Healing the Inner Child: Coming Home to Ourselves

Healing Statements from a Family Constellation Lens

Introduction

The child we were still lives in us. When something hurt that child and no one saw it, the hurt didn't disappear. It went quiet, and it learned to protect itself. As adults we often react from that younger place without knowing it: the panic when someone pulls away, the shame when we make a mistake, the old loneliness in a full room. This collection gathers healing statements for meeting that child, seeing what happened, and bringing them home.

The eight sections move from meeting the child, through the different ways a child is wounded, into the family field, and back into life. Each opens with truth statements, moves through the sentences that reveal and release the pattern, offers what representatives may say back, and ends with a bridge into the client's life today.

Before the eight sections comes a short one on the situation facilitators meet most often. A client rarely arrives saying "I want to work with my inner child." They come with money, a partner, their health or their work. Partway through, the Field shifts: the client's representative becomes younger, or something in the constellation starts to behave like a child. That section covers how to recognize the shift, how to follow it without forcing it, the sentences that bridge from the original issue to the little one, and how to return to the original issue once the child has been seen. In practice it is the doorway into everything that follows.

1. Meeting the inner child directly. Before anything can heal, the adult has to turn toward the child they left behind. This section is the first look, and often the hardest.

2. The unseen child. Some wounds come from what didn't happen: no one looked, no one came, no one asked. This section gives the lonely child a witness.

3. The frightened child. Anger, harshness, chaos and shame teach a child that the world is not safe. This section lets the fear be seen and lets the adult stand between the child and what frightened them.

4. The child who was violated. Sexual abuse wounds the child in their body and leaves them alone with a secret and a shame that was never theirs. This section asks for the greatest care, and keeps responsibility where it belongs. It works both psychologically and through the family field, and includes the restoration of innocence.

5. The child who grew up too fast. Many children carried their parents, their siblings, or the household. This section gives back what was too heavy and returns the child to their place.

6. The child's vows and protectors. To survive, children make inner decisions and build protectors: the critic, the pleaser, the one who never needs. This section thanks them and lets them rest.

7. The child in the family field. Not all of the child's pain was their own. Children carry feelings, fates and losses from the family system out of love. This section is the most Hellinger of them all: it names the entanglement and leaves the fate where it belongs.

8. Reclaiming what the child lost. Play, the body, needs, joy and wonder were often left behind. This section brings them back.

How to use this document

These statements are offerings, not scripts. The facilitator tests each one in the field and keeps it only if it brings relief, strength, or truth.

About these statements. A few come directly from Bert Hellinger or the wider constellation tradition; those taken directly from Hellinger are marked. Most were developed for this module with the help of AI, then shaped and refined by me in the spirit of that work.

Each line also names who speaks and to whom. Adjust the words (“Mother”, “Father”, “little one”, the child’s name or age) to the client’s own language. Many clients find it easier to speak to the child by name and acknowledging the age that is showing up in the Field: “Little Anna” or “How old do you feel?”

Truth statements

Every section opens with truth statements. A truth statement says plainly what has been, without blame or interpretation. Spoken to the child or to the person it concerns, it brings the wound into the open and often shows whose it is. Healing sentences come only after the truth has been seen.

Working notes

- Offer one sentence at a time, slowly. Watch the body before listening to the words.
- Watch the child representative more than the adult. The child shows whether something has truly landed.
- A sentence that lands is usually short, true, and spoken to someone, not about them.
- If a sentence is rejected, don’t defend it. The rejection is information.
- Apply checks and balances to avoid projection. You can check with multiple representatives to see how deeply something landed.

Working in person and online

Most setups in this document are described as if the constellation happens in a room, with representatives standing and moving. The same work can be done online, and facilitators should be able to do both.

- **In person.** Representatives stand, turn, step closer or away. Distance, gaze and posture carry the information, and the facilitator can see the whole field at once.
- **Online, with group representatives.** Representatives work on camera from their own space. They can stand, turn away from the camera, step back from it or come closer, and they describe what they feel and where their attention goes. The facilitator names positions clearly (“The adult self now stands between the little one and Father”) and the representatives take them in their own space.
- **Online, one to one.** Use floor anchors (sheets of paper on the floor) or figures and objects on the client’s desk. The client places them, then steps onto each place, including the little self’s, and feels from there.
- **What changes online.** The facilitator relies more on voice, breath and the face: a voice that suddenly sounds younger, a look away from the screen, a body that goes still. Movements that rely on touch, like a hand on the back, become images: “Feel the adult self standing behind you,” or the client puts a hand on their own heart.

A note on inner child work and the constellation

Hellinger didn’t use the term “inner child.” The frame comes from Jung, transactional analysis and later inner child and parts work, set here inside a constellation and the Orders of Love.

Two fields of healing: child to parents, adult self to little self

This module works in two different fields - Child to parent & Adult self to little/young self. Each section shows which field its sentences belong to, and what the Field often shows.

