

Family Constellations Circles: Acknowledging What Is

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Originally published in *Aquarius Magazine*, October 2006.

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Families have an unconscious soul – an invisible blueprint- that travels across many generations.

We are deeply bonded to family members we may not have even known or knew existed: a parent's deceased sibling; a grandmother's rage; a stillborn baby, miscarriage, or abortion; ancestors who were enslaved or enslaved others; a father's allies who died in wartime; our grandparents' previous partners; the ancestors who stayed in the home country; and many others.

Out of blind, loyal love, we may carry on suffering, unconsciously trying to bring into light our ancestor's difficult fate(s). All families have places of disconnection. Family constellation circles offer us a gentle, profound way of acknowledging and liberating difficult truths.

"Orders of love" is the term used by Bert Hellinger to name these powerful forces that influence our lives. These orders are hidden, natural laws. They involve belonging, give and take, and injustice and atonement. When balance within the family soul is restored, the same love entangled with illness, difficult fate, and suffering can be transformed into a force for healing.

In the circle setting, a sacred space is created where unspoken truths about our families may be acknowledged. A person briefly describes their life issue, along with family facts. They pick others to represent family members, living or dead, and place them according to their heartfelt, body-knowing image of their family.

A piece of the hidden blueprint is revealed and restructured toward a more balanced, life-giving picture. This movement of honoring the family pictures that were kept in the shadows makes a palpable difference, often in surprising, liberating ways.

Benefits

- Identify and disentangle from previous generations' struggles
- Connect with ancestral strength, support, and love
- Identify barriers to and shift couple relationships
- Uncover hidden factors influencing health, career, or family problems
- Live with more freedom, clarity, and love
- Feel more compassion and less judgment
- Gain insight into your healing practices

While each family's story is unique, there are universal truths that connect us to one another. Family Constellations offers wisdom about the depth of our loyalty to family functioning like no other approach from western culture.

What often happens is that the experience of being in another's constellation, and witnessing another family's unfolding truths, wakes up parts of our own ancestry that want to be seen, acknowledged, and integrated. We are all entangled, in one way or another, with parts of our family history that want to be recognized. We are all very much a part of the larger, human family.

This work is not about trying to change, fix, blame, analyze, or pathologize. Its' power and depth lie in honoring what is, especially in those places of loss, pain, or tragedy which have remained unacknowledged....in a circle of ancestral connection. When we do so, love and life can flow more freely, and our rightful place of belonging is restored.

Background

While German native Bert Hellinger developed Family Constellations almost thirty years ago, the approach also draws on deep roots found in tribal, indigenous wisdom. For many years, European audiences of 500+ came together for this work, taking post-Holocaust steps toward healing. It was introduced to the U.S. over ten years ago, lives in 25 countries, and is organically spreading around the globe.

An Invitation

In our culture that so deeply values self-reliance, while struggling with distraction, compulsivity, isolation, and disconnection, this approach makes it clear: there is no replacement for ancestral connection, honoring truth, and simply acknowledging what is.

Current fascination with DNA testing and genealogy shows one side of our longing for ancestral connection. Family is in our DNA. They are also in our soul. We carry in us, in our bodies, the whole of our families. Our parents, our grandparents, our great-grandparents, our great great grandparents, and so on, and so on, and so on. As the saying goes, "No roots, no wings."

I encourage all of us to trust these intuitions, to listen to the voices of our ancestors inside of us, to be open to possibilities that what we are experiencing in our lives today may be connected with the unacknowledged pictures of those who came before us. When we do this together, without judgment, we are more able to live our lives, in present time and place, and to draw support and connection from our ancestral tribes.

There is much that wants to be honored and integrated in us as individuals and in our families. I hope that you'll join me in exploring how we can, together, experience healing truths.

“When we look at our parents, then we see that behind them are their parents, and behind their parents are other parents, and so on through many generations. The same life flows through all of them until it reaches us.” - Bert Hellinger.

Lisa Iversen, MSW, LCSW, has been a Systemic Family Constellations practitioner since 1999 and a psychotherapist since 1993. She is the author of Ancestral Blueprints: Revealing Invisible Truths in America's Soul (Family Constellations West, 2009). Her areas of expertise and interest include transgenerational trauma, mental illness in families, effects of war in family and American culture, relationship between individual-collective healing, post-colonial healing, integration of indigenous and western healing approaches, visibility of feminine rooted wisdom, and ancestral resonance in daily living. Lisa lives in Bellingham, Washington with her husband and daughter. To learn more, visit www.ancestralblueprints.com.