

Making Love Work With Relational Constellation Wisdom

JoAnna Chartrand & Dyrian Benz, PsyD

The Constellation Process reveals significant past and present family influences on all kinds of life-issues, including on the love in our life.

Unseen forces connect us inextricably to our family and to our family's past. These bonds operate regardless of how close or distant we are either geographically or emotionally. Across time and space we are connected to our previous family generations and the damaging actions of one past family member can easily affect individuals in generations to follow. Carl Gustav Jung, in his book *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* describes this kind of influence.

I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my parents and distant ancestors. It often seems as if there were an impersonal karma within a family, which is passed on from parents to children. It has always seemed to me that I had to answer questions which fate had posed to my forefathers, and which had not yet been answered, or as if I had to complete, or perhaps continue, things which previous ages had left unfinished.

The Family Constellation Group

An actual Relational Constellation, which includes Family Constellations, takes place in a group setting. The group size can be as few as twelve people and as many as hundreds. In the constellation the client first presents a problem. He or she then selects individuals from a group of strangers -- the other constellation group members -- to represent the various family members. The client then places these representatives in standing positions so that their physical position mirrors the relationships among them.

© JoAnna & Dyrian Benz-Chartrand
Relational Constellation Institute of California in Santa Barbara
www.relationalconstellations.com • www.essentialolutions.info
joannachartrand@gmail.com

At this point, an extra-ordinary phenomenon occurs. The representatives, who do not know the people they have been selected to represent, regularly begin to feel like the actual family members they are representing. These sensations and bodily experiences give the information needed to guide the constellation.

By observing the personal and inter-personal reactions among these representatives, the hidden problematic influences from other family members, on the client's current life, are often revealed. With an astonishing frequency concealed family influences are brought to light in just about any type of life-problem.

Sometimes, it even appears that the client has assumed the fate or destiny of a distant, unknown ancestor. In so doing, he relinquished his own fate in favor of that of the predecessor. This is called an "entanglement".

A large boulder thrown in the river can create turbulence for a long way down stream even though the rock is hidden under the water and invisible to the observer. Entanglements work in this same hidden, but powerfully influential way. Constellations make entanglements visible.

It is my task to bring a reality to light. Once it is in view then the reality works, and my work is done.

Bert Hellinger

A Taste Of A Family Constellation

After a recent Constellations workshop which we – JoAnna and Dyrian - led this is what one of the participants reported to me. He described the curious phenomena of representatives actually experiencing the thoughts and sensations that the real family member most likely had experienced. This consistently happens to representatives although the representative has no prior information about this family member.

During my first constellation workshop a woman - the client - picked me to be the representative of her former husband. She then arranged the representatives by physically standing them in relationship to each other.

She placed the representatives for her self, the current husband and the daughter in relatively close proximity and I, the representative of her former husband, was placed at a slight distance and off to the side.



The Constellation Facilitator started to focus on the rest of the family representatives. While I stood there, uninvolved, I started noticing my curious thoughts. I was having thoughts about how I didn't want to let this woman go, how I wanted her with me, and so on. Since I did not know anything about this woman or her situation, the strength of my reaction baffled me. To my surprise, I started to notice a pain building in my heart. At this point, some time had passed and the constellation work began to include me. At this point I had a big noticeable heart ache and strongly felt, somehow, that I did not want to let this woman go.

The client then explained that the ex-husband, for which I was the representative, actually had been against their separation. He was still causing difficulty because he never accepted the break up. The Constellation Facilitator asked me to say to her, "I let you go, with love." Everything in me rose up against speaking these words. When I finally spoke them, immediately my heartache diminished significantly. Then I was moved a few feet further away from the rest of the representatives and turned around, so that my back was to them. This brought on the final

© JoAnna & Dyrian Benz-Chartrand

Relational Constellation Institute of California in Santa Barbara

www.relationalconstellations.com • www.essentialsolutions.info

joannachartrand@gmail.com

change. The rest of my heartache disappeared and I had the feeling that my life was my own now. I felt free and also had warm feelings about giving the woman her freedom to live without me. This resolution seemed to bring peace to the woman and the representatives of her new family.