Child to parents. The relational field, and Hellinger's territory. The client stands as the child before the actual parents, ancestors or excluded ones. Healing comes from speaking the truth to them, giving back what isn't the child's, returning to the child's place, and taking life from the parents. The parent representatives tell you about the bond.

Adult self to little self. The inner field, drawn from Jung and parts work. The client's representative stands as the grown-up before the child they once were, with a representative for the little self. Healing comes from turning toward the part that was left behind and offering presence, protection and permission. The adult and little self representatives tell you about the client's capacity to hold themselves.

The two need each other. Reparenting used alone can quietly bypass the parents ("I don't need them, I have myself now"). That is a subtle exclusion, and the little self representative usually stays oriented toward the parent anyway. Parent work used alone can leave the child facing the old situation with no grown-up beside them, and the child re-lives it instead of resolving it.

How the work usually begins. Inner child work rarely starts as its own constellation. More often the facilitator is working on another theme, such as money, a relationship or health, and the Field shifts: the client's representative becomes younger. That is the sign that inner child work is needed.

When this happens, let the client's representative stay in that younger state. Bring in a new representative for the adult self, so the relationship between the adult self and the little self can be seen. Often that is where the work is. If the little self is oriented toward a parent instead, bring in the parent and work child to parents. When both are needed, all three stand in the field.

The first movement is often simply that one can't look at the other. Let that be seen before any sentence is offered. Each section notes what the Field often shows. Follow what it actually shows. The next section describes this process step by step.

Before the sections: when the Field points to the little one

Most inner child work doesn't arrive labeled. A constellation set up for money, a partnership, a health issue or a career block often shows partway through that it's really about the little one. The facilitator doesn't steer it there. They notice what the Field shows, and follow. This section is about recognizing that moment and bridging into the sections that follow.

Signs the Field is pointing to the little one

- A representative suddenly feels small or young, or their posture drops or collapses.
- A representative looks around as if searching for someone, or toward where a parent would stand.
- A representative for an abstract element (Money, Success, Health, the Body) reports feeling like a child.
- The client's voice, posture or language changes, and they sound younger.
- An age keeps coming up, or a childhood memory surfaces unprompted.

Following the movement

- Ask the representative simply: "How old do you feel?" Or ask the client: "How old are you right now?"
- When the client's representative is the one who has become young, let them stay in that younger state. They now represent the little self. Then bring in a new representative for the adult self, and let them find their place, or place them where the little self's gaze goes.

- When a different representative becomes young (for Money, Success or the partner), ask the same question, and let the Field show whether a little self and an adult self need to come in.
- Watch where the little self orients. That shows which field to follow:
  - Toward the adult self, or the adult self can't look at them: stay with adult self to little self.
  - Toward a parent, or the place a parent would stand: add the parent, and follow child to parents.
  - Toward the floor, or toward someone not yet in the field: the child may be carrying someone else's fate. See section 7.
- Keep the original representatives in place. The issue the client came with often shifts on its own once the little one has been seen.

Bridging sentences

From the original issue to the little one. Offer them only after the little self has been seen.

- Client to Money: "Money, I see now that this isn't only about you. It's about the little one I left behind."
- Client to Success: "Maybe it isn't success I've been afraid of. Maybe it's being seen, like when I was small."
- Client to the Body or the illness: "Maybe you've been holding what the child couldn't feel."
- Client to the partner: "Maybe I've been hoping you would give me what I needed as a child. That was never yours to give."
- Client to the work: "I've been working so hard to finally be good enough."
- Adult self to the little self: "So it's you. I didn't know you were here."
- Adult self to the little self: "You've been in this the whole time."

Returning to the original issue

Once the child work has settled, turn back to the element the constellation began with. Let the adult self look at it again, with the little one beside or behind them.

- Client to the original element: "Now I'm looking at you as a grown-up."
- Client to Money: "You may come to me now. The child doesn't have to be afraid of you anymore."
- Client to the partner: "I see you now, not the parent I was waiting for."
- Ask the original representative what has changed. Often the shift shows there first.

Facilitation note. Resist naming what you see before the Field has shown it clearly. One representative feeling small is not yet a direction; when two or three signs line up, follow. And if you add a little self and nothing moves, take them out again. The Field didn't want them there.

1. Meeting the inner child directly

The adult often left the child behind at the moment of the wound and never went back. Set up the adult client and the child at the age that comes up. Notice the distance between them, and who looks away first. Don't rush the meeting; sometimes the whole first constellation is only this.

Field: Adult self to little self.

Truth statements: naming that I left you

Adult, to the child.

- "I see you. I haven't looked at you for a long time."
- "I left you there. I'm sorry."
- "I was ashamed of you. I wanted to be bigger than you."
- "I've been living as if you didn't exist."

- “You’ve been waiting for me all this time.”

