on our environment before we



are able to move to an even deeper level of the experience where we most likely will discover pain and sorrow. This cycle may repeat itself a number of times before a trauma state is released and resolved.

I have learned to value "flight" as a necessary step to unraveling frozen energies in our system. If somebody stays too close, he will remain frozen. This is not a question of will power. Without creating the necessary distance we can't experience the tremendous relief of finally being safe. It is important to point out here that it is not necessary to remember traumatic events in order to move through this process. Some clients remember the experiences and others don't. It suffices to follow the body's movements as it finds its way to release and return to its natural equilibrium. Awareness Listening to body movements and understanding them requires awareness. Many of our body movements have become unconscious and it takes focusing and slowing down to perceive them. We may have to repeat a movement a number of times and consciously sense into them before we understand what our body is expressing with this movement. For example: While talking about something a person performs a number of small defensive hand movements without any awareness of doing so. The trauma therapist would focus in on the movement, slow it down, have the client repeat it and look for its full expression or meaning. It is through following this process that frozen energies release and become available again.

We go through a similar journey encountering our emotions. The key word here is "containment". When emotions flood us - no matter if it is pain, rage or bliss - we cannot contain them and look for ways to cope. Regression, catharsis and acting out are clear indicators that the emotions can't be contained. As in the case of unconscious body movements, emotions need to be regained and contained bit by bit by bringing more and more awareness to them. Much as in the practice of meditation we are looking to gain a more profound level of consciousness.

What aspects of trauma work apply to family constellations?

Insights gained through trauma work don't contradict or challenge the principles of the constellations approach. They do, however, call for more careful proceedings when dealing with traumatic events.

I believe it would be very helpful to introduce the process of titration - the drop-by-drop procedure- to facilitators of family constellations, so that they only confront clients with as much as they are able to safely absorb. Currently most facilitators avoid overwhelm instinctively, and even though no one wants to overwhelm their clients I believe it happens frequently and could be avoided by asking themselves the question: How much can this client integrate at this time?



What can the facilitator do to avoid a possible overwhelm? For one, if the experienced situation was heavy, slow the process down. I personally have stepped away from the idea that it is possible to resolve such an issue f. e. abuse in one single constellation. Instead I may work with several constellations over whatever time span is needed to help my client resolve the issue safely. In this way people continue to discover deeper levels of connections as they proceed to face both the love and the darkness inherent in each family system.

Since I pay more attention to how much my client can bear my work has changed. Before I encountered trauma work I felt more inclined to confront a client who was not looking at a person or an issue. I would encourage them to face it. I remember one of Bert Hellinger's sentences: "Flight is no escape." In the meantime I see that flight is no escape - but flight might be a necessary first step of a solution.

Today my attention focuses more on how much my client can integrate. Let me give an example:

A female client reports that a friend of the family had sexually abused her. The abuse had gone on for about three years of her childhood. During the constellation the child's representative feels extremely abandoned by everyone and particularly by her mother. Facing the perpetrator she experiences pain and shock but is eventually able to leave all guilt with him and turn away from him to face her family. At this point I bring the client into the constellation to take her place. She breaks down in tears and is unable to look at anybody. I immediately have her turn away from the constellation, yet her tears continue to flow uncontrollably. I join her and we distance ourselves from the constellation and even as we exit through the door her tears continue to flow. We wait in the next room until she calms down and I ask her if I should finish the constellation or if she would like to meet anyone in this constellation. She replies that she would like to look at her two sisters. So I return to the constellation and release father, mother and perpetrator from their roles. The client returns to make a brief loving connection to her sisters and we end with this moment.

In my opinion the client's needs override all rules and ideas of how a constellation should be done. I orient my work around these needs and I am willing to interrupt, take distance or take a break in order to avoid overwhelming someone. I stay in close contact with my client and let him decide, how much he can handle.

This way I keep my constellations in service to my clients. I may even encourage an abused client to keep distance from a perpetrator before looking at him/her and to raise one hand as soon as feelings of overwhelm come up. Once I see the hand raised I freeze the constellation immediately.



Dealing with traumatic events it is important that the facilitator has to be aware of the client even while working the constellation.

A female client had suffered a "medical mistake", lost one arm and was dealing with its consequences. The constellation moved well and the representatives were heading to a solution picture when I noticed that the client was not observing the constellation anymore but looked away. I stopped the constellation to inquire how she was feeling and realized that she was in an overwhelmed and frozen state. I joined her and we backed away from the constellation to create distance. From there I dissolved the constellation and worked with her on her current state.

As my goal is not to "pull a constellation through" or even to reach a positive solution picture, I feel free to interrupt whenever my client seems absent or negatively affected.

In an advanced training group I decided to demonstrate how to use wooden figures to work with individual clients. The man who volunteered brought a difficult issue. When he was six months old his parents left him with his aunt, because they had to go abroad, to Germany, in order to earn money. They did not reunite until he was three years old.

I suspected that this issue was one of "interrupted movement" (a term in trauma work when a child was separated at an early age from his parents) and though I doubted that it was suitable for working with wooden figures I decided to go ahead and explore it. We put up figures for father, mother and child and began the constellation. We worked for about a half an hour until the client imagined that his mother was smiling at him at which point I decided to leave it.

Later, during a feedback circle, this client reported how he felt relieved. He had been extremely nervous to approach this issue, because he was unsure if he could bear re-experiencing the situation through representatives. The use of wooden figures had made it easier for him as it created more distance. We had made a small first step towards resolving this interrupted movement.

These examples have taught me to stay more humble in certain situations. Rather than hoping for major liberations through a single constellation I now try to advance at the client's speed.

Understanding how trauma states resolve has taught me some other new perspectives in my work.

A client was working on feeling estranged from her family. She suspected abuse by her father but had no memories before the age of 14. The child's representative is afraid of



the father and wants to move away from the family. As we have no facts I avoid naming anything and just follow the energies present in the constellation. When the client enters the constellation she can't bear being near her family and feels relieved when backing away and finally turning away from them. She reports a sense of liberation and relief and I end the constellation.

As the seminar continues I observe this client, who always presented as quiet and reserved, become increasingly discontent with her constellation. She behaves more and more aggressive towards me and requests "some more" on our last day. When I suggest a second constellation she declines and concludes our final feedback circle with a single word: "Shit!"

This could be viewed as failure on my part as the facilitator. From the perspective of a trauma therapist I see it differently. The retreat from her family, the distancing and turning away were a kind of a necessary flight. Enough distance was created for my client to reorient, recover and gather strength. As the energies unravel the flight reaction is followed by rage and - the deeper the hurt the wilder the rage. Just as that bird awakened out of its shock to pick at whatever is nearby, her rage gets directed at whomever is present and as the facilitator (and also as a possible "father figure") I become the target. This rage has little to do with me personal but is a necessary part of a solution.

I obviously won't know how my client will integrate the experience after the seminar but she has clearly stepped into a place where she accesses her strength and power. The best I can do for her process is to bear her rage without reacting or getting angry back ("you are unfair!").

Awareness of this bigger healing movement through the pendulation between resource and hardship creates a new perspective of the overall effect of family constellation work. Doesn't the image of rightful order that often concludes the first constellation serve as a resource? This can be understood as a resource of strength and healing that the client needs to integrate before entering deeper levels of entanglement that might have been invisible before.

When I first put up my family I received a simple, healing image that felt right and extremely good. Several years later I asked for another constellation and very different energies emerged. I was confronted with intense energies of isolation, insanity and horror. The pendulum had swung the other way and I have no idea how many more movements of good and bad may come my way.

Understanding this process takes pressure off the facilitator. If only positive solution pictures would help our clients, we feel responsible to bring the constellation to "a good end". If, however, an organic pendulation exists that continually moves between resourcefulness and



hardship and thereby brings about healing, the facilitator can relax and simply accompany the client and support the unraveling of this process.

It would be a fascinating exploration to find out if the same pendulation process can be observed in Hellinger's work "movements of the soul".

When trauma and family entanglements go together

Finally an example how trauma and family issues can overlap:

A tall young man in his early twenties comes to do his constellation. He is friendly and well mannered but people who meet him in the street would rather avoid him because he shaved his head and has tattoos all over his arms and shoulders. His issue: many years of drug addiction.

The constellation reveals that his mother cannot really look at her child. She is afraid of him. (This means normally in a constellation that she confuses the child with somebody else.) I asked for any facts in the family history that might help us understand this fact but he knows none. As it seems obvious that it is not the child whom the mother fears, I choose a man, place him next to the boy and name him "the one who is really meant". Mother's attention immediately shifts to him and she is visibly frightened of him. The child shows great relief and can finally be seen as just the child. Because of a strange attraction I suspect that this man might be a first boyfriend who was violent or even raped her.

