

Family Constellations – Movements of the Soul

**“We do not see things as they are.
We see them as *we* are.”**

Susan is depressed and low on energy. It is difficult for her to motivate herself to get up in the mornings. Every time she visits her father, he complains about her brother. For years they haven't had any contact and her father is blaming him for this. He expects his son to take the first step and to apologize for what he believes is inappropriate behaviour from his son. Nothing changes no matter what Susan says to her father.

One day Susan attends a weekend workshop in Family Constellations. She takes the opportunity to do a constellation on her own issue around her family. Group members are asked to stand in a certain position, at a certain angle to each other as they represent her family members. They start to communicate their feelings and impressions. Some of them then change their position in relation to others until “something falls into place” and feels complete. In the end Susan and the group finish the constellation with a light feeling of relief and ease. She doesn't really understand what has happened; she just enjoys her energy coming back.

Two weeks after this session, her father tells her that her brother has called him and they have met. It was a long and heart-warming conversation and he is so happy that there is now a new start. Susan's depression starts lifting. She is astonished that this change took place just following the workshop, after so many years of stagnation. What has happened?

Bert Hellinger

Bert Hellinger sees his Family Constellation work as being phenomenological. It is important to see what is *really* going on.

“I open myself to a situation in darkness, not knowing what is going on. The question is: How do I get to a truth concealed in darkness? I dive into a flowing field; I become part of it, and it reaches out beyond me.” (Bert Hellinger, *Love's Hidden Symmetry*, 1998)

Bert Hellinger was born in 1925. He studied philosophy, theology and education, and worked as a priest for 20 years and in particular as a missionary to the Zulu. After this he qualified in psychoanalysis and attended courses in Gestalt Therapy, Transactional Analysis, and other forms of therapy. From this background, and subsequent training in family therapy, as well as his own experiences he developed the work now known as Family Constellations. He became known for making visible the entangled dynamics between family members and achieving resolution by acknowledging the inherent universal order.

The Orders of Love

Family Constellation work brings to light ways in which individuals are entangled with the fate of other members of their family and what this means for their own life. It becomes obvious that every member has the need to bond, to achieve equilibrium and to find the right place within the family. To fulfil this need it is necessary to integrate anyone. If just one person is excluded then children born later unconsciously take over the fate of the rejected family member. This is the meaning of entanglements. The consequences are: holding back in life; being stuck in self-defeating patterns; low self-esteem; unhappiness or illness.

To resolve these dynamics, it is necessary to acknowledge the excluded person as a part of the family and to give them their proper place. Through this acknowledgment, respect, and love these injustices may be balanced out without repeating the destructive patterns.

The entanglement follows an orderly pattern, in which something bad needs to be expiated by something else that is bad. Innocent children vouch and atone for guilty adults. On the other hand the resolution *also* follows a kind of order, in which the need for bonding and equilibrium unfolds in a healing way. Both kinds of order, one disastrous and the other healing, are Orders of love. Because *everything* we do comes from the place of love.

What happens in a session?

Participants choose representatives for their family members and place them in a certain position and angle to each other in the room. Then these people start to express their feelings, impressions and thoughts while standing there. The process is divided into two stages, which are linked to each other in a fluid way. The first one is to bring the entanglements to light in order to recognize the hidden dynamic, which ties us to the fates of other family members and blocks the flow of love. Then, through intuition, the use of certain sentences and people changing positions the resolution for the healing can take place. The understanding of what is behind the entanglements together with the opportunity to complete an unfinished or interrupted process from the past is possible to experience with a feeling of lightness and ease. And even though sometimes the healing is immediately obvious in a session, the soul needs time to integrate the change in its own time.

A different method

I have trained with Claudia Mengel, near Cologne in Germany. She developed a different method based on Bert Hellinger's work. For setting a constellation I use coloured mats, which people lay on the floor to bring out the inner pattern formed by a particular situation. Each mat can represent a person, an object or an issue. This constellation on the floor is the beginning of the process of *making the unconscious pattern conscious*. Then group members are invited intuitively to choose a mat and to step on it. (In one-to-one sessions I do the process.) The person who is laying the constellation gives no information about the meaning, their story or the issues. The absence of information is helpful, because it prevents bias or prejudice getting in the way of what is really going on in the process. People then start to communicate their feelings, thoughts and impressions and follow their intention to change their position in relation to each other. It is possible to recognize the dynamics of entanglements and also to see and sense possible solutions. The process will last as long as the individual soul needs in order to heal just what is meant to be healed in this moment. Towards the end I may enquire about the meaning of the mats, if there is an indication that it may be supportive to the process.

The Constellation work is an opportunity to create a container where we are able to come in contact with the existing order. It is a tool to view ourselves in relationship to the bigger picture of the world and to take our proper place within it. It is never too late to begin the healing process, because there is a part of human nature, which loves to know the truth, no matter how painful.

For further information and questions please contact:

Diana Grell

1 Findhorn Road

Kinloss IV36 3TX

Tel. 01309 691549

Email dianagrell@hotmail.com