

Healing the Family Soul, by Julie Williams

Chapter 2 in A Journey of Riches, Returning to Love

“Where there is love, there is life.” Mahatma Gandhi

What if I told you there was one key thing you could do to align your mind, body, and spirit with truth, love, and happiness? This thing could assist you in shifting the foundation of who you are so deeply and profoundly that you could stop seeking what you wanted and actually start living your dreams. You would be motivated by love rather than fear, allowing you to access a steady flow of self-empowerment that is aligned with your soul's true purpose.

Over the last two decades of facilitating thousands of clients, students, and retreat participants through Family Constellation Therapy, I've witnessed incredible results across all kinds of physical, emotional, and spiritual issues. For example, I've helped women who were told they were infertile to birth several healthy children. I've assisted people in healing completely from conditions like depression, chronic fatigue, panic attacks, cancer, and many others. I've seen relationships on the brink of disaster find love and connection again. I've assisted people in turning their businesses around from bankruptcy to profitability. Time and time again, I've seen the power of Family Constellation Therapy change people's lives in ways that align them with manifesting what their hearts desire most, while simultaneously releasing them from the burdens of suffering they have unknowingly inherited from their ancestors.

Family Constellation Therapy is a systemic approach which uncovers and releases unconscious entanglements to ancestral suffering that affect our health and well-being both personally and professionally. It is based on the idea that just as we have our own soul or animating life force energy, our family has collective energy called the family soul. The family soul holds life and is bound by deep, all-encompassing and unwavering love.

As life flows from generation to generation, the family soul weaves a beautiful tapestry giving each family member a place within the masterpiece. Like your fingerprint, your place within the family soul belongs only to you. When all family members take their place within the system, there is a natural order that presides, allowing love to be the primary force that flows in life. However, if anyone in your family history experienced trauma, loss of a child, mental illness, an early death, imprisonment, or any ill fate that meant they were excluded, lost, forgotten, or estranged, the family soul becomes fragmented and the flow of love is disrupted. Like water that leaks from a cracked vase, the family soul cannot hold its full life force if any family members are forgotten. This

means that the future generations will only have a fraction of the life force available to them, which will inevitably lead to some form of pain, suffering, or distress in life.

Take a moment to think about the lives of your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents; I'm willing to bet you'll be able to identify someone in your family history who experienced something that had an impact on your family soul. If you compare their experience to a current struggle in your own life, you'll probably notice a striking similarity. This is an example of an entanglement. Some of the strongest entanglements can also be found where the family history is unknown or missing. Given world history, it's safe to say we all have something in our ancestral past that has impacted our family soul enough to create entanglements that cause suffering in our lives today. Here's why:

In addition to inheriting our genetic information from our ancestors, we also line up to take on the burdens of suffering, especially the ones that caused a family member to be excluded and the family soul to fracture. By living the same suffering now, our hope is that we can heal the wound to the family soul, by re-including them through living a similar experience. We do this out of deep love and loyalty as our souls try to honor their lives by trying to feel their pain. In other words, in an effort to heal the wounds of the past, we take them on as our own. These are deep subconscious patterns that we are rarely aware of until they begin to have a negative impact on our life. When we can understand that our pain will not heal the pain or another, but instead, only create more pain, then we have taken the first step in breaking free from our ancestral entanglements.

While love and loyalty are an important part of why we take on the family suffering, the most compelling reason is our need to belong to our family system. Think about a newborn baby for a moment. It's cute and smells nice but is completely helpless on its own. Every child needs someone to care for it in order to survive, which is how the need to belong becomes hardwired into our psyche as a primary instinct. In order to survive, we must first belong. This explains why we willingly take on our family pain. To separate from it pushes against our basic survival instincts. Essentially, we are deciding that it is better to suffer by living with ancestral entanglements than risk our survival by not belonging.

