Improving Upon Family Constellations

A Body Psychotherapy Model

Stephanie Scarminach

ABSTRACT

In the field of group therapy, Family Constellations is a practice that remains mysterious. This phenomenological group process has opened a great many emotional doors in family systems. However, there are numerous components in the practice that operate without considering therapeutic safety. While Family Constellation work has shown itself to be impactful, it neither prepares individuals to participate, nor does it conclude in a manner that supports the aftermath experiences of those involved. The approach discussed in this paper provides a theoretical layer that could be integrated into the Family Constellation model to combat this lack of structure, safety, and regulation for all those involved. This proposed model includes a number of body psychotherapy practices that support facilitators in using somatic interventions to create a stronger therapeutic container, track participant regulation, and successfully close the experience in a way that diminishes the potential for harm.

Keywords: Family Constellation, somatic, body psychotherapy, group process

T

his paper posits that the incorporation of body psychotherapy and somatic principles can increase the efficacy, safety, and ethical considerations of the existing Family Constellation model. Body psychotherapy principles that offer somatic intelligence provide the important safety net that is currently lacking in the classic Family Constellation model. These are necessary for facilitators to ethically hold space, for clients to receive the full potential healing from the practice, and for participants to be able to sufficiently develop and maintain healthy boundaries pre-, during, and post-participation. While Bert Hellinger claimed that writing about how the model works causes it to lose its vitality (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998, p. v), it is imperative to discuss how the addition of a strong somatic overlay advances the model’s ability to connect to the very lifeblood its founder spoke of. This article offers background for the Family Constellations model, its founder, and the psychotherapeutic practices most commonly associated with it. While there are critiques of the model and its founder, they will not be discussed at length. The Family Constellations processes, though important to understand, are not the focus of this paper. The focus is on how these processes may be improved by the addition of somatic theory and practices.

Literature Review

Family Constellations

For over three decades, family constellations have been used to take a more in-depth look at the unseen dynamics of family relationships (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998, p. xii). Fam-
family constellations are facilitated within a group format hosted with therapeutic supports (Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002). This particular type of processing touches on “trans-generational, phenomenological, therapeutic intervention with roots in family systems therapy, existential phenomenology, and the ancestor reverence of the South African Zulus” (Cohen, 2006). Bert Hellinger has been credited with originally developing the practice (Hellinger & Ten Hövel, 1999; Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998), and his name still remains strongly attached to family constellations (Cohen, 2006). While this method has little to no academic writing quantifying or supporting it, there are increasing numbers of case studies and compelling personal accounts that speak to its effectiveness (Lynch & Tucker, 2005; Payne, 2005; Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002; Stuart, 2005; Ulsamer, 2005; Cohen, 2006). In reference to this anomaly in supported research, Bert Hellinger focuses the question on the deeper inner workings of the human experience as a reminder to not “keep the peel and throw away the truth” (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998, p. xii).

Depending on the group, there can be 15 to 30 participants in a family constellation. Group members are asked by the client to be stand-in representations for members of their family of origin. Participants represent these members on a volunteer basis (Winnicka, n.d.; Talarczyk, 2011). The client physically places each representative somewhere within the room as the facilitator asks for minimal specific information about each family member regarding deaths, partners, and children. Often the spacing and facing of the family representations is quite significant and telling (Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002). After the placement of participants, the facilitator and client observe aspects of the family system through the client’s body language and participant selection (Winnicka, n.d.; Talarczyk, 2011). From there, the facilitator asks for the “here and now” experiences of participants in relation to their arising physical sensations (Harris, Stiefel, & Zollmann, 2002; Winnicka, n.d.; Talarczyk, 2011). The facilitator might shift the locations of some participants until the underlying issue appears to have untangled. Some facilitators will then ask the client to step into the new arrangement of the system, standing in the place of the individual who represents them. However, for some it is sufficient for the client to witness the movement (Winnicka, n.d.; Talarczyk, 2011). This describes the most classic practice as taught by its founder, Bert Hellinger. However, since Hellinger did not patent the method or techniques, facilitators are free to adjust the method to meet their own modalities. Hellinger believed the new wave of practitioners would expand upon the style, and thereby enhance it (Cohen, 2006).