When the adult can’t look

- “I’m afraid that if I look at you, I’ll feel what you felt.”
- “I turned away from you because I couldn’t bear it. Now I’m old enough to bear it.”
- “I don’t know you yet. I want to.”

When the child won’t look

The child has learned that adults don’t come. Trust is earned slowly.

- “You don’t have to trust me yet. I’ll stay.”
- “I won’t leave you again.”
- “You can take your time. I’m not going anywhere.”

Seeing the child as they were

- “You were so small.”
- “You were only a child. It wasn’t too much to need what you needed.”
- “You did the best a child could do.”
- “Nothing that happened to you was your fault.”

What the child may say back

Offer to the child representative when the field softens.

- “Where were you?”
- “I thought you forgot me.”
- “Will you stay?”
- “I’m still here.”

Into life

- “From now on, when you’re frightened, I’ll be the one who comes.”
- “I’m the grown-up now. You don’t have to run my life anymore.”

Facilitation note. A child representative who rushes into the adult’s arms too quickly often isn’t the real meeting. Wait for the moment when the child’s body actually relaxes. The questions the child asks (“Where were you?”) are often the most useful material: let the adult answer honestly rather than with comfort.

2. The unseen child: neglect, absence and loneliness

Some of the deepest wounds come from what didn’t happen. No one looked, no one came, no one asked. Because nothing “bad” happened, these clients often say their childhood was fine.

What the Field often shows. Either field can open first, and the Field shows which. If the little self turns toward the absent parent, begin with child to parents: the absence needs to be named to the person it concerns. This is often the way in when the client minimizes (“My childhood was fine”), because the little self’s reaction shows what the client can’t yet say. If the little self turns away from the parent or can’t face them at all, begin with adult self to little self. The child may first need one person who finally sees them, before they can face the parent.

Child to parents

Set up the child and the parent who was absent, busy, depressed or far away.

Truth statements: naming the absence

Child, to the parent.

- “Mother, you weren’t there.” / “Father, you weren’t there.”
- “You were in the room, but you didn’t see me.”
- “I was alone with it.”
- “I cried and no one came.”
- “I learned to be no trouble.”

The child’s conclusions

To reveal, not to resolve.

- “Because no one came, I decided I don’t matter.”
- “Because you were too tired, I decided my needs are too much.”
- “Because you didn’t see me, I decided I have to earn being seen.”
- “I promised myself I’d never need anyone.”

Seeing the parent’s side

Only after the child has been seen. Not to excuse, but to understand.

- “Mother, I see now that you were drowning too.”
- “Father, you were gone because no one was there for you either.”
- “You couldn’t give what you never received. I see that now.”

What the parent may say back

Offer to representatives when the field softens.

- Mother: “I couldn’t come then. I see you now.”
- Father: “It wasn’t that you didn’t matter. I wasn’t able.”
- Either: “You may take from others what I couldn’t give you.”

Adult self to little self

Set up the adult client and the little self. The adult becomes the one who finally sees.

The adult to the unseen child

- “I see you now. You were there the whole time.”
- “You were never too much. There just wasn’t enough around you.”
- “You don’t have to be quiet to be loved by me.”
- “Tell me. I’m listening.”

What the little self may say back

- “No one ever asked me before.”
- “Can I be loud?”
- “I’m not invisible.”

Into life

- “I stop waiting to be noticed. I let myself be seen.”
- “When I feel invisible, I know it’s the child. I stay with them.”
- “I let people come close, even though no one came then.”

Facilitation note. Clients from neglectful homes often minimize: “Nothing really happened.” Don’t argue. Let the child representative show it; the loneliness is usually visible in the body long before the client can name it. These clients may also rush to the parent’s side (“They did their best”). Let the child be fully seen first, then the parent.

3. The frightened child: fear, harshness and shame

A child who lived with anger, unpredictability, harsh punishment, addiction or constant criticism learns that the world is not safe and that they are somehow the problem.

What the Field often shows. The little self freezes or hides when the frightening parent comes into the field. That usually signals the adult self is needed first. Once the adult stands in place, the child is often safe enough to speak the truth to the parent.

In person and online. In the room, the adult self’s representative physically steps between the little self and the frightening parent, and the facilitator watches the child’s body settle. Online with representatives on camera, name the new position clearly (“You now stand in front of the little one, facing Father”) and ask the little self what changes. Working one to one online with floor anchors or desk figures, the client can place the adult figure between the child figure and the parent figure, or step onto the adult’s place and then onto the child’s place behind it, and feel the difference. Either way, the child should feel protected before any truth is spoken to the parent.

Adult self to little self

Set up the adult client, the little self, and the parent or person who frightened them. Place the adult between the child and that person only when the client is ready; this position is the heart of the section.

The adult steps in

The adult stands between the child and the frightening parent, facing the parent.

