

## Family Patterns

Unusual things happen in families, and these events can affect the health of later generations without the current family members being aware of it happening. In any generation, children often try to help carry the unresolved problems and burdens of the adults.

A family over many generations is like a mobile in a child's bedroom: movement at any point causes a compensating reaction in all the other parts. Children are the ones most affected by this compensatory movement. They easily and unconsciously take upon themselves unresolved energies in the system so that the system as a whole can regain balance and order.

What is suppressed in a family does not disappear but floats around waiting for an opportunity to reappear. Children feel the unexpressed energy, take it in, and live it out. And so, every mother behaves in some way like her own mother, and every father like his own father.

A person who feels an inner (perhaps unconscious) connection to another family member or ancestor will often have similar feelings towards life and live out a similar fate. Bert Hellinger calls this 'entanglement'. It can manifest as depression, guilt, thoughts of suicide or other psychological disturbance.

One common cause of entanglement is when a family member has been shut out, or excluded and forgotten. This could be because they died very young, or in childbirth, or by suicide, or by accident. Or a person could be identified with a criminal or shameful event, or be part of a dreadful family secret, and excluded in that way. Such a member will often be represented in a subsequent generation, or several generations later. That person could be you!

Children don't need to get involved in their parents' and grand-parents' lives - not by judging, nor by taking on their burdens. When they do, it can severely affect their own health and quality of life.

## Therapeutic Intervention

The classic method is to attend a *Family Constellation* workshop where other participants are 'placed' in the centre of the room to represent family members of one person who acts as the 'client' for that session. Another method is to use figures or objects placed on a table, and simply work 1-on-1 with a facilitator.

To do the *placing* the client relies on a deep intuition. There is no story-telling or thinking required. Instead, the facilitator invokes what is called the *Knowing Field* - which brings a sense of the deep truth underlying the relationships between the participants.

The Knowing Field expresses itself through the position of the representatives, both in distance and in the directions they face. It also contains an energy which strives towards healing. Representatives feel themselves pulled in a certain direction - the direction of either the problem or the solution.

Mysteriously, the representatives are able to quickly sense key aspects of the person they are representing. One may feel anger or rage, for example, and another may feel ignored or left out. It is astonishing. The facilitator allows the Knowing Field to bring about a resolution, or sometimes gently makes adjustments to the arrangement to see what 'feels better'.

The serious magic is that energetic shifts can be felt as the constellation moves towards resolution, akin to adjusting the balance in the 'mobile'. The adjustments can often continue for days or weeks after the exercise has been completed. And the changes then flow through into the family system.

*References:* Any book written or co-written by Bert Hellinger  
John L. Payne, *The Healing of Individuals, Families and Nations*.  
B. Ulsamer, *The Healing Power of the Past - A New Approach to Healing Family Wounds*.