The mother of this young man had been to some of my workshops and when I met her again I asked her who she thought this "one who is really meant" might be. She thought about it, said that she had heard that one of her grandfathers could be violent and we left it at that. The next day she returns and reminds me of a constellation we had done several years prior. When she was 12 years old two men kidnapped her and held her for nearly 12 hours. They tied her up, tortured her and sexually abused her until she eventually managed to escape. In the constellation particularly the older of these two men presented as brutal and violent, making statements such as "I like it when you are terrified." The representative for the child vacillated between terror of and boundless love for this man. (Trauma research has confirmed that such connections frequently happen between perpetrator and victim.) When she thought about her son's work, my client concluded that it was this perpetrator whom she perceived when looking at her son. Her son, in turn, had taken on a part of his role. Here you can see how traumatic experience can directly affect family members. Talking further with my client I learned how different therapeutic approaches had worked well together. When she first began working on this kidnapping



experience she found hypnotherapy to be a most helpful tool. Her next big step was to meet the perpetrator in her constellation. However, she still feels the effects of the trauma living in her body and has now decided to begin trauma work.

How do trauma work and constellation work differ and what do they have in common? Trauma and constellation work address different layers of our being. Constellations connect us with our roots as social beings by demonstrating how we are connected to our family system. They make it clear that we belong to that system and will remain a part of it. If we encounter in a constellation a perpetrator outside of our family system, we discover a human being who carries a burden of guilt. Even if we turn away from this person, we do so with respect and it is this respect for the fate of another that brings about healing. This respect can heal relationships with others as well as part of ourselves. Trauma work focuses directly on our body and its reactions. Much of our impulses and instinct are an inheritance from the animal kingdom and it serves a facilitator well to understand how these energies move within our bodies. Trauma work addresses the physical level of our nature and heals there. Once frozen energies have been resolved we can return to undisturbed interactions with our environment and our fellow humans.

However, the boundaries between these two approaches are not always so clear-cut. Here is a quote by Peter Levine: "Looking at trauma we are looking at loss of connection, connection to ourselves, our families and our surroundings." In the application of trauma work the connection to the therapist as another human being therefore becomes a central theme. It is this connection continually reestablished and reaffirmed- that creates a polarity to the pull of the trauma. The trauma therapist Babette Rothschild speaks to this by talking about our ability to create relationships later in life. "A traumatized child is not necessarily doomed to a life of dysfunction. Many people who did not have opportunities to create safe relationships during their childhood were able to correct that later in life and create positive experiences with their connections and relationships." Rothschild mentions friends, teachers, neighbors, partners as well as psychotherapists. And these issues of bonding, connection and relationship are the core concerns of family constellation work. Through it we frequently discover a deep, connecting flow of love in seemingly dysfunctional families. This experience that connection has always been there creates a new sense of belonging, which can be seen as a corrective experience. As you can see, both approaches, constellations and trauma work, overlap in many places. I see them as two circles that overlap in some part and stand alone in another. Maybe half the issues brought in by our clients could be addressed with either approach though they would utilize different tools. In the other half each area holds its own domain and is preferable to the presented issue. I am planning a workshop for severely traumatized clients in which I combine both approaches. In the mornings we will be working in a group setting and do constellations while the afternoons are reserved for individual SE sessions. I can't wait to see how both approaches work together and what results can be achieved. The question of healing and growth is not an either or question, trauma work or constellations, but how can we combine them on our journey



to more vitality, love and life force. In this process it is clear to me that I can only take people as far as I have gone myself. In other words constellations led by me will only uncover both positive as well as negative aspects of life to such a degree as I am able to accept and contain. Facilitators therefore need to stretch their abilities to meet and accept the hardships in our human experience. I believe trauma work to be a good tool for such expansion.



7.2 Family Constellations & Trauma Therapy

by Svagito Liebermeister

Family Constellation is an effective short term therapy that has the potential to arrive at the roots of problems in a short time. The interaction between representatives placed in a constellation can quickly reveal underlying conflicts within a relationship system — for example within the family of a client.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of this method is that the client hardly speaks. In most cases, after representatives for family members have been placed, a client is only an observer. The representatives are moved by the energy field of the system, which is connected to a deeper layer of the mind not ordinarily accessible.

This deeper layer, which Hellinger calls the 'soul', guides the representatives and the facilitator towards solutions. It is a way to by-pass superficial layers of our minds, where our desires, attitudes and beliefs are generated, and directly approach the roots of conflicts.

By helping a client experience that he is part of a much bigger collective system and inviting him to fall in tune with these vaster forces of life, the facilitator helps a client come to a point where he can say 'yes' to life as it is.

This 'yes' to life should not be misunderstood as saying 'yes' to other people, or to every life situation. Essentially, it is a 'yes' to oneself and to one's own individuality, and in this way can be considered to be a spiritual dimension of life.

In difficult or challenging life situations, such as shock or trauma, this ability to say 'yes' to life is often impaired. A person becomes either disconnected from the flow of life, or develops negative attitudes towards life and other people.

Instead, the life of this person may focus on the fear of experiencing such a traumatic event again and on avoiding anything resembling the original situation. On the other hand, there can also be an urge to resolve the effects of a trauma, which can result in people being drawn to situations that have a certain similarity to the original event.

In general, we can say that therapy is an effort to bring unresolved trauma and blocked energy to a completion, and in this way restore a person's capacity to be in a flow with life, reconnecting with other people and looking towards the future rather than at the past. This is the type of 'yes' a client experiences when therapy is successful.



In Family Constellation one can see that this ‘yes‘ is closely connected to one’s ability to say ‘yes‘ to one’s parents and to receive them in one’s heart. It is not a grudging or reluctant gesture, in the sense that a client accepts his parents because he has no choice, but should rather have a quality of rejoicing and gratitude. For this reason, we usually talk more about ‘receiving‘ one’s parents, rather than merely accepting them.

In terms of the physical body, the successful resolution of trauma usually leads to a discharge of the stuck or suppressed energy. This means that abnormally heightened states of arousal within the nervous system disappear and a person returns to a normal movement between activation and relaxation that is within manageable limits.

While acknowledging the reality of trauma, Family Constellation offers no specific concept for understanding it. This sometimes leads to neglect of the fact that traumatized clients need to be treated in a way that differs from other clients.

However, the new approach to Family Constellation works more with spontaneous movements of the representatives and this gives time for deeper layers of a family system to reveal themselves. This is closer to the perspective of body-oriented trauma therapy, which considers trauma as an event that particularly affects the body and its nervous system.

The classical style of doing constellations, where representatives are basically guided by the facilitator and his concepts, can easily pre-empt the natural discharge of trauma, forcing a premature conclusion that is not mirrored by the actual state of a client’s nervous system.

For example, in a session where the trauma was perpetrated by one or both of the parents, one might see a client being asked — almost forced — by a therapist to bow to those parents in a kind of subordination. Such a gesture cannot lead to positive results. Rather, it can be seen as a new form of conditioning, whereby the client is taught what is right and what is wrong and learns to surrender to a moral concept. In a worst case scenario, it could lead to a strengthening of trauma symptoms.

Family Constellation’s new approach gives more space for trauma discharge to occur naturally, as the facilitator intervenes less and allows movements of the systemic energy field to unfold by themselves. Nevertheless, it is important to bring more clarity to what actually happens in trauma — not only psychologically, but also physiologically.

In this article, I will examine how trauma therapy can contribute to the work of systemic therapists. Specifically, I will refer to Peter Levine’s ground-breaking approach to trauma therapy, called Somatic Experiencing, which is more comprehensive than other methods, emphasizing the biological roots of trauma and its effect on the body and nervous system.



In my work, I found this approach enriching and beneficial when working with family systems, as it focuses on aspects of trauma that can easily be neglected by a Family Constellation practitioner.

First I will introduce some basic concepts, then I will discuss their relevance in a Family Constellation session.

1. Basic Insights

The most important understanding of Peter Levine's approach is that trauma occurs on the level of the nervous system and is not in the event itself. In other words, the same event can be traumatic to one person, but not to someone else. An event becomes traumatic when it disrupts the nervous system's normal ability to cope with an event. It has a quality of overwhelmingness, in which the individual is unable to cope. If a particular event is perceived to be too sudden, too much or too fast for the individual's nervous system to handle, it becomes traumatic.