- Adult to parent: “This is my child now. I’m here.”
- Adult to parent: “What you did was too much for a child. I see it.”
- Adult to little self, over the shoulder: “I’m standing here now. You’re behind me.”
- Adult to little self: “You don’t have to watch out anymore. I’m watching.”

The adult to the frightened child

- “Your fear made sense. You were in danger.”
- “You weren’t bad. You were a child in a frightening house.”
- “You can stop freezing now. It’s over.”
- “You may cry, and I won’t laugh.”

What the little self may say back

- “Will you really stay there?”
- “I can breathe now.”

Child to parents

Once the child is safe behind the adult, the child may step forward, or speak from behind the adult.

Truth statements: naming the fear

Child, to the parent.

- “Father, I was afraid of you.” / “Mother, I was afraid of you.”
- “I never knew which one of you would come home.”
- “When you drank, I disappeared.”
- “You hit me, and I thought I deserved it.”
- “You shamed me, and I believed you.”

The child’s conclusions

To reveal, not to resolve.

- “Because you were angry, I decided I must be bad.”
- “Because I never knew what would happen, I decided I have to watch everything.”
- “Because you laughed at me, I decided my feelings are ridiculous.”
- “I made myself small so you wouldn’t see me.”

Giving back what doesn’t belong to the child

- “Your anger belongs to you. I give it back.”
- “The shame you put on me was yours. I leave it with you.”
- “What you did is yours to carry. What I felt is mine, and it was right to feel it.”
- “I was not the reason. I was only there.”

Seeing the parent’s own fate

Only when the child is safe. This is not forgiveness on demand.

- “Father, I see that you were frightened too, as a child.”
- “Mother, I see the violence that came before you.”
- “I leave your fate with you. I don’t have to understand it to be free of it.”

What the parent may say back

- “It wasn’t your fault. It was mine.”
- “You didn’t deserve it.”
- “I’m sorry.” (Only if the representative truly feels it. Never prompt it.)

A note on “I’m sorry.” Check where it comes from. Sometimes a parent’s apology is an attempt to ease their own guilt rather than to acknowledge the child. Then it quietly asks something of the child again, and the child representative usually feels heavier, not lighter. If that happens, leave the apology out and let the parent carry the guilt instead: “It’s mine to carry. You don’t have to do anything with it.”

Into life

- “When someone raises their voice, I remember I’m grown now.”
- “I don’t have to make myself small for anyone.”
- “I let the vigilance rest. I can take care of us.”

Facilitation note. Watch for the child who defends the frightening parent. Loyalty is strongest exactly where the harm was greatest, and "it wasn't that bad" is often the child protecting the bond. Don't argue with it. Let the adult stand in place first; safety usually has to come before truth can be spoken. And never ask for reconciliation. Some parents can be taken as the source of life while what they did stays with them.

4. The child who was violated: sexual abuse

Sexual abuse in childhood is among the deepest wounds a child can carry. The child is harmed in their body, often by someone they loved or depended on, and is usually left alone with the secret. They often carry a shame that was never theirs, and a split between the body and the self. This work asks for the greatest care.

Before you begin.

- Work only with the client's consent, at every step. The client decides whether the person who did it is represented at all, and how close.
- Never re-enact. The constellation shows positions and relationships, not what happened.
- Keep the person who did it at a distance, or represent them with a floor anchor or an object rather than a person.
- Bring the adult self in before the child is asked to look at anything.
- Watch for dissociation in both the client and the little self's representative: a blank look, going numb, losing contact. Slow down, bring them back to breath, the floor and the present, and stop if needed.
- This work doesn't replace trauma therapy. Know when to refer, and make sure the client has support after the session.

A note on responsibility. Some older constellation writing looked for the cause of abuse in the family system in ways that shifted responsibility away from the person who did it, sometimes toward the child's mother. In this work, responsibility stays fully with the person who did it. The family field can still show what made it possible (silence, looking away, a parent who wasn't there), and that is named too. But it never makes the child's innocence, or the act, less clear.

What the Field often shows. The little self is often frozen, turned away, or hidden behind someone. The adult self may not want to look at the child at all, because looking means feeling it. Usually the adult self comes first, to make the field safe. Speaking to the person who did it comes later, and only if the client wants it. Often the more important relationship is with the parent who didn't see or didn't protect. The Field may also show a loss of innocence that wants to be restored, or a pull toward an earlier generation where the same thing happened.

Adult self to little self

Truth statements: naming what happened

Adult self, to the little self.

- "Something happened to you that should never happen to a child."
- "I know now. I won't look away anymore."
- "You were alone with it for so long."
- "You kept the secret because you had to."

The adult to the violated child

- "It was never your fault. Not any part of it."
- "You didn't do anything to cause it."
- "Whatever your body felt, it wasn't your fault. Your body did nothing wrong."
- "You were a child. You couldn't have stopped it."

- “I’m here now. No one comes near you without my permission.”
- “You don’t have to tell me anything. I believe you.”