When we accept that our belonging in our family system is guaranteed by fully taking our appropriate place in our family system, we free ourselves from the hold the entanglements have on us. From this place, we can acknowledge all members of the family with full honor and respect, allowing in a deep knowing that everyone belongs, no matter what. This is a profoundly important part of how we can bring peace and healing to every member of every family, including ourselves because when we heal ourselves, we heal the entire family bloodline.

The first time I heard this explanation of the principles behind the work from my Family Constellation therapist, Eve, I was a bit bewildered yet eager to learn more:

"You mean to tell me that I am suffering in my life as a form of misdirected love in an attempt to heal the past, which isn't possible, and also to try to belong, which is already a certainty?," I said, shaking my head in disbelief. "That doesn't seem like the best use of my time," I mused.

"Yes, that's exactly what you and all of us, are doing in the deepest recesses of our subconscious minds," Eve responded.

"OK, so I'm carrying burdens from the past but they don't belong to me at all?"

"Precisely. Because you love your family so deeply, you subconsciously agree to take on their suffering."

"Honestly, that seems a bit rude. I mean, it's like I'm expressing through my actions that they can't handle it or aren't strong enough to cope."

"Yes, I suppose it is a bit rude," she laughed.

I questioned, "If I suffer in my life now, which doesn't actually take away the suffering of my great-grandmother, then aren't I actually creating more of the pain in the family soul system as a whole?" A wave of sadness passed over me.

"Yes, you're exactly right," she replied gently. "Your soul's prayer goes something like this:

Dear great-grandmother, I will be the one who suffers in this lifetime so that you would never have had to suffer in your life. I do this because I love you and want to heal the wounds within our family system. I do this out of deep loyalty to our family soul, which guarantees my belonging and, therefore, allows me to stay safe and alive. My deepest desire is that if I can take on your suffering, then there is hope that all the generations who come after me can be free from similar trauma, illness, distress, unhappiness, hardship, and pain. I will give my life to this purpose because when those who came before me are healed, I will be healed too; then we may all (including my children) be able to embrace life more fully and live with a heart full of love, peace, and unity."

"Wow, that's strangely beautiful," I replied. "But wait...does that mean I'm completely screwed? I mean, I can't change what happened in the past, so am I forever sentenced to the pain?" I was starting to feel a bit trapped and hopeless, as if my free will had just been taken from me.

With a soft chuckle, she replied, "Not at all, quite the opposite, really. Coming to realize what your subconscious mind has been up to for so long is the first step to being able to change the pattern and let go of the burdens you carry in your life that don't belong to you. Family Constellation work is the most effective way I know of to release these

ancestral entanglements so you can access the fullness of your life. When you reclaim the love you were putting into what you now realize is an impossible task, it comes back to you in such beautiful and magical ways. I, for one, am looking forward to seeing what you do with it in your life because I know it will be something special." She beamed a smile in my direction.

"I feel lighter already in just acknowledging that," I replied in relief. "And now I feel really drawn to setting up my own constellation to give back what isn't mine and create a life that's guided by love rather than fear. Is that a possibility?" I asked, wiping the remnant of a tear from my cheek.

She replied with a kindness that opened my heart just a little more than it was before. "Yes, I'd be honored to walk that path with you."

At that time, I was a senior executive working at a large biotech company based in San Francisco, California. I was at the peak of my corporate success, having worked my way up the corporate ladder from my early days in the lab doing genetic research. I'd worked hard, channeling my competitive spirit and goal-oriented nature into my career, and it had paid off. My lifestyle matched the big salary I was earning with a shiny new car, regular travel on our corporate jet, and a house I'd purchased completely on my own. The drawback was that I was always striving for the next goal, seldom taking time to rest, and I soon found myself in a state of burnout. The hard work that was necessary to create a successful career was now beginning to stifle my personal happiness.

When a long-term relationship ended suddenly, and I no longer had the energy to compete in the endurance racing I'd enjoyed so much because it helped me find perspective, my emotions began to overwhelm me on a fairly regular basis. I was smart enough to recognize something wasn't quite right, but I couldn't put my finger on precisely what it was, which is why I paid close attention to that chance meeting that happened with Eve. She gave me an important message at the exact time I was looking for it.