Hellinger’s background with group psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, primal therapy, transactional analysis, and NLP (Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002) can all be seen when dissecting the structures of Family Constellations work. In addition to these more commonly known modalities is the influence of the Zulu tribe of South Africa (Meyburgh, 2009). Hellinger originally went to the Zulu tribe as a missionary, and after 16 years (Talarczyk, 2011), came away with the Zulu’s strong beliefs for the need to acknowledge ancestors and past generations (Meyburgh, 2009; Lawson, 1985, pp. 24–25; Cohen, 2006).

There have been a number of critiques regarding Family Constellations and Bert Hellinger’s methodologies (Talarczyk, 2011). These include the argument that the practice, at its base, is not psychotherapy. Nor is it systemic work, though it is often referenced as such (Talarczyk, 2011), as it is inconsistent with the theory and practice of systemic therapy (Talarczyk, 2011). This is due in part to the inexplicable phenomenology of participants (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998, p. xii) experiencing symptoms similar, if not identical, to the original family members. However, the sensations experienced by participants is a highly contested area of this practice that goes beyond the structural arguments. Additional critiques appear regarding Bert Hellinger’s orientation, including his 25 years spent in a convent, his missionary trip to the Zulu tribe (Talarczyk, 2011; Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002), and his white cis-gender identity (Cohen, 2006; Talarczyk, 2011; Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002). In addition, Hellinger’s commentary has been seen as challenging and at times disturbing. Hellinger’s explanations of the shock factor are also cause for critique, though they do challenge the individual to find truth within themselves (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998, p. ix). This applies to Hellinger’s orders of love precedence, inclusion, and balance (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998), which could be perceived as influenced by his many privileged identities, such as his religious background or gender (Cohen, 2006), which he discusses in many of his books (Talarczyk, 2011). Though important for consideration, this article will not further discuss critiques of the model. If the reader wants more information regarding the critiques of the model, please reference Talarczyk’s Family Constellation Method of Bert Hellinger in the context of the Code of Ethics for Psychotherapists (2011).

**Gestalt and Psychodrama Comparisons**

**Psychodrama**

Family Constellations has been noted to have major influences from psychodrama and Gestalt (Cohen, 2006). Speaking to the re–enacting process integral to psychodrama, and the very involved manner in which clients play within the process, Psychodrama's founder, Jacob Levy Moreno, has been famously quoted as “teach[ing] the people how to play God” (Moreno, 1985: 5–6, Wilkins, 1999). Psychodrama roles are described in vivid detail, and the client can switch and try on other roles in the group (Davies, 1976) and become a “psycho–dram–
atist” by embodying rather than intellectually learning (Wilkins, 1999). Psychodrama emphasizes action over verbalization (Davies, 1976; Wilkins, 1999), believing that by releasing emotional blocks through spontaneity, clients are led to new solutions for old problems (Jay, 1992; Wilkins, 1999). There is also space for discussion wherein the participants are encouraged to speak about their experience (Davies, 1976). The idea is to shift the client’s perception to deal with change (Jan Costa, 1995; Wilkins, 1999). Early forms of psychodrama appear similar to Hellinger’s model, although the action-based approach and emphasis on group member ego differs from the intuitive facilitator direction seen in Family Constellations (Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002).

The representatives in Family Constellations are placed with little to no information related to who or what they are representing (Crawford, 2013). They remain open to the unknown dynamics that will emerge when the client biases are reduced (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998, p. 75). In addition to minimal information about the arrangement of the family, and after the completion of the constellation, client and participants are encouraged not to reflect out loud (Harris, Stiefel, & Zollmann, 2002). It is important to note that unlike the acting encouraged by psychodrama, in Family Constellations, representatives are expected to feel strangers’ symptoms (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998, p. xii). Family Constellations remove the “drama” of Moreno’s practice (Cohen, 2006) to instead hold a larger space for hidden dynamics that need to be brought to light (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998, p. xii).

