

## The Dance of love with Family Constellations.

There is a lot to be learned from Ballroom or Latin dance in terms of how male and female principles may complement and complete each other in the dance of love: The man experiencing his masculinity with healthy pride and the woman her femininity with pure pleasure, as they move together intuitively with symmetry and grace. He leading in a protective and loving way, that encourages his partner to match him with her sensuality and strength, as he provides a safe place for her to express her beauty, much like a precious bloom. Strong men and women making good resilient and respectful connections.

We all want to be loved and happy. That is a basic human desire that drives us into the adventures of life and stays with us, in one form or another until death. We are mostly driven to look for happiness through relationships, but also through pursuing and accomplishing goals and dreams. We each come into life through the male and female sex cells uniting into One. Both equally essential to the procreation process. It seems that we are *hard wired* to seek love and fulfillment through relationships of all kinds and procreation takes place for most within a relationship. There is no doubt that our very survival as a species relies on the natural drive to find a mate, make love and produce babies, allowing DNA to be passed on through generations. However, the flow of life force is much more than a genetic process, as it is accompanied by the deeper textures of family, culture and the power of masculine and feminine qualities and love, that provide a rich tapestry to clothe the essential physical structure of the DNA in our genes.

In today's continuing struggle between the genders, it seems that both men and women have a way to go. Women are still working towards gaining equality with men in work, relationships and also family and life style choices. At the same time there is a lot of confusion, posturing and political correctness around the roles of men and women in society and even more so in personal relationships. In particular, many men are unsure or uncomfortable in their manhood and don't know what is required of them by women or society. Should they be a SNAG (sensitive new age guy) or do women still want to be swept off their feet? Finding and maintaining a respectful healthy connection between the genders remains a challenge.

Many of us don't know how to dance the dance of love; a dance that would allow each of us to fulfill our potential as men or women, in both intimate relationships and also in wider society. For the purpose of this article I am addressing heterosexual relationships only at this time.

Unfortunately, discrimination in terms of gender, sexual orientation, race and religion is still alive and well and deeply embedded in the psyche of many sections of modern society. It is still the case that women often need to give up their essential femaleness and *grow balls* in order to rise up the corporate ladder in male dominated organizations. While at the same time, many sensitive and intelligent men are aware of a discomfort with their maleness in the face of so much aggression and violence in the world. No wonder men

and women are finding it hard to connect in a sustainable and meaningful way in relationship, if they aren't comfortable in their natural, gender roles.

In modern Western society we often think of ourselves as totally separate, autonomous beings, totally free to carve out our path, with our intention, will, skills and choices. While on one level this is true, we often forget another truth that those who live in cultures that remain in touch with their roots intuitively know, that they are also part of their family systems and ancestral past. We are the latest expression of people coming out of our ancestral lines and we carry the genes of our forefathers and mothers. In reality, we are both individual and also an integral part of a greater family and cultural system. We are separate and also part of a greater whole. Both of these aspects of being human need to be acknowledged, in order to fulfill our potential as men or women and find the love and happiness that we all crave at our core. We are separate and also an expression of our people.

As mentioned, modern people often consider themselves as separate entities and this is further reinforced by society and the personal development and psychotherapeutic worlds in their use of egocentric approaches to personal growth. The focus is on individual feelings, beliefs and goals. Of course there is no doubting the value of personal growth through self-reflection, de-briefing, scrutinizing beliefs in raising awareness in a way that helps us to make sense of the world. In this approach, the qualities of personal desire, tenacity, will and autonomy are considered paramount. This perspective puts the person at the centre of their world and does not take into account the larger perspectives with significant others and their family systems.