Without love there is no solution.

Bert Hellinger, founder of Family Constellations

The Effects Of A Family Constellation

You may wonder what real effect such representational placement of a family may ultimately have. Hellinger and many of us other facilitators have received hundreds of reports and letters of gratitude from participants about how impactful these Constellations are. Below are segments from one such report.

A Family Constellation Report: Frank

First I proceeded to set up my constellation and then watched it all unfold. I was mesmerized to say the least. I couldn't believe the emotions I was feeling as I watched my family express themselves. This is really what I wanted to share with you in this letter. The volunteers from the audience, who knew nothing about my family were responding like them perfectly and this moved my soul.

In the constellation the man representing me was very resistant to hugging and accepting my Dad's love and painfully it fit the real me as I'm so scared of my Dad hurting me as he has done so much in my life.

© JoAnna & Dyrian Benz-Chartrand

Relational Constellation Institute of California in Santa Barbara

www.relationalconstellations.com • www.essentialolutions.info

joannachartrand@gmail.com

When the man described his physical sensations of feeling tight in the throat etc.. I felt a lot of emotion too because those are the exact sensation I've felt my entire life.

The work in the constellation where I became my father's son and then my father gave me his blessing was so profound and truly so needed. Watching this was like a giant healing injection right into my soul. I never knew it until that moment, but that is the blessing I yearn for so deeply.

At the end of the work I was placed in the actual constellation. At first the woman representing my wife felt strange and I was aware that this was not really my wife. The constellation was then moved a little and suddenly I felt completely different. I felt such love and compassion and hope. I felt like we were united through our ancestry and our children and we were now a family that had backing, support and love. I felt vulnerable, but brave somehow as I stood there with my family looking towards the future with some clarity and direction for once.

I've been deeply impacted and I feel as though my healing has been catapulted far ahead into the future to a place that would have taken a long time to reach in any other way. Something inside of me has really shifted; energy is flowing through me in a different and more fluid manner. That day was one of the most profound experiences I've ever had in my entire life.

Let us complete the picture of the above constellation with one more report. The following is a description from an observer who witnessed Frank's Family Constellation. The report also shows the healing effect that a constellation can have on an observer who is not actively involved in the Constellation.

Witnessing The Constellation

As I witnessed the constellation I found myself welling up with emotion and amazement. I wondered what was moving these complete strangers to experience these feelings that they themselves didn't have any personal connection to. Frequently I had to remind myself that none of what was said was scripted nor was it play-acting.

© JoAnna & Dyrian Benz-Chartrand

Relational Constellation Institute of California in Santa Barbara

www.relationalconstellations.com • www.essentialolutions.info

joannachartrand@gmail.com

I was particularly moved when Hellinger stated that one person standing alone is not enough to be a father. I thought of my own father who had lost his father at the age of two. Right then and there I felt a peace where there had previously only been disappointment about all the years my father had not been the father to me that I wanted. Hellinger's words which followed this constellation, "you are in very good hands with your own soul," continue to move me deeply.

In addition to the numerous reports from participants about the effectiveness of this approach proof from scientific research is also beginning to gather. Recently a doctoral study at the University of Munich has also confirmed this effectiveness of the Family Constellations. The research showed a significant improvement in the problem that the clients focused on in the constellation as well as a betterment in an overall sense of their self. The progress was reported by the client both immediately after the Constellation had taken place as well as some time later. In other words, the Constellation had an almost immediate as well as a long lasting positive effect.

...the resolution is there when all the members of the family are pleased. When each person is in the right place; when each is being true to what is important to that person; when each is attending to his or her own life and not interfering with the others; then everyone has dignity and self-esteem and feels good. That's a resolution.

Bert Hellinger