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Overview of Family Constellations

by Katherine Revoir

Family Constellation work is a gentle yet transformative process that unravels unconscious loyalties and stuck patterns of behavior. It is a three-dimensional, body-centered, participatory exploration of naming and releasing trauma and past pain that can live in individuals and family systems. It works from the core insight that, in any system, all parts inherently belong and continuously strive for connection and inclusion. Constellations bypass the usual cognition to touch deep currents, while gently holding the heartbeat of the family lineage. We name and contextualize that which has been invisible, yet so in charge of these stuck patterns.

In the systems we call families, the events, places and people we "forget" or push to the shadows continues to affect us until they are recognized and integrated in a balanced way. We now know through social neuroscience that trauma experienced by one generation leaves traces in the next. Recent epigenetic research reveals that the protein sheath wrapped around each person's DNA holds markers (like rings in a tree trunk) that show traumas our recent ancestors have lived through.

In light of these discoveries it makes sense that the more work we do to connect with past generations, and to ground ourselves in the present and in our own bodies, the more ease and access to agency we have in the world.

Your participation in a group constellation can happen in one of 3 ways:

1. As the seeker, who receives the constellation, you bring an issue or pattern of behavior that you would like to experience differently, e.g., career, personal relationship, finances, health, etc.

2. As a representative, you volunteer to represent a key person, emotion, or element that is relevant to the seeker's intention. As you step into the field to represent, you feel what it's like to have the emotions and perspective of others.

3. As a witness, you watch but do not participate. I have often received deep insights from watching other people's constellations.

When we take part in a Family Constellation process, we get to see the map of our inner dynamics and our family dynamics outside of ourselves. We step into the brain's right hemisphere, with its connection to the body, emotions, and its orientation to our relational world.

If we are in a group context, our brain is nourished and held by other brains, while the facilitator meets our experience with warmth, resonance and precision. We then get to time-stamp traumatic events and reconcile with the parts of ourselves (and/or the parts of our families) who suffered. We make sense of what happened, and see that we can live, flourish and contribute our gifts with more ease.