While coaching or counselling may be very effective for those issues that come from a person's life choices and situations, or the development of life skills, unfortunately they have little effect on those issues that have their roots in the dynamics of family entanglements that are much deeper. Nevertheless most of us, at some stages of life, benefit from a coaching or counselling approach to;

- formulate goals
- create structure to achieve goals
- improve communication
- acquire the appropriate knowledge or skills for the task at hand

However, all of this well-intentioned help may be to no avail if we still feel fundamentally unworthy of what we are seeking, at a deeper level. Worthiness is a reliable measure for success as can be seen from my book *Be Rich AND Spiritual*. Unworthiness shows itself in sabotage that arises from deep-seated places in the psyche. In my experience as a personal development facilitator, such sabotage patterns are most effectively dealt with at their roots through the personal unconscious mind or the systemic family system. Dealing with conscious thoughts by using reasoning techniques such as CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) as discussed in my book *Stardust on the Spiritual Path* pg 89 is ineffective for unconscious and emotionally based problems.

In truth we are all born into family first. The significance of this is felt from the first breath. We have a conscious, unconscious and also a systemic unconscious deeper mind, which may be thought of as a cellular memory and each level of these consciousness's need to be resolved or integrated in order to find peace and wholeness. There is no doubt that the family that we are born into has an effect on how we are. This can be seen in the emotional state of babies entering into life. If we look at newborn babies, we find that some are born content, or appear to be angry or anxious, showing that at some level they are coming into life with emotions. How can that be? Some appear to be born content and placid while others show anger or anxiety, even though they are at the beginning of life and haven't yet had experiences that may create such feelings.

There are many adults who have been aware of such feelings for as long as they can remember and these feelings make no sense in light of their life situations. It is my experience that many people who come to me for help say they have been aware of a particular emotion or pattern all of their life and on further questioning often reveal that a similar quality is also present in a parent or grandparent too. Therefore, it makes sense to surmise that they picked up these feelings elsewhere. If we are totally free and autonomous, as many assume, we would each be born as clear open vessels, with no baggage at all, wouldn't we? In truth the powerful effects that family systems, culture and history, especially trauma have on us, has largely been ignored. However, if what a person is dealing with has its roots in the dynamics of their family system, a different approach may be required.

Here I am suggesting that an individual self focused approach is required for those matters coming from personal life choices or experiences and a different approach is required for this matters related to feelings or behaviors that have their roots in family dynamics that may be lost in the mists of time of previous generations.

Imagine if those with this deeper experience of family dynamics could tap into the sadness, anxiety or guilt that they have always had and go to its source and become free of it, while remaining respectfully connected to their family system? This is the new paradigm of a process called Systemic Family Constellations. This process works with the individual and also the family system in finding release and resolutions in a psycho-spiritual and experiential process that is brief.

“Family Constellations as a group process was brought to the world by the German psychotherapist Bert Hellinger in the 1990's. Hellinger had been a Catholic priest and teacher in Africa in Zululand where he noticed their system of order in extended families. This consisted of acknowledging each member of the family in relation to the whole, according to their time of entry (who came first, second....) and also the nature of the relationships (e.g. father-son or first child, second child, first wife, second wife) and how these factors appeared to create harmony and respect in family groups. Hellinger took these insights home with him when he left the priesthood to become a

psychotherapist in Germany.

A Family Constellations workshop takes place when a group of people come together to form a sacred space. They sit in a circle with a facilitator in order to take turns to look at their issues by using people from the group to represent those people of their situation, including one representative for themselves. The representatives are placed spatially in relation to each other, according to the client's inner image. Once placed, the constellation commences and the representatives begin to experience sensations in their body, with the facilitator and the representatives guided by the energetic field that develops. The facilitator enables the energy of the field to be expressed and released, or for the representatives to follow an impulse to move, as the energy field unfolds in revealing what it has to show. The client observes the process from the circle. New perspectives arise and emotions are dissipated through the representatives in the field that ripple through the mind, body and soul of the client and also the greater body of the family soul in finding a resolution and a healthier order. The system finds a new equilibrium, by allowing the client to reconnect to the flow of love flowing through the generations. This is a powerful, experiential, psycho-spiritual process that is a brief intervention in allowing the person to find new perspectives on which to move forward. The effects of a constellation are often felt for months or longer after the process, as new perspectives fall into place for the client". Pg 119 Yildiz Sethi (2014) *Stardust on the Spiritual Path*.