I'd learned to trust these synchronicities in life, so I began to reflect a little more on what made me happy in life and what didn't. I noticed how little happiness I actually felt working in my current career, even though I was good at it. When I searched for where my passion for work was, I realized I was much happier working with clients as a holistic therapist, which I was doing on the side as time allowed. It caused me to remember my childhood desire to become a doctor because I wanted to help people heal. I originally got my degree in Biology with the intention of applying to medical school but later changed my mind when I found I just couldn't stand behind the traditional medical model of diagnosis and pharmaceutical treatments. It seemed more limited than what I knew true healing to be. Going into research was the next best option for me, where I could focus on healing people by providing scientific knowledge to the world.

I began to wonder, if I wasn't happy in my work, then why was I so driven to succeed in it? If my passion lies elsewhere, then what was fueling me to stay in my current career? The simple answer was fear — fear of not having enough and not being good enough. I soon found myself back in conversation with Eve. I explained my realization and wondered if she could shed some light on it from the ancestral perspective.

"I think my success is driven by fear," I admitted on a warm summer day, as we sat looking out the window together, drinking a cup of tea.

"Fear is an extremely powerful motivator," she nodded. "But the problem with that strategy is that it's not sustainable in the long term; it will catch up with you eventually."

I nodded in agreement. "Yeah, I think I'm at that point. I'm pretty burned out," I admitted with a sigh. I felt like everything in my life was unraveling, crashing down, and exploding all at the same time. I had lost the connection to my inner knowing that had previously brought clarity for what my next steps should be. No matter what I did, I couldn't shake the growing fear of failure that threatened to drown me.

"That's good that you can acknowledge that," she said encouragingly. "You have to be able to admit there's an issue before you can begin to heal it. Are there other areas of your life where you feel fear is a bigger player in your decisions that you might like it to be?" she continued. "You can tell there is an ancestral component to the stress if the same experience or emotion shows up in multiple contexts in your life."

"Yes, actually, I can see how the same fear plays out in my romantic relationships, too."

"How so?" she asked, turning toward me to listen more carefully.

"Well, my current pattern in relationships is that I choose unavailable men. It never works out, for obvious reasons, and it always makes me feel afraid that I'm not good enough or loveable. Or, if they want to commit to me, I can't reciprocate the commitment because I'm afraid they won't be enough for me in the long term," I explained.

"It sounds like you've done work in this area before. That's a pretty self-realized statement," she said thoughtfully.

"Yes, I've been doing some personal growth work around this, but it doesn't seem to move me forward. I'm still a magnet for the same type of guy, which is pretty frustrating, but I can't seem to break free from it," I shared. My last breakup sent me into the tailspin of questioning every aspect of my life. I figured if I could release the suffering underneath my failed relationships, maybe this would help me in the other areas of my life as well.

Eve explained, "That's exactly how it feels when there are ancestral entanglements at play. You can't seem to break free from the situation because the deep loyalties and survival instinct to belong are attached to staying loyal to the suffering. I think it would help you if we set up a constellation on it. Would that be of interest to you?"

My curiosity was beginning to peak and I was excited to explore what might be at the root of my struggles. "Yes, I'd be open to that," I replied. As I began to understand the concept better, I was curious to know how far-reaching one piece of work could be. I asked, "Will working with the context of relationships also help my career issue as well? Or is that a separate constellation?"

"Good question," she said. "When we uncover and release the ancestral entanglements you carry in the context of relationships, it will also have a positive effect on releasing the same pattern for you in your career. I call this the holographic nature of the work; working each part affects the whole. Shall we schedule a constellation for you at my next group workshop?"

"Yes, I'd love that, thank you," I replied. I was excited but apprehensive since I really didn't have any idea what was in store for me. Could this work be the key to unlocking a happier future for me? Could it free me from the fear that had been motivating me? Would it be powerful enough to unravel decades of conditioning that I'd been living with and help me find true love? It would take some time, but I would find that the answer to all these questions was a resounding yes.