What the little self may say back

- “You believe me?”
- “I thought it was me.”
- “Don’t leave.”

Reclaiming innocence

What is often spoken to in the Field is a loss of innocence, and a deep wish to have it back. It can help to set up a representative for Innocence (or “My innocence,” “My light,” whatever word the client uses) and let the Field work on this restoration. Innocence often stands far away, turned away, lying down, or behind the person who did it.

Let Innocence and the little self find each other at their own pace. Don’t hurry it. Sometimes the child walks toward Innocence; sometimes Innocence comes to the child. Often the restoration completes when the child takes Innocence into their arms or their heart. Online, the client can hold an object that stands for Innocence and bring it close to their body.

Little self to Innocence

- “I lost you. I’ve missed you so much.”
- “You were taken from me. I never gave you away.”
- “Please come back to me.”
- “You still belong to me.”

Adult self to Innocence and the little self

- “I’ll keep you both safe now.”
- “No one can take this from you again.”

What Innocence may say back

- “I was never destroyed. Only hidden.”
- “I’ve been waiting for you.”
- “I’m still yours. I always was.”

Child to the person who did it

Only if the client wants it, with the adult self standing between or beside the child. The client may also speak from the adult self’s place.

- “What you did to me was wrong.”
- “You were the adult. It was your responsibility.”
- “The guilt is yours. I leave it with you, all of it.”
- “The shame you left me with belongs to you. I give it back.”
- “My body is mine. I take it back.”
- “I don’t have to forgive you. I don’t have to understand you.”

Don’t offer the representative of the person who did it any sentences of apology or remorse. If they say something on their own, check carefully where it comes from (see the note on “I’m sorry” in section 3). The healing doesn’t depend on their response.

Child to parents

Often the deepest pain is with the parent who didn't see, didn't believe, or didn't protect.

Truth statements: naming what was missing

- "Mother, you didn't see what was happening to me." / "Father, you didn't protect me."
- "I needed you to believe me."
- "I couldn't tell you. I didn't think you could bear it."

Giving back

- "I carried the silence for the whole family. I put it down now."
- "That you didn't see belongs to you."

What the parents may say back

Only if it truly comes.

- "I see it now. I should have seen it then."
- "It wasn't your fault."
- "I believe you."

The family field: when it doesn't begin with this child

From a constellation lens, sexual abuse often doesn't stand alone in a family. It may have happened before, in the generations above: a grandmother, a great-aunt, an ancestor in war, a family where it was never spoken of. The systemic conscience doesn't forget what was excluded and kept silent, and later generations may carry it or repeat it without knowing. The child may be entangled with an earlier victim in the line, or the person who did it may have been caught in an earlier pattern of their own.

When the Field points beyond the immediate family (heaviness from behind the parents, representatives looking past everyone, a feeling that "this is older than me"), set up a representative for "the one before" or for the earlier generations, and let the Field show who is there.

This view explains how something moves through a family. It never excuses it, and responsibility for what was done stays with the person who did it.

To an earlier victim in the line

- "I see you. What happened to you was not seen. Now I see it."
- "What happened to you happened to me too. I leave your fate with you, with love, and I take my own life."
- "You belong to this family. You don't have to be hidden anymore."

To the family line

- "It stops here, with me."
- "I no longer carry the silence of this family."
- "I honor all who suffered this before me. I live for something new."

To the person who did it, if their own history shows

Only if the Field shows it, and only after the child's truth has been spoken.

- "What happened to you before is yours. What you did to me is also yours."

- “Your history doesn’t make it less wrong. I leave both with you.”

What the earlier generations may say back

- “We see you. You don’t have to carry it for us.”
- “It ends with you. You may be free.”

An advanced perspective: holding all in the heart

At times, and for some clients, a larger movement becomes possible: one that goes beyond victim and perpetrator. From an elevated consciousness, the client can hold everything in their heart at once: their inner child, their parents, and even the person who did it. Hellinger spoke of movements of the spirit that take us beyond good and bad, where everyone is part of something greater. When this is real, it can be deeply freeing.

This is an advanced perspective. It isn’t for everyone, or for every situation, and it must never be offered as a goal.

Navigating spiritual bypassing. This movement can only come after everything else has been honored: the child fully seen, the truth spoken, responsibility placed where it belongs, the anger and grief allowed. It doesn’t make what happened acceptable, and it isn’t the same as forgiveness, reconciliation or contact. Signs that it is coming too early:

- The client moves there quickly, before any anger or grief.
- The little self’s representative goes numb, contracts or turns away.
- The words are spiritual, but the body doesn’t match them.
- “They were only doing their best” arrives before “what you did was wrong.”

If you see these, gently return to the child. The larger movement, when it is true, comes from the client and the Field, not from the facilitator.

Sentences for this movement

Offer only when the Field is already moving there, and check each one with the little self’s representative.