Gestalt

The Gestalt influence on Family Constellations (Cohen, 2006) can be seen by examining the principles and practices Gestalt teaches. Gestalt explains that “growth starts with conscious awareness of what is occurring” (Corsini & Wedding, 2014, p. 300), reflecting Fritz Perls’ personal beliefs and personality (Wagner-Moore, 2014; O’Leary, 2013). Gestalt is a process-based psychotherapy focused on the engagement of the client with their environment (Bowman, 1998, p. 106; Toman & Woldt, 2005), with an emphasis on the present moment, potentially even excluding the client’s background (Hendlin, 1987). The self-awareness that is the focus of most psychotherapeutic modalities is also the focal point of this orientation, with the addition of exploring the spontaneous, creative, deliberate way the self contacts its surroundings (Toman & Woldt, 2005; Yontef & Simkin, 1989; Meier & Boivin, 2011). The Empty-Chair and Two-Chair techniques are two of the more popular interventions (Hendlin, 1987; Meier & Boivin, 2011). In addition, Gestalt finds great importance in the nonverbal subtext (Corsini & Wedding, 2014, p. 318), teaching how the body communicates, feels, expresses, and hears the deeper meaning, offering a gateway to meta-awareness (Corsini & Wedding, 2014, p. 302; Yontef & Simkin, 1989; Meier & Boivin, 2011).

It is apparent that many Gestalt techniques have largely influenced Hellinger’s Family Constellation model (Cohen, 2006). In addition to the minimal information being requested of either the client (Hendlin, 1987) or Constellation participants (Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002), the current moment body awareness Gestalt offers can be seen in the present moment sensations dialogue of participants in Family Constellations (Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002; Winnicka, n.d.; Talarczyk, 2011). Gestalt’s focus on spontaneity (Corsini & Wedding, 2014; Toman & Woldt, 2005; Yontef & Simkin, 1989; Meier & Boivin, 2011) is seen in the spontaneous way the ancestral lineage and hidden dynamics appear in Family Constellations (Bradway, 1979; Kalff, 1980; Cohen 2006). While similarities appear, and Gestalt styles of group therapy are practiced around the world (O’Leary, 2013), the phenomenon of representatives experiencing in their own bodies what other individuals they do not know have experienced is unique to Family Constellations (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998).

Satir Family Systems

Family Constellations is grounded in the clinical study of Virginia Satir’s family systems therapy (Cohen, 2006). Satir’s work has been closely associated with parts work and the practice of role-playing internal dynamics among the parts of the self. This is useful for self-development (Carlock, 2015), as well as for family reconstruction and understanding the effect of family systems on the individual within (Banman, 2002). As a pioneer of the family therapy movement (Banman, 2002), Satir’s model teaches that children define themselves through the lens of their parents (Satir, 1998). The model shows how toxic the “shoulds” within a family system can be, shedding light on how children are led to believe that in order to be loved they should show up in a specific way and attempt to live based on the “shoulds” of their environment (Satir, 1998). Satir believed this “should” symptom was the cause of an individual’s unique experience of oppression. She saw that their innate life energy was displaced and surfaced in their physical symptoms or challenging behavior (Satir, 1998). She offered the perspective that those with this energetic conflict experience deprivation caused by the pressures of their family “should,” and by the fact that they know no other way to express their internal energetic struggle (Satir, 1998). Her model’s approach is systemic, and offers transformative depth work that can be effectively done within a short time frame (Banman, 2002).

The Family Constellations approach offers a way to see how our family systems operate (Edward Lynch & Tucker, 2005), and the way the group consciousness and dynamic affects and touches each individual (Hellinger & Ten Hövel, 1999). The approach shows Satir’s distinct influence (Cohen, 2006), wherein a system’s complexities can be untangled and have life breathed back into them and the individuals involved (Edward Lynch &
Tucker, 2005). Family Constellations approaches family dynamics in the way a flock of birds moves together. While a single bird might turn in many directions on its own, the flock turns as a whole, and the single bird becomes subject to the flock. Through this acceptance of submission to the greater whole, individuals maintain their place with the system (Hellinger, Weber, & Bäumont, 1998), believing they should turn with the flock. Family Constellations is a short model, lasting one to two hours at most with an immediate debrief (Stiefel, Harris, & Zollmann, 2002), just as is Satir’s model (Banman, 2002). Although the manner through which constellations are conducted might not be considered psychotherapy, it is recognized and considered to be a systemic model (Basinski, n.d.; Talarczyk, 2011).