We met again the following weekend at a group Family Constellation workshop she was hosting. Having my own constellation done was exciting, terrifying, and surreal all at the same time. I remember being instantly fascinated by the process, while at the same time, extremely vulnerable about baring my soul to a room full of strangers who had gathered that day to participate.

From our previous conversations, we agreed the issue we would work with was to explore what was stopping me from finding a healthy, long-term relationship. With the issue clear at hand, Eve skillfully collected my family history, then chose participants from the group to be representatives for my family members. These representatives were placed within the circle of chairs where everyone was seated and asked to stand in the field and report on their experiences. What unfolded on the floor in front of me was something I'd never seen before.

The representatives were clearly themselves, yet also were expressing emotions, thoughts, and mannerisms in an uncanny way, capturing my family dynamic so precisely; I was astounded. How did they know that was how my mother held herself or how my father spoke or what their relationship dynamic was? How did my representative know where to stand concerning my parents, reflecting the truth of my part in the whole dynamic?

I watched in awe as Eve used words, movements, and positioning to draw out the hidden suffering in my family system, which allowed me to take my appropriate place in the structure, all the while, including everyone who was excluded with full honor and respect. As I sat there in a room full of people who were playing out my family dynamic before me with such devotion, unconditional love, and support, I knew at that moment that Family Constellation work was something truly extraordinary.

What transpired next was pure magic and brought the clarity I was seeking. As my constellation unfolded before me, I sat in disbelief as I witnessed what we discovered next. Two representatives laid on the floor — one representing me and the other for the ‘thing’ that kept me from finding my beloved. They faced each other, completely mirroring the other’s position, gestures, and expressions. (Representatives that lie on the floor are symbolic of not being alive or not accepting life.) As these two people laid at the feet of the representatives of my parents, Eve looked at me with a knowing gaze. She’d seen this dynamic many times in her career and named it the “womb twin dynamic.”

Womb twins are sole survivors of a twin or multiple pregnancy. Most commonly, the lost twin is miscarried within the first trimester without the mother’s knowledge. As soon as the words were spoken in the field, the representative for my mother collapsed, sobbing next to the lost twin, while the representative for my father stood stunned and disconnected. As I sat there, taking it all in, I began to feel seen in a way I had never been before.

I watched as Eve worked tenderly, straightforwardly, and adeptly to re-include this lost one so that both of my parents’ souls could finally acknowledge their loss. I felt a tremendous burden lift from my heart. What remained was a sense of wholeness — a knowing that I am indeed enough within myself. At that moment, every failed relationship I’d ever had suddenly made sense. The great loves in my life had been my manifestation of my lost twin, not my soulmate. The fear of being born without my twin had driven me to try to fill the empty place with material possessions, career successes, and monetary rewards. I had been waiting to find my other half before I would allow myself to fully live.

This was a game-changer for me. A whole new identity aligned with my soul's truth was now available and I didn't have to do anything but simply *be me*. The gift this piece of work gave me that day would transform my life forever.

Almost instantly, my life began to change. Straight away, I noticed my ability to stay calm in situations that used to cause me anxiety. The kind of men I attracted and chose to be in a relationship with were more available and I was able to commit deeply to them. I felt more solid and grounded as I accessed a deeper embodiment of my own essence. My self-confidence was restored, and I could fully trust my inner guidance once

more. The noise in my head, otherwise known as the monkey mind, fell silent. I was able to fully relax and recover from my burnout without feeling guilty or lazy. My future felt full of potential and my path began to unfold before me.

My life circumstances soon changed to catch up with the inner soul transformation I'd experienced. I was able to negotiate a deal to leave my corporate job with eight months full salary in my pocket as a thank you for my many years of dedicated service and hard work. I felt so supported by my ancestors to grant me the gift of time without having to worry about money. My wish for a career change came true, and I was able to step full-time into being a holistic therapist and facilitator. Lastly, all my relationships were doing better than ever.