- “I hold you all in my heart: my little one, my parents, and you.”
- To the person who did it: “What you did stays with you. And I no longer need to hold you outside my heart.”
- “I leave you to your fate, and to something greater than both of us.”
- “I bow to life as it is, with everything that happened, and I choose to live fully.”

Ask the little self’s representative how it lands. If they soften or feel more space, it is true. If they contract, it is too early, and that is fine.

Into life

- “My body belongs to me.”
- “I decide who comes close, and how close.”
- “I can feel safe in my body again, at my own pace.”
- “What happened to me was real. It is not who I am.”

Facilitation note. Go slower here than anywhere else in this module. A single truth statement, deeply received, may be the whole session. Sometimes the right outcome is only that the little self is no longer alone. Don’t push toward the person who did it, or toward resolution with the parents. And take care of your representatives afterward: release them from their roles clearly, since this material can stay in the body.

5. The child who grew up too fast: carrying the parents

In the Orders of Love, parents give and children take. When this is reversed, the child stands above the parents and carries what was meant for adults: a parent's grief, a parent's marriage, the younger siblings, the household. These children often grow into capable, exhausted adults who don't know how to receive.

What the Field often shows. The little self stays turned toward the parents, still carrying, and doesn't take in the adult's care until the burden has been given back and they've returned to the small place. Reparenting before that point often becomes one more way of carrying everything alone.

Child to parents

This pattern rarely shows up as its own topic. More often the client comes with something else (money, health, a relationship, work) and the Field shows the reversal in relation to that issue. The client's representative stands taller than the parents, in front of them, or turned toward them as if watching over them. Or they can't take in the money, the partner or the success, because their hands are still full with the parents. When this shows, bring in the parents if they aren't already in the field, and let the position be seen. That position is the first truth.

Truth statements: naming what I carried

Child, to the parents.

- "Mother, I took care of you."
- "Father, I held the family together when you couldn't."
- "I raised my brothers and sisters."
- "I was your confidant. I knew things a child shouldn't know."
- "I never got to be little."

Sentences that reveal the reversal

To test, not to resolve.

- "I'm bigger than you."
- "Without me, you would fall apart."
- "I'll carry it for you."
- "If I let go, something terrible will happen."

Returning to the child's place

The classic movement. The child steps down and back, in front of the parents, facing them.

- "You are the big ones. I am the small one." (Bert Hellinger)
- "You are the parents. I am the child."
- "What is yours, I give back to you."
- "I carried it out of love. Now I give it back, with respect."
- "I can't save you. I can only be your child."

Giving back specific burdens

- "Your sadness is too heavy for me. I leave it with you."
- "Your marriage belongs to you. I'm only your child."
- "Your loneliness isn't mine to fill."
- To a sibling, if set up: "I wasn't your mother. I'm your sister." / "I wasn't your father. I'm your brother."

Taking from the parents

Once the child is back in place, the receiving can begin.

- "Dear Mother, dear Father, I take my life from you at the full price it cost you." (Bert Hellinger)
- "I take what you could give. The rest I find elsewhere."
- "Now I can receive from you."

What the parents may say back

Offer to representatives when the field softens.

- "Thank you. Now it's ours again."
- "We're the big ones. You may be our child."
- "You don't have to carry us. We can stand."

Adult self to little self

Now set up the adult client and the little self. The adult takes over what the child was never meant to hold.

The adult to the child who grew up too fast

- "You were so good at taking care of everyone. Who took care of you?"
- "You can put it down now."
- "I'll do the carrying from now on. You can play."
- "You were never responsible for keeping them alive."

What the little self may say back

- "Who will take care of them?"
- "Am I really allowed to stop?"
- "I don't know how to play."

Into life

- "I don't have to hold everyone together."
- "I let others carry their own burdens."
- "I may receive without first having to give."

Once the burden has been given back, return to the issue the client came with. Often the money, the partner or the health issue can now be looked at from the child's proper place, with the parents behind.

Facilitation note. Children who carried their parents often feel the return to the child's place as a loss of power or even as abandoning the parent. Expect guilt. Hellinger would say this guilt is the price of leaving the family's old order and is a sign of growth. Let the parent representatives show whether they can actually stand without the child; very often they can, and that is the turning point.

6. The child's vows and protectors: a parts work approach

To survive, a child makes inner decisions ("I'll never cry again") and builds protectors: the inner critic, the pleaser, the perfectionist, the one who never needs anyone, the one who leaves first. These saved the child's life and now often run the adult's. Set up the child, the adult, and one representative for the protector. Treat the protector with respect. It is loyal to the child.

A note on this section. The idea of vows and protectors comes from parts work, such as Internal Family Systems, more than from traditional Family Constellation work. Hellinger worked with the family system and its orders; he didn't map the inner parts of one person. Here those inner parts are given representatives inside a constellation, so the Field can show how they relate to the child and to the adult self. Treat it as a bridge between the two approaches, and use it when the Field shows an inner part rather than a family member standing between the client and the child.