Body Psychotherapy

Body psychotherapy is a complex modality with therapeutic practices that stem from disciplines presented by Freud (Rolef, 2014), and from bodywork modalities presented by Reich (Johnson, 1995; Rolef, 2014). It is known as a somatic methodology wherein the body and mind develop an interwoven relationship. One of its basic principles is embodiment, indicating that we are alive in our bodies (Rolef, 2014). Reich connected the Freudian id with the autonomic nervous system (Carroll, 2002), which led to the teaching “I am body mind among other body minds, therefore I am.” Body psychotherapy offers a way of unifying the psychic and the somatic (Reich, 1942; Rolef, 2014). In more recent years, the body’s experience of the world has been given even more weight with the argument that without connection to the body, there would be no connection to the world or to experience (Judith, 2004; Rolef, 2014). This has been elucidated through the memory’s reliance on the nervous system, synapsing between the brain and points in the body (Rothschild, 2000). When the link between proprioception and the kinesthetic sense became apparent, body psychotherapists were able to make the connection between memory and body (Rothschild, 2000), bringing to light the concept of body experiences stored in sensory and emotional ways such as images, sounds and sensations (van der Kolk, 2015). In body psychotherapy, the engagement of the body as a tool to contact and calm the nervous system allows clients to process their trauma, rather than relive it (van der Kolk, 2015). Many of these somatic phenomena are seen in Family Constellations work. While there is not much research supporting this connection, the following section will provide the missing link.

Applied Theory

The proposed model is an addition to the current original theory of Family Constellations as taught by Bert Hellinger (Manné, 2009). Family Constellations can gain a more stable container with the addition of structure, using body psychotherapy tools such as supportive opening and closing practices and titration guidelines. Increasing awareness and tracking would provide a new level of safety to each section of the constellation. This author’s proposed somatic model outlines three key additions to create this safety framework: 1) setting the container, 2) a titration practice during the constellation and, 3) closing the container to complete the experience. To demonstrate how the model could be implemented, these are interwoven into Hellinger’s current model (Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classic Family Constellation Format (Manné, 2019)</th>
<th>Added Body Psychotherapy Structure – in italics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the issue</td>
<td>Setting the container</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing representatives</td>
<td>Establishing the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting up the constellation</td>
<td>Setting up the constellation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working to resolution</td>
<td>Working to resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacing representative with client</td>
<td>Replacing representative with client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing ritual</td>
<td>Closing ritual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.
Somatic Structure

1. Setting the container

Introducing somatic groundwork is imperative when asking clients to delve into potential traumas. Basic body awareness techniques give participants and clients the ability to track, pause, and engage in states of arousal while still keeping themselves regulated (Rothschild, 2000). This begins with creating a safe environment (Cornell, 2013), which, in a constellation, can be introducing an active group warm up. Though the format may vary, this must include guidance on how the individuals in the group can focus on their personal felt sense (Cornell, 2013) and somatic experience. This establishes a baseline sensation of self that client and participants can remember and return to during and after the constellations. Using body awareness as an anchor helps participants identify their specific sensations in order to differentiate themselves from the group experience (Rothschild, 2000). This will become extremely important once the constellation is underway, as constellations often delve into a family system’s lived trauma (Ulsamer, 2005; Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998; Hellinger & Ten Hövel, 1999). While facilitating such an opening, the facilitator should engage in their own somatic awareness as well. This tracking of self allows facilitators to come to know their own countertransference (Page, 1999) so that when it arises, they may recognize it as their own, and return to the client’s needs (Martin, 2016). The intensity and risk of constellations require a higher level of self-compassion on the part of the facilitator, but the danger in this need is that they may become authoritarian in their direction (Ulsamer, 2005). By facilitating a somatic opening, the intent is for the facilitator to be aware of what their body is saying so that they may track and care for their own body while facilitating (van der Kolk, 2015), and minimize the potential for projection and subsequent harm.