It is a situation in which the organism does not have the option to react with the instinctive 'fight or flight' options. As a result, the organism goes into a so-called 'freeze' response, where the whole system shuts down in a final attempt to protect itself and maximize the chances of survival. For example, if a mouse is caught by a cat it enters a state of freeze, which protects the mouse from experiencing pain and also inhibits the cat's impulse to kill, thereby increasing the mouse's chances of survival.

Studying the behavior of animals, it has been observed that when an animal survives such situations and returns to normality from a 'freeze' state, it usually goes through a process of discharge. Accumulated energy is spontaneously released — for example through shaking or shivering. This allows the animal's nervous system to return to its normal level of operation and permits the animal to function as before.

When threatened, human beings tend to function very much like animals because a more primitive and instinctive area of our brain – the brain stem — is activated and takes control. This is the region of the brain that is in charge of the autonomic nervous system and controls our survival response. The more recently developed, human part of our brain, known as the Neo-Cortex, is by-passed.

There is no need, here, to go into detail about the way the body gets activated and what happens in different brain centers, such as the amygdala and the hormonal response. The important principle to understand is that, when we feel threatened, a physiological process begins that enables the body to respond quickly, with a lot of energy, to maximize our chances of survival.



This immediate response is possible only through by-passing our ability to think about the situation and exert voluntary control – there is no time and no energy available for such complex mental processes. This is why we say that in moments of survival-related stress we function like animals, relying on our instincts, with very little or no control over our responses.

As with other animals, the human body generates a lot of energy in preparation for fight or flight and, when circumstances do not permit such responses, the body goes into freeze mode. In this state, both parts of our autonomic nervous system — the sympathetic and the parasympathic — are highly activated.

When the body comes out of the freeze state, a significant amount of the aroused energy does not get discharged. Instead, it remains trapped inside the body and, in particular, inside the nervous system. This makes us different from other animals, who seem to have no trouble getting rid of excess energy.

What makes us humans different? It is the Neocortex, the thinking mind, that inhibits the release of energy after the threat is over. Peter Levine therefore defines post-traumatic stress (PTS) as an abnormal prolongation of what was originally a quick response to a threatening situation. PTS symptoms are incomplete responses that have become frozen in time. They repeat themselves in endless loops, just like a broken record when the needle gets stuck at a certain point.

The PTS victim remains in a state of heightened activation, as if still under threat, and, as one may imagine, this takes a lot of energy. Moreover, in this state of chronic hyper-alertness, the whole organism gradually becomes more vulnerable to other stressful events, which may be added to the nervous system as new traumas. One result of this is that a person suffering from PTS syndrome now feels compelled to act more cautiously in life, reducing the range of life experiences available.

A nervous system that can no longer regulate itself within normal limits can be compared to a car in which the brake and the gas pedal are pushed at the same time. It is a simultaneous state of high arousal and high shut down. Accordingly, a traumatized person may appear to be in a state of high activation, in which he cannot really relax, or he may appear to be dissociated and absent, as if in freeze mode. Or he may vacillate between the two states.

This is a simplified summary of Levine's approach to trauma. For further study, I invite the reader to pursue the extensive literature available in this field. (See bibliography)



A therapist dealing with a traumatized client needs to understand how and why his client is unable to return to a normal state of functioning. He needs to be able to reach a deeper level of the client's body and nervous system in order to heal the problem. Intellectual insights won't be enough. It is for this reason that Peter Levine has created a specific therapy for healing trauma, which he called Somatic Experiencing, in which the practitioner tries to reach to the level of the brain stem, where the trauma energy is trapped, and help the nervous system discharge the stuck energy.

In the process, he takes care to expose the nervous system only to as much activation as it can absorb without going into freeze. In other words, the work has to progress slowly, from a resourced state, in which over-stimulation or reliving of a traumatic event are avoided. Traditional therapy runs the risk of overwhelming clients, exposing them too fast to a stimulus that in some way resembles the original event that caused the trauma. This 'overwhelm' is likely to result in re-traumatization.

Levine's approach poses an interesting challenge to our work as Family Constellation practitioners. It reminds us that clients who suffer from trauma may need to be exposed to a threatening situation more slowly, with more support. It helps us understand that a person may know all the entanglements that led to a traumatic event and may even be conscious of the roots in the family system, but this may still not relieve him of the related symptoms.

The physical responses that are responsible for trauma symptoms are governed by a part of the brain that has not yet realized that the threat disappeared long ago. Intellect doesn't go deep enough to touch this layer. This is the reason why, in trauma therapy, we speak of a 'biological completion', where the body itself can learn to complete the past.

This can be seen as complementary to the completion of a movement within the family system, as it is done in Family Constellation.

2. Trauma Healing Techniques and How Those Principles Can Be Adopted for the Work of Family Constellation

I refer here mainly to methods developed in Somatic Experiencing.

Resourcing is a method where the client is brought in contact with whatever helps him maintain a sense of self and inner integrity. There can be outer resources, such as persons, special places, or objects. There can be inner resources, such as personal qualities and abilities. Resources can be experienced on a physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual level. They are unique to the individual and can also



change during a session. Their function is to strengthen a client in the face of difficulties, or disruption, which otherwise would lead to re-traumatization.

The building of resources is an important part of trauma work. It prepares the client to face challenges without being overwhelmed by them.

Applying this principle to Family Constellation can mean various things:

It can mean that, when a client is highly activated, one may not begin a constellation immediately, but first try to lower his activation and help him find some inner or outer resources. This can be done through working with the body and helping a client become aware of parts of the body that are more calm and less activated. Or, one can help a person realize that, where he is right now, is a safe environment, where no threat exists and the danger is over. Working with a client's eyes can be an important element in this context. Resourcing has a lot to do with giving the client a sense of well-being, which is also known as "grounding".

However, grounding does not necessarily include a feeling of connection with the feet and legs, or the lower part of the body, as this may be the activated part. Sometimes, the whole body contains so much aroused energy that no resource can be found within the body itself. Then one has to find other resources outside the body, even fantasy images may be helpful, or the therapist himself can act as a resource.

Example: In a session, a client was very activated and afraid, when thinking of his mother. Rather than asking him to say 'yes' to his mother and receive her, the therapist asked the client to imagine how he would have liked his mother to be, creating the new image as a fantasy of the imagination. Describing this image, the client began to relax, discharging energy, and was then able to be more present for the session. From this secure point, he gradually became more capable of looking at his actual mother.

Only when a person is sufficiently resourced is he able to receive a constellation and benefit from insights that arise during a session

Sometimes, it may even be necessary to interrupt a constellation, if a client becomes too activated, loses his sense of well-being and grounding, and is unable to follow the constellation.

Resourcing also covers another aspect of constellation work. Within a constellation, a therapist often has a choice: to work with the biggest entanglement, or to give attention to that part of the system where a client can receive the most support and



strength. With a traumatized client, it will be better to look first for resources within the family system.

In other words, the facilitator needs to be able to see whether love and support is available from the side of the mother, or from the side of the father, then help the client become aware of that, instead of focusing on what he did not receive. Sometimes, he may need to find love and relaxation by being surrounded by his other siblings, or, more generally, from life itself.

Example: In a constellation, a female client could not recall any important events in her family. When placing representatives for her parents, the mother was drawn away and started to express a lot of violence and pain and was unable to experience relaxation, even after more representatives were added to the constellation. The client herself went more and more into a frozen state. Asked how she felt, she replied that she was not touched by what she saw, as if it had completely by-passed her. The therapist dissolved the constellation and instead placed the actual client and her three siblings in the middle, next to each other. The client immediately came out of her dissociated state, feeling relieved and looking at her siblings with love.

In the face of dealing with trauma, one has to be very aware of this principle of finding support for the client, not focusing only on those members of the family system from where the trauma is coming.

Important questions are: Who was able to support and take care of the child/client? What did the client receive (rather than what he did not receive)?

Titration describes the process of slowly entering traumatic areas of activation, so that feelings and sensations can be processed gradually, bit by bit, without overwhelming the client. It helps to minimize activation by slowing things down, giving space to break down the experience into manageable pieces. This gives the body time to integrate and generate its natural resources.

Titration can be compared to opening a champagne bottle, which is under pressure. When opened quickly it ‘explodes’ in a way that much of its content is spilled out. However, when it is opened in a slow and ‘titrated’ way, the air and pressure can be released without creating an explosive reaction.

This principle is important for any kind of therapeutic session when dealing with traumatic content. For example, the client can be asked to talk slowly, leaving gaps between his sentences, or be requested to talk about one issue at a time. Bert Hellinger



sometimes allows a person to utter only one sentence, which can be seen as a way to contain the energy. Sometimes even no sentence is uttered.