In a follow-up conversation after my own constellation, I sat with Eve by the fire, sharing reflections on what had transpired. As I explored the work more deeply, I discovered that there are a few main movements associated with healing the family soul. She described them as the "big/little dynamic," "interrupted reaching out," the "victim/perpetrator," and "life's embrace." I asked her which movements we had done in my constellation the previous day. I was eager to find out if I could do more work since I'd found the first session so valuable.

Eve explained, "Mostly, I worked with the big/little dynamic because it was your first constellation and that is the foundational movement. The parents are the big ones and the children are the little ones — it's the order we arrive on the planet. It isn't appropriate for the little ones to take responsibility for the big ones and the suffering their souls may carry."

"That makes sense; it would be rude to do that," I mused, remembering our first conversation. "I can see why it's a foundational movement; it had an incredibly powerful effect on me."

"I'm glad you got to benefit from it," she replied. "Your system was really ready to make the move, which always helps bring change more quickly without a whole lot of drama."

"Yeah, the only drama I have now is in trying to get enough clients so my business can support me financially," I said. "I still have to dip into my savings for unexpected expenses. There seems to be an invisible limit to what I can earn in business for myself rather than when I'm working for someone else."

"That's interesting. Did anyone in your ancestral past lose a business, get swindled out of a family fortune, get cut out a will, or lose the family home?"

I went on to tell Eve the story of my grandfather, who was orphaned at a young age, and by the time he was old enough to claim the family fortune, the lawyer managing the estate had spent every last cent, leaving him with nothing. His mother — my great-

grandmother — made her fortune in real estate, only to lose it all in a shady investment deal. My father and his sister had a falling out after she took his share of their mother's inheritance, leaving him with nothing of the family estate.

“Those are indeed significant events that would cause you to become entangled in financial misfortune,” Eve explained. “I sense that you have turned that loyalty around a bit, though, where, instead of losing the fortune, you won't allow yourself to receive it in the first place. After all, you can't lose what you don't have.”

I was speechless. She'd hit the nail on the head. As she spoke, she had taken out a small wooden board and set small figurines on it representing each family member I had mentioned. This was a one-to-one format of doing constellations when you didn't have a group of people handy to set one up. I sat there captivated as she worked to release the ancestral entanglements I had around money.

“I like the balance I now feel in your masculine line,” she commented, “and now my attention is going to your maternal line. Given that your mother lost a child, experienced trauma in her own childhood, and then lost her mother at a young age, interrupted reaching out is going to be present for you. This will hinder your ability to receive any form of abundance.”

“Can you explain a little more about that?” I asked. She really had my attention now. What she said made perfect sense, and I could also feel it in my body. My heart ached, and tears began to fill my eyes. She noticed me trying to hold back the floodgates of my building emotions.

“It's ok,” she said. “Let the emotions flow; grief is one of the heart's emotions, and when it heals, sometimes tears are needed to let go and open your heart to love completely. Keep the breath flowing; it helps to move the emotion.”

She worked with the figurines on the board as she explained that interrupted reaching out is a soul movement (not a physical one) between mother and child after birth. When the child is separate from the mother's body, its soul reaches for the embrace of the mother. When this soul reach is met, the child's soul may then connect to life with the eternal love and support of their mother; however, if there is not enough of the mother's soul present to meet the reach of the child (due to her entanglements, lost children, or past trauma), the embrace is never realized, and the child stops reaching (thus the name).

My emotions went from a cathartic expression of grief to a tender vulnerability as she worked this dynamic using the board and figurines. I began to feel the heart-to-heart connection with my mother's soul as I was held in her soul's embrace. I longed for nothing in this place. I suddenly felt like I had everything I needed.

"I think that's a good place to leave it for today," Eve said, seeing the flush in my cheeks and fullness of my heart.

"There's one more movement I'd like to do with you after this piece integrates fully." I nodded in reply with deep gratitude for this work, her kindness, and skill.