Field: Adult self to little self. The protector stands between them.

Truth statements: naming the vow

Child, aloud, often for the first time.

- "I promised I'd never cry again."
- "I decided I would never need anyone."
- "I swore I'd be perfect, so no one could hurt me."
- "I decided it was safer to leave before I was left."
- "I decided to be good, so I would be loved."

To the protector

Adult, to the protector.

- "Thank you. You kept the child alive when no one else did."
- "I see how hard you've worked, for so many years."
- "You were the only one who came. I honor you."
- "I'm here now. You don't have to do it alone anymore."
- "You may rest. You can stay close, but you don't have to be in charge."

To specific protectors

- The critic: "You criticized me before anyone else could. I understand. I can hear criticism now and survive it."
- The pleaser: "You kept everyone happy so we'd be safe. Now I may disappoint people and still belong."
- The perfectionist: "You thought perfect meant safe. I may make mistakes and still be loved."
- The one who never needs: "You decided needing was dangerous. I may need, and I'll take care of it."
- The one who leaves: "You left first so we'd never be left. I may stay and find out."
- The one who goes numb: "You turned the feelings off so we could survive. I can feel now, slowly."

Releasing the vow

Adult, to the child.

- "You made that promise to survive. You don't have to keep it anymore."
- "I release you from the vow. It was a child's promise, made in a child's world."
- "The danger you made it for is gone."

What the protector may say back

Offer to the representative when the field softens.

- "I didn't think anyone would ever come."
- "I'm tired."
- "I'll step back, if you'll stay."

Into life

- “When the critic speaks, I thank it, and I decide.”
- “When I want to leave, I ask the child what they’re afraid of.”
- “My protectors work for me now, not the other way around.”

Facilitation note. Never try to remove or defeat a protector. If it is attacked, it will dig in, and the field will harden. Protectors soften when they see that a capable adult has arrived. Watch the protector representative: when it can turn toward the child, or step aside, the vow is usually already loosening.

7. The child in the family field: what the child carries for others

Not all of the inner child’s pain began with them. Out of blind love, children take on feelings, fates and losses from the family system: a mother’s unspoken grief, a lost sibling, a grandparent’s war. The child doesn’t know they’re carrying it. They only feel the sadness, the guilt, or the pull toward the dead. Set up the child, the parents, and the person whose fate the child carries. When it isn’t known who that is, set up “the one the child carries for” and let the field show.

Field: Child to parents and the family system, with the adult self as needed.

Who gives the burden back. The release can be spoken from the child’s place or from the adult self’s place. Let your feel for the Field, and your intuition, decide which.

- **From the child’s place.** The child took on the burden out of a child’s love, so the release often lands most deeply when spoken from that same place. The little self, or the client’s representative standing as the child, speaks to the parent or the one carried for. When the child representative can do this, the relief usually shows clearly in the body.
- **From the adult self’s place.** Sometimes the child is too loyal, too young or too frightened to let go. Then the adult self steps forward, with the little one behind them, and gives the burden back on the child’s behalf.
- **Both.** Often the movement shifts as it goes. The child begins and freezes, and the adult self steps in. Or the adult self gives it back first, and then the child can say it too.

Whichever way it goes, once the burden has been given back, the adult self turns toward the freed child and takes them into life.

Truth statements: naming the burden

Child, to the parent or the one carried for.

- “Mother, I’ve been carrying your sadness.”
- “Father, I took on your guilt.”
- “I’ve felt this my whole life, and it was never mine.”
- “I came after a child who died, and I felt I had to live for two.”

Sentences that reveal the loyalty

To test, not to resolve. These name the child’s hidden movements.

- “I carry it for you.” (Bert Hellinger)
- “Rather me than you.” (Bert Hellinger)
- “I follow you.” (Bert Hellinger)
- “If you can’t be happy, I won’t be either.”
- “I’m doing it like you, so I’ll belong.”

The replacement child

A child born after the loss of another child, or given the name of someone who died.

- To the lost sibling: “You are my brother. You were first. I am second.” / “…my sister…”
- “I’m not you. I’m me.”
- “You have your place in our family, and I have mine.”
- To the parents: “I can’t replace the child you lost. I’m your next child.”

The forgotten sibling

Miscarried, stillborn, given away, or never spoken of.

- “I didn’t know about you, and still I felt you.”
- “You belong to us. I give you a place in my heart.”
- “I was lonely for you. Now I see you.”

To the excluded ones

- “I see you. You belong.”
- “I carried your fate without knowing it. Now I leave it with you, with love.”
- “Your fate was heavy. It is yours, and I honor it.”
- “Please look kindly on me if I live.”

Leaving the fate where it belongs

Client, to the parent or the one carried for.