It is good to remember to deal with one issue at a time in a constellation session, leaving related issues for another time. It may be good for traumatized clients to avoid looking directly at the most challenging event, dealing instead with some less fearful issue, even if this is not considered to be the root cause of a problem. This is contrary to some people's idea, who may think one should always go directly to the root of a problem.

Pendulation describes the natural flow between trauma and resources (trauma and healing vortex). It is a technique used to connect with a small amount of activation, allowing it to discharge, then swinging back to the available resource.

It can be also embraced as a general principle of a therapeutic session, where one moves between supporting a client, helping him to disidentify with his problems, then challenging his ego structure and working on his issues. (I have described this in more detail in my book ,The Zen Way of Counseling: A Meditative Approach to Working with People').

This principle is especially important, because in trauma a client often becomes disconnected from his resources, easily has a sense of being overwhelmed and is often unable to control his behaviour. As a result, he may suffer from a certain symptom that he cannot control, which worsens if he is confronted with too much activation similar to the original traumatic event.

This principle also applies to Family Constellations. For example, someone on the father's side of a client's family suffered a severe traumatic shock, while on the mother's side there is more strength, continuity and support for the client. The therapist may focus too much on helping the client disidentify from the father and his family, which may turn out to be impossible. The client may even wish to cling to the father, staying closely connected with him, unless love and support from the mother is included from the beginning of the work. This additional strength can facilitate a movement away from an unhealthy identification with someone on the father's side of the family. Often, one can see a kind of pendulation in a constellation, when a therapist asks the client to look at his mother and father alternately.

In the new approach, working only with spontaneous movements, there can be a natural pendulation not initiated by the client, but part of a bigger movement, the movement of life, where entangled and healing movements alternate. Seen from this perspective, one can say that life itself has a natural power to self-regulate. Or, one can



say that life is a process of involvement and coming out of involvement. One has to identify before one can disidentify. These insights of trauma work can help facilitators to be less one-dimensional in their approach, more conscious of the fact that in a trauma there is an intrinsic potential. But to access this potential, it may not be enough to make a client aware of the deeper laws of life, but to accompany a client to a place where he is able to discover and realize these laws for himself.

For example, if a client experienced a sexual abuse, it is not enough to know that eventually victim and perpetrator have to meet. It may be too early to confront the victim with the perpetrator, as is often done in Family Constellation sessions. It may be more important to help the client find resources as a first step, then to see how much confrontation he can tolerate and what kind of healing movement can arise.

In general, one should stay closely connected to the client and his reactions to what he sees unfolding before him, not only watching and observing the movements of the representatives in the constellation

Many times, Family Constellation facilitators tend to forget the actual client and only watch the representatives of a constellation. This may be acceptable in an ordinary situation, but when dealing with a traumatized client one may miss the fact that he is being subjected to over-stimulation or re-traumatization.

Another principle of trauma work is called discharge, where activation is helped to gently leave the body. This may be accompanied by the restoration of certain responses that have become inhibited and frozen within the physiology. Trauma therapists specifically talk about the fight, flight and orienting responses.

Family Constellation therapists need to be aware of any discharge that happens in a representative, or in the client himself, which is usually a sign that a client is coming out of an identification, or re-establishing a missing connection. This can show in a deep out-breath, a physical relaxation, a smile, or an emotional expression such as laughter or crying. Usually, it leaves a client stronger, more integrated and more available to the present moment. On an emotional level, this needs to be distinguished from so-called secondary emotions that weaken a client and are the result of continued identification. They do not relieve the client and do not open him to any new territory.

Trauma therapists usually take care that any discharge in a traumatized client happens gently, gradually, and should not lead to over-stimulation. A lot of importance is given to integration and helping the system to reorganize itself. These are essential elements: giving enough time and space to a client without moving too quickly to new



material, slowing things down and waiting for the client to be able to absorb what has been processed.

This approach serves as an important reminder to Family Constellation therapists. It usually is better to look at one entanglement at a time, to emphasize one important insight, to avoid any long talk or analysis after the constellation, giving the client enough silence and space to absorb what he has seen. It may be also important to check if the client has arrived back in the „here and now“ and is able to understand that the past is over, not only intellectually, but existentially. It may be necessary to remind the client of a new resource he has found during the session, helping him become aware of the effect this resource has on him right now.

Trauma therapy gives special importance to educating a client, helping him understand what trauma is, why symptoms develop, also how to support the body in order to overcome such symptoms. It has been found that, with education, a client is more able to support himself in daily life and also feels less shame about his powerlessness to control his symptoms. To understand what is a panic attack, what may lead to it, what is helpful in such a situation, may be the first step in regaining control. Traumatized clients need to be able to regain control over their behavior as a first step to finding relaxation and overcoming the consequences of their trauma. This also means that a therapist may give practical homework to his client.

This is different from the usual approach to Family Constellation, where we do not spend much time explaining and offer nothing specific for a client to do after a session. In terms of family conditioning, this approach is appropriate, but it may not be enough when dealing with the body. The body needs to be supported by the intellect; it needs to be given enough time for re-learning and perhaps given additional support through practical exercises that can be done at home.

3. Other Benefits

Of course, many therapists and Family Constellation practitioners already include some of these principles in their work. Still, it is a helpful reminder, especially as trauma has not been understood rightly in the past and is not paid much attention in the work of Family Constellation. Also, the need to include the body is often not given enough importance. In my opinion, facilitating constellations without helping the body to integrate those experiences is insufficient.



In my work, I have been adding the physical dimension by including active meditations in a course of Family Constellation. I feel it essential for clients to become conscious of what their body is carrying in terms of undischarged, stuck energy.

For trauma clients, this is even more important. They suffer from symptoms that need to be addressed physically, not only through understanding the family dynamics that created them. For example, it is helpful for a trauma client to learn to sense activation and discharge on a physical level, something which is called ‘tracking’ in Somatic Experiencing. This can be done before and after a constellation.

Before a constellation session begins it can be useful to lower arousal and help the body discharge excessive energy that originates in an unresolved trauma. This preliminary process grounds a client in the present moment and makes him more available to observe, absorb and integrate the work. Often, as we have already mentioned, traumatized clients are either hyperactive or in a dissociated state. In both cases, a constellation is likely to by-pass them, with little or no positive result.

After a constellation, it is helpful to give time for integration, tracking the effect of what has been observed in the body. This will give more depth and meaning than simply asking a client if everything has been understood. In my experience, many clients answer ‘yes’ to such questions out of a sense of shock, or in an effort not to appear ignorant, or to please the therapist, rather than from real understanding.

So, to help a client become aware of physical sensations before and/or after a constellation can enrich and deepen the benefits of a constellation. (This is an interesting field for further study).

There is another benefit of body-tracking before a session:

In constellation work, especially when working with movements of the soul or spirit, it is essential to find a right starting point for the session. In other words, we need to decide whom to place in a constellation, whom to choose from a family system. This may be just one or two people, but they need to be the right ones, otherwise the work may go in a different direction, with no solution for a specific problem.

The less representatives, the more concentrated the work, so it is important to start with a significant person. Sometimes this may be easy to decide, but in many situations this is not so obvious. Many experienced facilitators who have watched Bert Hellinger begin a constellation session with only one representative have been puzzled how he is able to come to a certain conclusion. Whether one agrees with all of Hellinger’s



conclusions is not something I will discuss here, but it is obvious that he places great importance on the selection of a significant family member related to the client's issue.

I have discovered that guiding a client to track his body sensations, moving through cycles of activation and discharge at the beginning of a session — without being too concerned about relating this to family dynamics — can lead the therapist to discover the right and important person with whom to start the constellation.

I have been experimenting with this approach with trauma clients and have always found that the body itself will guide me to what is important. At a certain point, it becomes easy and obvious to see which person from the family system needs to be selected for the constellation.

The following example shows how working with the body can be combined with constellation work:

A female client, about 40 years old, is having a session. She is quite fearful, her body is trembling and she has difficulty speaking with a normal tone of voice. Before inquiring about her issue, I first help her to become more calm. I suggest that she doesn't fight with the trembling feeling, but rather focuses on an area of her body that is less affected and relatively calm. This helps her tolerate the activation more easily and soon she is able to discharge some of the physical tension. I also help her to realize — simply by inviting her to look around — that she is in a safe and supportive environment.