Failing to integrate a somatic intervention in setting the initial container is a disservice to the client and participants. A container offers edges wherein the clients may delve into vulnerable territory while maintaining a feeling of safety (Martin, 2016; Cornell, 2013; Rothschild, 2000). Creating a container builds a structure that can support the intensity of opening traumatic experience and memories without as high a risk of re-traumatization (Cornell, 2013; Rothschild, 2000). When the facilitator sets the container by opening with a somatic activity, a space is created where clients develop trust for the facilitator, themselves, and their own felt sense (Cornell, 2013). Creating a container also sets up the practice itself; how much can be brought into the room greatly depends on the container set up by the facilitator (Cornell, 2013). When the facilitator develops and upholds this somatic structure as they introduce participants and clients in the practice, they create a group that will be able to report back more direct, specific, and authentic reflections (Cornell, 2013), rather than convoluted personal projections.

2. Titrating representations

One the container is set, the client’s constellation focus is established, and representatives are chosen to participate in place of the client’s family members (Manné, 2009). After choosing representatives, the client will arrange the physical placement of each one in relationship to the others. When the client steps back, the representatives will often begin to have sensations and experiences similar to the family member they are representing (Ulsamer, 2005; Harris, Stiefel, & Zollmann, 2002; Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998). This embodied experience is part of what makes Family Constellations so effective; without the energetic body processing of a traumatic event, its effects will remain attached (van der Kolk, p. 184, 2015) to the family system (Faust & Faust, 2005). It is in these moments that somatic titration becomes extremely important. When stepping into a representation, participants place themselves into someone else’s shoes, so to speak, and become subject to whatever experiences that might entail (Manné, 2009). Participants are prone to have body experiences, sensations, and feelings that are not their own as a result of stepping into the field (Manné, 2009; Ulsamer, 2005; Harris, Stiefel, & Zollmann, 2002; Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998). This can be extremely risky if a participant does not understand somatic titration to self-regulate in and out of the experience (Rothschild, 2000; van der Kolk, 2015). If individuals are hyperarsoused, they are not able to vocalize or integrate the experience (van der Kolk, 2015), but by asking clients and participants to track their sensations, they maintain a gauge by which they can self-regulate (Rothschild, 2000).

Participants, clients, and facilitators who track their sensations will be more likely to notice if they are within their window of tolerance, and if not, to engage in self-regulatory activities such as focusing on breathing and non-activating sensations (Cornell, 2013; Martin, 2016). This requires a heightened awareness from all parties. Engaging in titration offers participants in particular an additional tool to observe the experiences they have as representatives, and their personal place in relationship to the constellation (Rothschild, 2000).

It must be noted that the facilitator should be tracking the emotional movement of the client and participants in relation to the constellation, reminding those involved to slow down or pause so as to maintain the structure and safety of the container (Martin, 2016). In addition to directing the constellation, the facilitator’s engagement is demonstrated through reminders and management of the titration, thus communicating their continued presence and holding of the container, and allowing client and participants to trust that they are held (Martin, 2016). This enables client and participants to remain with the representation experience without becoming overwhelmed, and ensures their ability to separate from it afterwards. In order to remain present with challenging material and not lose themselves...
in the experience, participants must oscillate in and out of the experience and stay within their window of tolerance (van der Kolk, 2015). This offers the layer of safety needed for participants to feel safe in their bodies so they can sort and translate the experiences into language without becoming overwhelmed or enmeshed (van der Kolk, 2015).

3. Closing the container

By using somatic titration of the sensations experienced in a constellation, participants are less likely to take home the direct sensations after the constellation has ended. This “take-home” issue is mitigated through a more expansive window of tolerance gained from titration techniques, as discussed above. Both client and participants may have a challenging time “leaving” the representation and experience behind, and may inadvertently take portions of the experience with them in the form of transference and projection (Benz & Chartrand, 2015). This can show up in many ways, but one example is a client continuing to see participants as representatives even after the completion of the constellation. They may have a desire to engage and interact with participants as if they were still in the experience. While Hellinger teaches variations of closing rituals (Manné, 2009; Ulsamer, 2005), such as final statements and turning physically away from the encounter (Manné, 2009), incorporating an additional piece wherein client and participants are facilitated back into their own awareness and somatic sensations would offer a more tangible and supportive closing structure. By returning to the personal body sensations established in the opening container, client and participants are able to return to an anchor that was established at the start (Rothschild, 2000). After the constellation is complete, the facilitator should offer an experience of tracking a here-and-now sensory activity, which, as Rothschild (2000) writes, is a “current time activity.” The initial established container now acts as a return point during the closing activity, a tether that client and participants can use to return to their somatic sensations, allowing them to “apply the brakes” (Rothschild, 2000) and separate from the experience. It offers the deeper knowing that they do not have to remain in the constellation experience, a reminder that it was simply information (van der Kolk, 2015) rather than take-home sensations. The clear differentiation from the constellation experience, and the recognition of a need for a personal landing place is a gap in constellation work this model addresses.