Healing the interrupted reaching out pattern opened the doors to my business BIG TIME. My phone started ringing off the hook with clients wanting to work with me; I was being invited to give workshops, talks, and asked for interviews by newspapers, radio, and podcasts. The word about my holistic therapy business was now out there and I no longer had any problems filling my appointment book and workshops.

For the first time in my life, I was truly happy in my skin. I was working my passion, financially independent, and felt as ready as ever to settle down with someone and create a life together. That's when I met the man who I instantly recognized as a soulmate, and it was the icing on the cake! Looking back, I can see it was all a divinely orchestrated setup to bring me face to face with one of the darkest movements of the family soul, the victim-perpetrator pattern. It was a pattern I'd been acutely aware of in other contexts of my life over the years but couldn't release it thoroughly until it was a matter of true love.

The victim-perpetrator dynamic is one of the most common ancestral dynamics. It has to do with the events of the past where anyone was victimized or committed perpetration. We all have this energy somewhere in our past; it can show up as bullying, anger issues, abuse, victim mentality, bipolar disorder, autoimmune disorders, depression, anxiety, or other chronic illnesses.

Months later, I found myself back in the client chair for my next constellation session with Eve. I'd been sharing my successes with work and also my dismay in thinking I'd found "the one," but was now caught up in a web of lies, betrayal, and deceit. In my mind, the relationship was pretty stable until one day, everything changed when I found out what my partner had been up to behind my back. I was angry with myself for not seeing it sooner, saddened by what he'd done, and afraid of what he might do next.

"Fear, anger, and grief are the emotions associated with the victim/perpetrator dynamic," Eve pointed out to me. "Given your parents' ancestral makeup of Polish and German heritage, I'm not surprised you've got this running through you. The Holocaust is one example of a collective expression of this pattern. We'll need to work with this before we can do the last movement I had in mind."

Facilitating this pattern in the family constellation frame takes skill and experience, given the density associated with it. The key to healing it is to realize that all of these aspects are the same, meaning you can never have one without the other. Once these

are united in harmony, the dynamic loses its hold on the lives of those who are caught up in it.

I watched her work with the victim/perpetrator dynamic by standing in to represent each aspect herself, which is another way a facilitator can work in a one-to-one session. She stepped back and forth between the two aspects, reporting what she noticed and working with the feelings that came up for me. She adeptly worked until no animosity or tension remained between the two aspects and a complete sense of God-like love and unity filled the room.

"Now it's time for you to feel life's embrace" she said, standing in front of me, representing life. I stood in as myself. We stood facing each other, arms outstretched but not touching.

"I want you to really reach for me, your life. Reach with an open heart. I am a representative of all the aspects of your life. See me as the pure life force energy that I am. I am pure love, limitless joy, and divine harmony. I am all you seek, and my purpose is to be what you make of me. I am you. You are me. We are one."

With those words, I felt as if I'd been pushed forward, although no one was behind me, and I flew into the arms of life. The embrace was indescribable. I was so full of light that my worries, discomforts, and distresses faded to the furthest edges of my awareness. I realized at that moment that the best and most fulfilling way to be free from pain and suffering was to fill myself with the unconditional love of life force energy. Some might call this a moment of enlightenment or liberation. Once you experience it, you can never "unfeel" it. It changes who you are forever.

Life force energy is the most abundant kind of energy there is in the universe. It holds the fullness of every living being, while at the same time, is nothing but infinite potential until it is connected to a living soul who embodies it as their own. To access the fullness of life, we must free ourselves from the loyalties to our ancestral entanglements.

Family Constellation work is the most effective form of therapy I've come across that can do this in such a complete and lasting way. When you are free from these entanglements, the flow of love is restored so that you can welcome in all the abundance that life has to offer. For me, once I embraced life fully, the fear that had once been a constant companion no longer had power over me.

Instead of looking for love, I had finally *become* love. It was then that I was finally able to meet my beloved and realize it was someone I'd known all along. I fell in love instantly.

My beloved was me. Falling completely in love with yourself is the place where true empowerment lies. My heartfelt wish for you is that you may realize that this love is not to be sought; it's within you...where it has been all along.