After some time, she tells me that a memory is arising of her father suffocating her with a pillow, when she was about 6 years of age. She remembers that she felt she was going to die. Without going further into this memory, I remind her that she didn't die and, when she relaxes a little, I ask if she remembers where her mother was at the time, and if there was any support available.

She tells me that her mother and other siblings were watching the event and seem to have been paralyzed. She remembers the feeling of letting go and not fighting. I inquire if this response was perhaps what saved her and she agrees. I point out her ability to let go and surrender as a personal resource that saved her life. After this, her energy slowly starts to expand. Previously, her energy had been pulled back from the periphery of her body and held at the core, with her extremities being under-charged and in a state of near-collapse — a typical fear-type physical condition.

Now her body position changes and her arms become more charged with energy. When I invite her to carefully track her body sensations she starts noticing the charge as it enters her arms and hands. As this happens, she makes defensive and protective gestures,



especially with her right hand and arm. After following this for a while, she feels more grounded, present and in her strength. I explain to her what happens in the body after such a traumatic event and also the difficulty in developing self-trust that occurs when a parent is unable to be a safe and reliable support for a child.

Now my client is more stable and ready to look at the family dynamics that may have driven her father to become such a threat to her life. It is clear that she will have to solve this issue with her father in order to establish healthy relationships with men. In her life, she tends to keep men at distance, while at the same time is searching for a father figure.

Letting her face her father in a constellation from the beginning may have been an overwhelming experience for her. Such a confrontation without proper preparation could have led to a strong reaction, or traumatized her further. Now she is more prepared. I ask her if she feels ready to proceed with the constellation and she agrees.

She chooses representatives for her father and for herself, then watches at a safe distance. When they face each other, the father cannot see his daughter as his daughter. The representative for the client starts to look at the ground and so – in accordance with Family Constellation dynamics — we place someone there to represent a dead person. The client lies down next to her.

The father is touched by this move, but remains frozen. After placing two other men in the picture, more movements happen and the impression arises that her father took on a murderous impulse from his grandfather, who seemed to have murdered someone. The client, on the other hand, took on the burden of representing the murdered person.

After a while, I ask the representatives for the father and the daughter to again face each other. This time, more acknowledgment is possible. The father is able to see his child and the daughter can take a few steps towards him. At this point we left the constellation.

Afterwards, the client felt she could relax more with her father and even visit him, which had been difficult before. She also felt more at ease about her present life situation, to allow things to grow slowly, without forcing herself into having any steady relationships with men.

This example shows how trauma work and Family Constellations can be combined to reach a more comprehensive and complete picture. Of course, sometimes one can get good results using only one of these methods. But the chances are higher that



some important aspect may be left out, or that the client may be too aroused to properly absorb the insights that were available to her.

4. Two Standpoints Give a Vaster Vision

As we have seen in the previous example, it can be helpful to combine trauma work with Family Constellation. Even if a facilitator does not wish to do this, it is helpful to have an understanding of both approaches to therapy and healing.

Family Constellation, on its own, sometimes does not include the body fully enough and may overlook the effects of trauma on a client's physiology. As a result, the facilitator may jump to conclusions and confront a client with something that can only be the outcome of a long process. Intellectual understanding may happen quickly, but, as we have seen, it takes time to absorb this in the body and let the body learn from it.

On its own, trauma work may overlook the systemic aspects. In other words, when we do not include what we take on from a former generation, we are bound to recreate similar traumatic situations again and again. For example, one can help a person overcome the effects of an accident. But unless we know what led this person to have the accident — for example, an identification with a former family member, whom one wants to follow into death — these benefits may be only temporary and similar situations may be recreated.

So whether one uses one or both methods does not really matter. What matters is to work on both levels, with the personal as well as the systemic, or collective.

To end this article I want to summarize a few principles that one should remember when working with a traumatized client:

1. The work should proceed slowly. One should avoid any confrontation in the beginning and make sure that the client is in contact with his or her resources.
2. One should be attentive to signs of activation or dissociation and avoid any re-traumatization.
3. It is often helpful with a traumatized client to let him choose the representatives, as this will give him a sense of being in control. It avoids giving the client the feeling of being subjected to uncontrollable events, which is what happened in the original trauma.
4. During the session, it is important to keep in touch with the client, helping him to track his body sensations. In this way, one can make sure the client is still present to what is happening.



5. One should always be ready to interrupt a constellation, if it becomes too overwhelming for the client.
6. It is good to limit the work to only one aspect of the constellation, or one entanglement, respecting the limits of how much the client can safely absorb. One can also check with the client if he wants to go ahead or not.
7. It is often better to keep a client out of his own constellation, remaining with his representative, as this allows him to keep a safe distance.
8. Sometimes it is better to leave things open to interpretation, rather than giving a detailed explanation, or being too definite about what happened. In this way, the soul is addressed rather than the mind and there is more space for the client to slowly absorb the situation. The placing of representatives without naming whom they represent, can also be a way to protect the client. For example, one could place someone to represent the real, hidden, underlying issue, rather than trying to find out exactly what this issue may be.
9. Physical contact, such as placing a hand on the client's arm, or behind the shoulder, can serve as extra support. However, one should be careful to respect the physical and energetic boundaries of the client. Trauma always includes a boundary rupture and clients often cannot sense their own boundaries, or, alternatively, may have very rigid ones. Bringing awareness to this, for example through asking a client about his response to being touched, can help re-establish healthy boundaries.
10. There may be additional means of support available, depending on the situation; for example other people in the room, if it is a group situation, or even objects in the room.
11. It can be helpful to give the client an understanding of the mechanisms that lead to trauma and that he is not 'wrong' or 'stupid' in his behavior. Also, when one wants to end a constellation without explaining what happened, one should check if it is necessary to explain to the client why it is better to not talk about those details.

To conclude: one should always observe how much a client can absorb and integrate. The therapist needs to make this decision, because traumatized clients tend to overestimate their own capacity and challenge themselves too much.

The principle of taking one small step at a time, leaving space for integration, is a good guideline for working with trauma. Tracking physical sensations is the measure of whether one is going too fast.

Emotional expression is needed sometimes, but the work should focus more on learning to contain and feel emotions, rather than having explosive outbursts.



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Section 8: Resources



8.1 Horse Constellation

A PMU Horse Constellation

By Sara Vaughan

(Silver Horse Healing Ranch)

I studied Family Constellation Therapy with Francesca Mason Boring in California 2008, completing the training and beginning to integrate facilitating constellations in my work with horses, special needs children and a variety of other clients.

During the training my mare Jackie became ill with mastitis; her left teat was infected and had swollen out of proportion. Adding to the mastitis, her front and rear legs were compromised so she had trouble walking. Francesca (facilitator) offered to do a constellation to see if we could help Jackie.

Jackie is a rescue horse. I adopted her in 2005. Originally she came from a Premarin Ranch in Canada. She was taken in by a rescue organization called The Animali Farm in Southern California.

As a PMU mare, Jackie was confined to a small stall and was impregnated year after year. A bag was attached to her underbelly to collect urine. The urine was rendered into a pharmaceutical Hormone Replacement Therapy (H.R.T.) drug called Premarin (PREgnantMAresurINe), which is prescribed to menopausal women to offset the symptoms of menopause such as hot flashes.

When the mares give birth to their foals some foals are sold to private buyers, some kept back for replacement stock the rest are sold at horse auction. Most of the auctioned foals end up being sold to the meat buyers. The foals are then fattened and slaughtered, supporting a horse meat export industry serving France, Belgium and South East Asia where horse meat is part of the diet.

Ever since I have owned Jackie, she has continued to lactate although she is without foal. For Jackie's constellation, Francesca asked me to choose someone in the group to represent Jackie and someone to represent myself. I placed the woman to represent Jackie at one end of the room and placed a woman to represent me about 12 feet opposite Jackie.

The facilitator interviewed each representative. Jackie's representative commented on something that looked like a flash of red to her left side. A woman was asked to stand beside Jackie to represent Jackie's lost foals. Almost immediately Jackie's representative let out a heart rendering cry and the foal's representative clung to her side, desperately rubbing her head against her mother's body. Watching the movement and hearing Jackie's grief was incredibly emotional. Some of the group had fallen asleep while others including myself cried along with Jackie.



The facilitator brought in a representative for 'a safe place for the foals to go to'. It was difficult for Jackie and the foals to separate but after some time and with gentle persuasion it became possible.

After the constellation it struck me that Jackie had not been able to complete the weaning cycle with any of her foals which could explain why she was lactating and had problems with her udder. The constellation gave Jackie's grief at being separated from her foals an expressive movement.