Bringing client and participants back to the sensations they identified earlier helps them distinguish between the momentary experience of the constellation and the personal self-awareness they want to take home. The client should take home the experience of the constellation, while participants must separate from it. The somatic emphasis on the body allows client and participants to recognize the separation between themselves and the representation so as not to impose their own at-

Limitations of the Model

This model requires facilitators to reflect on their personal somatic markers and develop a more attuned sense of self. Active facilitation requires engagement, concentration, feeling, and attuned empathy (Martin, 2016), making this subjectively intense work. The somatic tracking of a constellation also demands an additional level of attunement with client and participants (Martin, 2016), as well as additional time before and after the constellation when giving individuals the space to connect or reconnect with themselves. While facilitator bias cannot be avoided, as seen in critiques of Hellinger’s style and model, (Cohen, 2006; Hellinger & Ten Hövel, 1999; Talarczyk, 2011), somatic tracking and integration invites higher levels of reflection regarding countertransference (Rothschild, 2000; Cornell, 2013; Page, 1999).

This model did not delve into the phenomenological effects of constellation work (Cohen, 2006; Hellinger & Ten Hövel, 1999; Manné, 2009; Ulsamer, 2005), and it can be difficult to believe that anything will change in the family system without having conversations with the individuals who are part of it. Hellinger and his students have written extensively about the phenomenological method (Manné, 2009); for more information regarding this, please reference The Healing Power of the Past (Ulsamer, 2005).
Conclusion

Body psychotherapy and somatic sensations show that when we follow the sensory pathways to our internal experience, our system begins to change (van der Kolk, 2015). By experiencing an issue from the vantage point of directly and physically engaging in the constellation, our bodies have the chance to experience a different kind of interaction within a system, thus allowing us to embody the new way of being (van der Kolk, 2015; Rothschild, 2000; Cornell, 2013). This Family Constellations theoretical model offers a body-focused orientation that brings a new level of integration to clients, participants, and facilitators. It requires distinct tracking of what is happening in the moment (Martin, p. 239, 2016), which keeps all involved within a safe window of tolerance (van der Kolk, 2015; Rothschild, 2000; Cornell, 2013). The opening and closing containing activities act as anchor and tether, giving the client a sense of the edges of the therapeutic container, and how somatic titration can keep their body regulated. The facilitator’s responsibility in holding such a delicate space in the uncovering of trauma has previously gone undiscussed in relation to constellation work. This model addresses that gap, as well as offers support to clients and participants to directly track and regulate themselves. These containing activities offer a concrete solution for what has been missing in Hellinger’s model. Family Constellations is seen to have a powerful and impressive impact on clients and participants (Ulsamer, 2005; Hellinger, Weber, Beaumont, 1998; Hellinger & Ten Hövel, 1999). By engaging body sensations and maintaining new levels of security, participants, clients, and facilitators can all engage in constellations with increased awareness, safety, and a reduced potential for harm.

Stephanie Scarminach

Stephanie Scarminach is a practicing Somatic Psychotherapist and Coach who’s approach to healing and mental health integrates the body’s wisdom and family dynamics. Her time working with Family Constellations at the California Institute of Relational Constellations peaked her interest in family systems, and she pursued a MA in Somatic Counseling from Naropa University which she completed in 2019. In the past year, she worked with teen boys struggling with addiction and found great success integrating the somatic approach. She now has a private practice and hopes to continue expanding her work with family systems in the coming year.

REFERENCES


Herman, J. L. (2015). Trauma and recovery: the aftermath of violence; from domestic abuse to political terror. New York: Basic Books.