Case studies. (Names have been changed to protect confidentiality).

A man in his forties, called John, came to a workshop having had two failed relationships and was experiencing problems with his present partner. He had taken part in extensive counselling previously that hadn't helped him improve his ability to relate. In his original family, his father had left the family when he was young and his father's father had died in the war.

In the constellation John was found to be very much 'out of order' with his parents leaving him emotionally entangled and not free to pursue a relationship. Through the process, emotions were released and order restored with each person taking full responsibility for their part in the situation. His father was reunited with his father (John's grandfather) and John was able to connect with the males in his family in a healthier way and move on with his partner.

John was suffering from a lack of male connections in his family and also from continuing to emotionally support his mother, so that he had not been truly available for a partner.

A woman called Jane came to a workshop frustrated because she kept sabotaging her relationships with men. In asking about her birth family she told of how her grandmother on her mother's side had died in childbirth leaving six young children and a husband, her grandfather. Her grandfather

had married quickly in an attempt to make sure the children were looked after. Meanwhile the grandfather maintained his role as the breadwinner and the trauma of his wife's loss was buried deep in the family psyche, probably in an attempt to move on and survive.

The Constellation showed the family still deeply traumatized by the loss. Interestingly, the whole family including the representative for Jane expressed a strong feeling of guilt. Once the representative for the grandmother and lost child were included, there were many tears and the grandfather expressed his deep love and sadness to her. The constellation enabled the release of sadness, guilt and trauma that was still being felt by the present generation. They were able to acknowledge the essential part that the grandfather's new wife had played in the survival of the family. This was enough to resolve the guilt feelings in the family and for Jane to take them into her heart as she reclaimed her feminine essence with dignity and pride in connecting with the women of her family.

John and Jane are now getting on with forming better relationships now that they are more connected to their respective gender roles. This means that they are better able to dance the dance of love with potential partners.

Such trauma in a family may last for generations unless it can be grieved and expressed appropriately as is now being shown through the science of Epigenetics where psycho-social, emotional and ecological factors have been found to influence the switching on (or off) of genes, as shown in *Epigenetics*, Harvard University (cited 23/2/15).

Epigenetics is an area of science that has grown significantly over the last few years that is demonstrating that while DNA provides the blueprint of the physical structure in cells and organs, the expression of many genes in being switched on or off, is often governed by social, emotional and ecological factors according to *Epigenetics* Harvard University. Put simply genes may be switched on or off by psycho-social, emotional and relationship factors. This means that emotional and traumatic events that happened in our parents, or grandparents generation that could not be resolved at the time, may still be affecting the present generation. Further findings and verification of how powerfully Epigenetics can influence the switching on of psychosocial patterns are still being researched, as was shown in detail on the Australian TV program *Catalyst ABC* program (17 March 2015). Further, Franz Ruppert in *Trauma Bonding and Family Constellations* (2008) demonstrates how feelings and behaviors are transmitted through relational bonds from one generation to another, showing how systemic trauma and nuances of behavior and emotional patterns are passed on, creating healthy, or unhealthy patterns, until they are resolved by such processes as Systemic Family Constellations.

This is exciting because it means that effective therapeutic approaches such as Systemic Family Constellations or any other, may be very helpful in assisting with emotional and psychological resolutions, so that harmful patterns may be switched off, thereby stopping them being passed onto our children and grandchildren. This Systemic Family Constellations process has

an added benefit in that it allows you to deal with your relationships in a healthier manner now.

It is possible to step fully into your healthy gender, so that you can make the most of your life as a man or woman and find symmetry in the dance of love with your loved one, in creating healthy families in these complex modern times. Becoming empowered as a human being and as a man or woman, is very much the first step in personal development for healthy relationships and success.

Systemic Family Constellations are being offered by many across the world and in Australia in seminars, private sessions and Skype.

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## References

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