The people in the room who witnessed this constellation were deeply affected. The mastitis resolved and I am milking Jackie, replicating a weaning process. However, I believe the healing power of the constellation also worked in ways that are less evident.

I know it deeply affected me and I was reminded of when I consulted an animal communicator (when I first adopted Jackie) and she said Jackie wants you to get the word out about PMU's.

Then there was the woman who represented Jackie in the constellation. She had the experience of losing her horses when she was a girl as her father sold it without telling her and she never got to say goodbye. In the constellation she was able to complete that movement.

Another participant was deeply moved and has become more interested in horses since then. Most of the group was unaware of the Premarin Industry and how the drug is produced; the constellation definitely served to inform the group in a specific way.

My trip to Banff, Alberta, Canada:

Not very long after the completion of my training with Francesca, I received an email from her inviting me to join her three day Annual Constellation Retreat in Banff, Alberta, Canada.

I learned from Francesca there was a student in the group called Shannon, a horse person and therapist, who wanted to do a constellation regarding horse slaughter in Canada. Knowing that my work involved horses, Francesca hoped I would come to the intensive, meet Shannon and participate in the horse constellation.

At first I thought it seemed unlikely as finding responsible people to take care of my animals is difficult. But in considering the invitation, it seemed an important part of my education. Alberta is where most of the Premarin Ranches are located. Four of my own mares came from there. I realized it was appropriate for me to go as a spokesperson for my mares and to raise awareness about Premarin. Not only does this industry exploit horses, it puts women's health at risk. In 2003 a survey revealed that Premarin use in women can cause breast cancer and heart disease. (Affecting the heart chakra.) Also I wanted to see how Francesca would facilitate a constellation addressing horse slaughter.



Landing at Calgary airport I was surprised to see a huge horse sculpture in the airport foyer. Banff is a beautiful town situated at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. I felt as if I was stepping into a Christmas card. The large snowy mountains and tall pine trees are captivating.

The first morning of class I found a seat among a group of thirty students. Shannon, the woman I had been told to meet (not knowing who I was) sat next to me. Rosina, another student, walked into class with a DVD called Cloud under her arm. (Cloud is a wonderful documentary about the life of a wild mustang stallion). Rosina had recently begun to work with horses in a therapeutic way integrating her knowledge of Constellation work.

Francesca urged Shannon, Rosina and I to arrange a meeting in order to discuss the best way to present the horse constellation to the group as a community. The three of us met for breakfast in the hotel restaurant.

The meeting was chaotic. The waiter was having a bad day. Not only did he confuse our orders but each time one of us started speaking he interrupted us with questions.

Of the three of us, Shannon was the most organized. She had previously asked Francesca for a constellation regarding horse slaughter. Shannon had pages of notes and had consulted other professionals to help her formulate her intention. She shared with us a dream she'd had; she felt this dream was pertinent in some way to the constellation.

I told the other two that I was there to support the horses in any way I could, even if that meant being a silent witness. Rosina talked about getting petitions out etc to raise awareness of the horses' plight. In the end, we decided that Shannon should do the horse constellation.

Just before the workshop began, Shannon, Rosina and I were invited to come to the head of the circle as a community in order to present the horses' constellation to the group. I was worried. Based on our breakfast meeting I was not sure that we represented a "community". Francesca assured me that it was OK and said it might actually help the constellation to have some variety within the community. And, there was the possibility that the "community" was actually the collective community of horses, and we were just providing their venue.

The time came when we were ready to do the horse constellation.

Horse Constellation:

Shannon, Sara and Rosina sit to the left of Francesca and address the room as a community. Each woman speaks of her intention for healing in regards to horses.

Shannon: "I am concerned about horse slaughter in Canada. Since the USA banned horse slaughter and closed down the slaughter houses the situation has become worse for horses. Now they transport the horses to Mexico and Canada in an inhumane way. The horses are crammed into cattle trailers too small for them. They are not given rest, food or water during their journey.



When they arrive at the slaughterhouse the horses are very weak. They are shot with a captive bolt to their forehead, this is supposed to kill them but sometimes it doesn't and the horses suffer as they go through the slaughter process.”

Sara: "Who here knows about the hormonal replacement drug Premarin?" In a group of thirty, five raise their hands.

"Premarin comes from PRegnantMAresurINe hence the name. It is prescribed to menopausal women to alleviate the symptoms of menopause. It works well but can cause dire side effects like breast cancer or heart disease (heart chakra related diseases).”

The Premarin ranches are located here in Alberta. Hundreds of mares are kept in small stalls next to each other and are made pregnant year after year. The mares get very little exercise, about an hour a week and have bags hanging around their hind quarters in order to collect their urine. Each time the foals are born the ones that aren't sold to private buyers or kept back for replacement stock go to auction where they are mostly sold to the meat buyers. He or she then sells them to distributors in countries where they eat horse meat like France, Belgium and South East Asia.”

Many of the horses used in the Premarin industry are draft horses, their size enables the ranches to get more urine and the drafts are easy to work with as they have a gentle nature. When the mares become infertile they too are taken to the horse auction.

There are two horse rescue groups in California that specifically are involved in rescuing PMU's. I have four PMU mares three ex brood mares and one PMU foal that I adopted through The Animali Farm. My mares work at a ranch I have called Silver Horse Healing Ranch, (www.silverhorse.org) located in Topanga California. At the ranch I educate people about the nature of horses, promoting authentic relations between horses and humans.

Here in the western part of the world menopause is considered a disease and is treated like one by western medicine.

Women transitioning into crone-hood need reminding of what an empowering time this is for them. We need a new consciousness around menopause so that women can make informed decisions regarding their health that doesn't involve supporting an exploitive industry such as Premarin. There are alternatives available for women for menopausal symptoms like Dr Shultz's herbal remedy, Female Balance, and a 'bio- identical plant hormone derivative.”

https://web2.herbdoc.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=38

The third person on stage to speak is Rosina who gives a summary on an equine therapy practice that she is developing in Calgary, Alberta, using her knowledge of constellation work combining this with help of the horses.



Francesca (facilitator) then asks everyone in the group to get quiet and into their bodies. She asks those in the group who feel called upon to stand as a representative for a horse to do so. Slowly people begin to stand. The energy of the horses fills the room, their presence is palpable.

The facilitator instructs the horse representatives to follow the movement in their bodies. Some of the horses move around nervously seemingly trying to find relief. One horse moves outside of the circle and watches the group from beyond.

Some shake and bow their heads as they move around with bright eyes. Some horses stand alone, heads hung, others find joy in each other's company rubbing their heads and necks against each other.

Facilitator approaches each horse representative and asks them 'how do you feel and what do you notice'? She begins with the horse standing outside of the circle.

Horse #1 (Heidi): "I see everything from here, I am comfortable in my position"

(This horse feels at ease and has a calm look on her face. The representative feels as though she is part of the greater collective consciousness of horses.)

Horse #2: "I am sensitive and skittish, I have excessive energy. I can read things, people, the land, it's OK with me. I am sensing environmental doom and slaughter; I know more than I would care to know."

(This horse paces the room restlessly.)

Horse # 3: "I am bearing the grief of a 14 year old girl whose mother has cancer. I am working on burying the grief". (This horse stands still and hangs her head.)

Horse #4: "I am full of energy, I have to get out of the corral, and I feel imprisoned. I watch the outside world from here; I long to be free".

Horse #5: (Identifies herself as a black stallion) "I have to keep moving, I feel sadness at the madness of my tribe. I have to preserve myself"

Horse #6: "I am strong steady and young I am willing and do what's asked of me".

(This horse looks content and self secure.)

Horse #7: "I am tired and weary. I like to hear the sound of my feet on the ground. (She stomps slowly and deliberately). I'm aware of the restlessness among the others. I am so weary."

Horse # 8: (Stands motionless.) "I am a mature horse. The others could use my support and I am available to the horses that need me".

Horse #9: (Stands still and tense.) "I am totally helpless. They are slaughtering my children and there's nothing I can do!" (This horse is visibly upset and frustrated.)

Facilitator picks someone to lie down in front of this horse to represent a slaughtered foal. (Horse #10)



Horse # 2 is limping: "I'm dying, I'm injured and I can't sit still, I have to go now."

Facilitator picks three people to stand for the 'horse market:

#1. Premarin rancher.

#2. Meat Buyer

#3. Meat byproduct manufacturer

The horses form a semi circle facing the Horse Markets.

Horse #7: (Stomps slowly and loudly on the ground) "I am on alert. This one, (she points to the Premarin rancher) I have served them well." (She moves slowly and awkwardly towards the rancher and rests her head on the ranchers shoulder.)