- “Dear Mother, your grief is yours. I’m only your child.”
- “I leave it with you, with respect.”
- “I stay. Please bless me if I stay.”
- “I honor your fate by living my life fully.”

Adult self, on the child’s behalf.

- “My child took this on for you. It was too heavy for them. I give it back to you now, with respect.”
- “I take my little one out of this. It belongs with you.”
- “I stand between my child and this fate. They don’t have to carry it anymore.”

What the family may say back

Offer to representatives when the field softens.

- Parent: “It’s mine. You may put it down.”
- The excluded one: “I’m at peace when you live.”
- The dead: “We are dead. You may live.”
- “Our fate ends with us. Yours is new.”

Into life

- “The heaviness I’ve felt all my life, I let it go back to where it came from.”
- “I am allowed to be happy, even though they weren’t.”
- “I live, and I carry them in my heart, not on my back.”

Facilitation note. The clearest sign of a systemic entanglement is a child representative who looks at the floor

(often toward the dead), or who feels a feeling that doesn't fit the child's own story. When the inner child work stays stuck after sections 1 to 6, look here. The client's "inner child" may be carrying someone else's child, and nothing personal will release it until that person is seen.

8. Reclaiming what the child lost: play, body, needs and joy

Wounded children don't only carry pain. They also leave things behind: play, spontaneity, wonder, the right to need, the freedom of the body, the joy that comes for no reason. This section is the lighter turn of the work, and it matters as much as the rest. Set up the child and, if helpful, the lost quality itself ("Play," "Joy," "My voice") as a representative. Or, more often, bring these elements into a Field that is already in process: once the little self has been seen and something has settled, add a representative for the lost quality and watch how the child responds.

Field: Adult self to little self.

Truth statements: naming what was lost

Adult, to the child.

- "You stopped playing when it wasn't safe."
- "You stopped asking for things."
- "You learned to be serious so early."
- "Your laughter got too quiet."
- "You stopped trusting your body."

Play and spontaneity

- "You may play again. Nothing bad will happen."
- "You don't have to be useful to be loved."
- "You may be silly. I'll laugh with you."

Needs and wanting

- "Your needs are welcome here."
- "You may want things. You may ask."
- "You may be disappointed, and I'll stay."
- "You're allowed to take up space."

The body

- "Your body was always good."
- "You may move, run, dance, be loud."
- "You may rest when you're tired."
- "Your body knew what was true. I'll listen to it."

Feelings and voice

- "Your anger is allowed. It protects you."
- "Your tears are welcome."
- "You may say no."
- "You may speak. I want to hear you."

Wonder and joy

- “You saw the magic in things. I want to see it again with you.”
- “You may be happy for no reason.”
- “Joy doesn’t have to be earned.”

What the lost quality may say back

Offer to the representative when the field softens.

- Play: “I’ve been waiting for you to come back.”
- Joy: “I was never gone. Just hidden.”
- Voice: “Let me speak now.”

Into life

- “Every day, I give the child a little time to play.”
- “I ask for what I need, as an adult, without shame.”
- “I let joy in, even when it feels unfamiliar.”

Facilitation note. Clients often resist this section more than the painful ones. Joy can feel disloyal to a family that suffered, or dangerous to a child who learned that good moments end badly. If the child representative won’t approach play or joy, look for the loyalty underneath (“If I’m happy, I leave them”) and return to section 7 for a sentence like “Please look kindly on me if I’m happy.”

Closing: the adult and the child together, into life

The aim is not to stay in the child’s pain, or to become the child again. It is for the adult and the child to walk together, with the parents and the family behind them. How the child is held inside shows up everywhere in daily life.

Wound	What the child learned	How it shows up today	What healing opens
Unseen	“I don’t matter”	Over-functioning, invisibility, fear of needing	Being seen, letting people close
Frightened	“The world isn’t safe”	Hypervigilance, freezing, people-pleasing	Calm, trust, a settled body
Violated	“Something is wrong with me”	Shame, numbness, trouble with closeness and boundaries	Safety in the body, dignity, choice
Grew up too fast	“I have to hold everything”	Exhaustion, trouble receiving, control	Rest, receiving, lightness
Carrying for others	“I’m not allowed to be happy”	Unexplained heaviness, pull toward loss	Permission to live fully
Lost play and joy	“Good things end badly”	Seriousness, numbness, joylessness	Spontaneity, pleasure, wonder

Integration

Adult, to the child.

- “You’re not alone anymore. We go together.”
- “I’m the grown-up now. You can be the child.”
- “You can live in my heart, not in charge of my life.”
- “Whenever you need me, I’ll come.”

Closing statements

- “Dear Mother, dear Father, I take my life from you, and I make something good of it.”
- “With you both behind me, and my child beside me, I turn toward my life.”
- “What happened to me was real. It’s no longer all of me.”
- “I was a child once. Now I am grown, and the child lives on in me, safe.”
- For the group circle: “Every child in this room is welcome here.”