Premarin Rancher: "I am a little emotional. I am not the one killing these horses. There's a market for them." (Rancher turns to look at the mare leaning in her shoulder.) "I have coldness towards this mare".

Horse #2: (Injured comes forward and faces the meat buyer.) "They are sending me to the meat market. My hip hurts, I am sick and wounded. I gave too much. I give up, I go; I'm done!" (She lies down in front of the Meat Marketer.)

Meat Marketer: (Representative states that she feels as though she is the one who slaughters the horses.) "I feel heavy so uncomfortably grounded. I have a rising pain in my legs, pain in my spine and in my heart chakra. I'm extremely tense and I have a headache."

(She has trouble standing up straight.)

"I'm not suitable for this execution. It does not work with my beliefs; I am doing it just to survive."

(She is unable to meet the eyes of the injured horse who lies still in front of her.)

Meat By-Product Marketer: "I am hot in my legs and arms. I have a tingle in my chest. I see that I don't have to get the by-products from horses." (This Marketer holds least resistance and moves from his position.)

Facilitator visits each horse again and checks in with them.

Horse # 3 (Grieving): "I feel burnt but strong, I'm only 12; I have a lot of life in me. I carry this girl's pain. I wait for her to come and ride me (smiles) I love this girl very much."

Horse #5: "I am a very powerful black stallion." (He paws the ground proudly with his front leg). I don't feel anger towards that." (Points to the horse markets) I want to come awake again and speak to you (humans). When I am awake I tune in to all the horses wherever they are. Use our power well.

Hear us. We are waking up!"



Horse #9 (Visibly Angry): "I am not asleep! I would love to kick the shit out of anything to do with this! I want to hurt someone!"

Horse #11 (Foal): "I feel reborn. I feel like a guide. I am learning from the elders what life is about. Feel confused with this life and what's going on. I Feel like a crazy horse!"

Horse #4: (This horse has left the circle and is grazing under the mountains.) "I feel comfortable; I don't have to run away. I like being alone out here. I want to be of service but need to be approached in a certain way".

Facilitator picks three people to represent 'People who need horses for healing or teaching'.

They stand together on the edge of the circle looking in at the horses.

Horses #6 and #10 flirt with each other. Occasionally they look over to Heidi, Horse #1 who still stands outside of the circle. They exchange smiles with her.

Horse # 7 (Weary, is still standing very close to the Premarin Rancher.): "Relationship with women is important. It's been a real honor. Something we were willing to do. She (points to Premarin Rancher) feels part of my herd."

Horse #5 (Black Stallion): "This feels like a good service." (Points to the three women who represent 'People who need horses for Healing'.)

Facilitator is urged by a witness to add Earth as a representative to the circle. Grandmother Earth is placed and stands central in the constellation.

#3 Healer goes to stand hand in hand with Grandmother Earth. The foal joins them and is hugged and welcomed by healer #3.

Premarin Rancher: "I acknowledge this one." (Pointing to the mare leaning against her) "She can go to join the healers and it might be a win- win situation. They can buy her from me, that way my business will be supported". Premarin Rancher says to the mare: "Go where you're needed."

As the mare leaves her the Premarin Rancher adds "I'm emotionally drawn I'm trying not to be".

Facilitator brings in two women to represent Premarin Users. They stand at the edge of the circle alongside the Meat Buyer and Premarin Rancher. (One of the representatives mentions later that she felt the presence of a horse spirit as she sat watching the constellation. The horse seemed to give her support and rested her head upon her shoulder.)

Horse # 5 (Black Stallion): "I am mad at these women." (Points to the two Premarin users.) "She needs to educate them." (Indicating Healer # 1)

Healer #1: "I felt uncomfortable (pointing to Black Stallion) this one called me over. There's a learning and a trust. I hear stuff, impatience and unrest. I am sensitive too."



Healer #2 (Standing next to Grandmother Earth.) "I feel grounded. I am hearing things behind me." (She becomes aware of The Weary PMU Mare and the foal who have now joined together.)

Horse # 7 (Weary PMU mare): "This little one is learning. I can help this little one. I have to show this little colt the world. (She takes the hand of the foal and leads her around the circle.)

Premarin Consumer #2: (Stands overwhelmed by the situation in front of her. (Hands over her eyes.)

"I cannot see!" (Hands over her ears.) "I will not hear! My heart is pounding!"

Premarin Consumer #1: "I'm seeing this for the first time. I did not know!"

Premarin Rancher: "I like these ones that don't know." (Points to Consumer #1.) "I want to turn her around so she cannot see".

Facilitator brings in "Educator for alternative Hormone Therapy for women".

Premarine Consumer #1: (Walks over to stand next to Alternative Hormone Therapy.)

Premarine Consumer #2: "I can't open my eyes. I don't want to look! I'm terrified. If I look I might be called to take action. I can look at 'Alternatives'". (Turns to face Alternatives to Hormone Therapy.) "Looking towards Alternatives I am less panicked and can take in information from the Premarin Rancher and the Meat Marketer. I feel overwhelmed with grief at the recognition of my 'blind and deaf' complicity - I have an overwhelming sense of forgiveness from the Horse Spirit for my complicity in their suffering."

Premarin Rancher: "I'm hoping the women (points to Premarin Consumers) will be too busy to listen to Alternatives".

Meat Slaughterer: "I couldn't look this horse in the eyes. (Looks down at wounded horse) I suffer. I want to stand over there."

Meat Buyer: (Moves to stand with Alternatives.) "All of the pains I felt in my body have gone now as I stand next to Alternatives."

Healer #1: (Moves to stand next to Alternatives.) "I feel guilt and gratitude. My time spent with Grandmother Earth helped me get stable." Later she says "I feel I am a woman who has used Premarin in the past. I have gone to horses for help"

Horse #11 (Foal): "It's a learning process. I realize I have many options. (Smiling and prancing) It's my life and my choice!"

Horse #6: "I've enjoyed my life. I am well cared for. I haven't noticed this" (Points to the others in the group)

Horse #1 (Greater Horse Consciousness): "All is good!"



Angry Horse #9: "I am saved." Horse is holding hands with Healer standing next to her. There are people I want to take for a ride. She (healer) absolutely gets the first ride! I'll show her how smooth we can be together."

Wise Old Horse #8: "I understand. There is a way to connect".

Horse #5 (Black Stallion): "I have power and strength to share. I've been asleep. I'm becoming aware. She helps me (looks at the healer next to her) to wake up and I help her to wake up".

Horse # 3 (Grieving Horse): "I love my owner; I look for her"

Alternatives: "So much potential here. I am built from pain. My focus is on potential."

Horse #4: "I feel at ease, I'm amongst the snow, mountains and trees. I have no wish to participate. I just watch."

Premarin User #1: "I can learn to make other choices".

Meat Buyer: "I realize I can choose. I am grateful for the knowledge from the horses, I will use it for good purposes."

Healer: "I am grateful and I want to express respect to the horses and say Thank you!"

Horse #7 (Weary Horse): "My contribution is not to be misused. It's for the children, my children and for humanity. That one (points to Premarin rancher) needs to know that." "There is no shame you actually contributed in a bigger way. Taking the young one around helped me. Our job is to recognize the youth. The youths are very significant."

Healer (Standing next to Earth): "Grandmother Earth provides for us. We don't need to take from her anymore."

Grandmother Earth: "It feels so good (smiling and glowing) Good spirits are with us! Tribal forces have calmed down now and good spirits are among them. We need to keep on dancing it's the cycle of life we need to dance!"

Man walks into the circle and approaches Grandmother Earth: "I am Honor. And I honor you. I honor the horses honor each other!"

Horse #2 (Wounded Horse): "I can see I had lots of energy and power. I tried to convey my knowing to humans. I got sick and injured. I focused on Grandmother Earth and the mountains behind us. I trust that the creator will make it happen; we will see that we are all one. I'm healed by the earth, water and the mountains. I'm at peace".

Reflections:

On reflection of this constellation I recognized three horses that belong to me.

The angry horse reminded me of my mare Jackie. His intensity matched her energy. The anger caused at the slaughter of her foals resonated. As was demonstrated in the constellation we did for Jackie earlier she held a lot of emotion in regards to her missing foals.



When the "angry" horse took the hand of the healer and claimed 'I'm saved' and promised that this one would get the first ride. It reminded me of my relationship with Jackie. When I first got Jackie she was green. (Never been ridden). I 'started' (I prefer this word to 'broke') her and was the first one to ride her.

Our rides together are special. I ride Jackie with a bareback pad and a rope halter. I have never used any uncomfortable riding equipment with her like bits or spurs. On the trail we communicate telepathically, our rides are easy and fun.

The weary horse that stomped her feet slowly on the ground reminds me of my mare Laydee Lucille La Don. She had served as a Premarin mare for fifteen years until she became infertile. She was about to be sold to the meat marketer when I adopted her and had her transported to California from Alberta Canada. Laydee Lucille is an enormous Percheron draft. She is extremely gentle and loving.

After the rancher let her go to the healers the "weary horse" hooked up with the foal and was able to give the foal guidance about the world. The only horse of mine that I could put Laydee Lucille together with (all the other horses would not accept her) was my PMU filly Diva. Diva was a foal born at a Premarin Ranch that I adopted through the rescue site as a yearling. Diva looks similar to Laydee; she is the same breed and size but is black in color.

In the constellation the representative of the black Stallion recognized the Premarin industry and Premarin users. In the Premarin ranches they have stallions that impregnate the mares every year. It would make sense that the father of the slaughtered foals would have an awareness of what was happening. It occurred to me that perhaps the reason the stallion had been asleep was because of the pain he felt at the loss and treatment of the many foals he had sired.

The reaction of the Premarin users was interesting. Premarin User #2 could not and did not want to face the reality behind the drug that she was using but eventually she was able to deal with "Alternatives".

The other representative (Premarin User #1) simply was unaware of the situation. When she became aware of what was happening she was ready to join Alternatives. To me this means it is crucial to get this information out to women all over the world. (Since Premarin has become unpopular here it is being farmed out to third world countries.) This information needs to be communicated in a non accusatory fashion to the woman using Premarin.



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Publication containing condensed version of this article may be ordered via:
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Changing Women's Health Naturally: <http://www.womentowomen.com>

Francesca Mason Boring, All My Relations Constellations:
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8.2 The Stories that Bind Us

Published: March 15, 2013 ~ N.Y Times

I hit the breaking point as a parent a few years ago. It was the week of my extended family's annual gathering in August, and we were struggling with assorted crises. My parents were aging; my wife and I were straining under the chaos of young children; my sister was bracing to prepare her preteens for bullying, sex and cyberstalking.

Sure enough, one night all the tensions boiled over. At dinner, I noticed my nephew texting under the table. I knew I shouldn't say anything, but I couldn't help myself and asked him to stop.

Ka-boom! My sister snapped at me to not discipline her child. My dad pointed out that my girls were the ones balancing spoons on their noses. My mom said none of the grandchildren had manners. Within minutes, everyone had fled to separate corners.

Later, my dad called me to his bedside. There was a palpable sense of fear I couldn't remember hearing before.

"Our family's falling apart," he said.

"No it's not," I said instinctively. "It's stronger than ever."

But lying in bed afterward, I began to wonder: Was he right? What is the secret sauce that holds a family together? What are the ingredients that make some families effective, resilient, happy?

It turns out to be an astonishingly good time to ask that question. The last few years have seen stunning breakthroughs in knowledge about how to make families, along with other groups, work more effectively.

Myth-shattering research has reshaped our understanding of dinnertime, discipline and difficult conversations. Trendsetting programs from Silicon Valley and the military have introduced techniques for making teams function better.

The only problem: most of that knowledge remains ghettoized in these subcultures, hidden from the parents who need it most. I spent the last few years trying to uncover that information, meeting families, scholars and experts ranging from peace negotiators to online game designers to Warren Buffett's bankers.

After a while, a surprising theme emerged. The single most important thing you can do for your family may be the simplest of all: develop a strong family narrative.



I first heard this idea from Marshall Duke, a colorful psychologist at Emory University. In the mid-1990s, Dr. Duke was asked to help explore myth and ritual in American families.

“There was a lot of research at the time into the dissipation of the family,” he told me at his home in suburban Atlanta. “But we were more interested in what families could do to counteract those forces.”

Around that time, Dr. Duke’s wife, Sara, a psychologist who works with children with learning disabilities, noticed something about her students.

“The ones who know a lot about their families tend to do better when they face challenges,” she said.

Her husband was intrigued, and along with a colleague, Robyn Fivush, set out to test her hypothesis. They developed a measure called the “Do You Know?” scale that asked children to answer 20 questions.

Examples included: Do you know where your grandparents grew up? Do you know where your mom and dad went to high school? Do you know where your parents met? Do you know an illness or something really terrible that happened in your family? Do you know the story of your birth?

Dr. Duke and Dr. Fivush asked those questions of four dozen families in the summer of 2001, and taped several of their dinner table conversations. They then compared the children’s results to a battery of psychological tests the children had taken, and reached an overwhelming conclusion. The more children knew about their family’s history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem and the more successfully they believed their families functioned. The “Do You Know?” scale turned out to be the best single predictor of children’s emotional health and happiness.

“We were blown away,” Dr. Duke said.

And then something unexpected happened. Two months later was Sept. 11. As citizens, Dr. Duke and Dr. Fivush were horrified like everyone else, but as psychologists, they knew they had been given a rare opportunity: though the families they studied had not been directly affected by the events, all the children had experienced the same national trauma at the same time. The researchers went back and reassessed the children.

“Once again,” Dr. Duke said, “the ones who knew more about their families proved to be more resilient, meaning they could moderate the effects of stress.”



Why does knowing where your grandmother went to school help a child overcome something as minor as a skinned knee or as major as a terrorist attack?

“The answers have to do with a child’s sense of being part of a larger family,” Dr. Duke said.

Psychologists have found that every family has a unifying narrative, he explained, and those narratives take one of three shapes.

First, the ascending family narrative: “Son, when we came to this country, we had nothing. Our family worked. We opened a store. Your grandfather went to high school. Your father went to college. And now you. ...”

Second is the descending narrative: “Sweetheart, we used to have it all. Then we lost everything.”

“The most healthful narrative,” Dr. Duke continued, “is the third one. It’s called the oscillating family narrative: ‘Dear, let me tell you, we’ve had ups and downs in our family. We built a family business. Your grandfather was a pillar of the community. Your mother was on the board of the hospital. But we also had setbacks. You had an uncle who was once arrested. We had a house burn down. Your father lost a job. But no matter what happened, we always stuck together as a family.’ ”

Dr. Duke said that children who have the most self-confidence have what he and Dr. Fivush call a strong “intergenerational self.” They know they belong to something bigger than themselves.

Leaders in other fields have found similar results. Many groups use what sociologists call sense-making, the building of a narrative that explains what the group is about.

Jim Collins, a management expert and author of “Good to Great,” told me that successful human enterprises of any kind, from companies to countries, go out of their way to capture their core identity. In Mr. Collins’s terms, they “preserve core, while stimulating progress.” The same applies to families, he said.

Mr. Collins recommended that families create a mission statement similar to the ones companies and other organizations use to identify their core values.

The military has also found that teaching recruits about the history of their service increases their camaraderie and ability to bond more closely with their unit.



Cmdr. David G. Smith is the chairman of the department of leadership, ethics and law at the Naval Academy and an expert in unit cohesion, the Pentagon's term for group morale. Until recently, the military taught unit cohesion by "dehumanizing" individuals, Commander Smith said. Think of the bullying drill sergeants in "Full Metal Jacket" or "An Officer and a Gentleman."

But these days the military spends more time building up identity through communal activities. At the Naval Academy, Commander Smith advises graduating seniors to take incoming freshmen (or plebes) on history-building exercises, like going to the cemetery to pay tribute to the first naval aviator or visiting the original B-1 aircraft on display on campus.

Dr. Duke recommended that parents pursue similar activities with their children. Any number of occasions work to convey this sense of history: holidays, vacations, big family get-togethers, even a ride to the mall. The hokier the family's tradition, he said, the more likely it is to be passed down. He mentioned his family's custom of hiding frozen turkeys and canned pumpkin in the bushes during Thanksgiving so grandchildren would have to "hunt for their supper," like the Pilgrims.

"These traditions become part of your family," Dr. Duke said.

Decades of research have shown that most happy families communicate effectively. But talking doesn't mean simply "talking through problems," as important as that is. Talking also means telling a positive story about yourselves. When faced with a challenge, happy families, like happy people, just add a new chapter to their life story that shows them overcoming the hardship. This skill is particularly important for children, whose identity tends to get locked in during adolescence.

The bottom line: if you want a happier family, create, refine and retell the story of your family's positive moments and your ability to bounce back from the difficult ones. That act alone may increase the odds that your family will thrive for many generations to come.