*A close-up of a red and black text

Description automatically generated*

**Family Constellations for Couples: What it Can and Cannot Do**

**Welcome!** Family Constellations work can be hugely beneficial for couples. Constellations brings to our awareness what might be unconsciously behind our patterns as couples. Because of this, they can be really revealing and inspire greater compassion and understanding between couples. Nonetheless, it’s useful to know the limits of what constellation work can and cannot do.

First, however, it’s important to understand I am NOT a couples therapist. I do not do relationship coaching, help with better communication skills, work through conflicts, etc. I honor professionals who do that work, and if you have not tried it yet, and your relationship is having considerable conflict, I recommend trying that.

**The Kinds of Issues Family Constellations with me can be good for:**

* Exploring with curiosity some of your patterns in the relationship, as long as they are not hugely triggering ones.
* Dealing more helpfully with in-laws and other extended relatives.
* Coming together as a partnership to help minor children.
* Dealing with the ways life can place stress on a relationship that is otherwise working pretty well: illnesses, unemployment, etc.
* In preparation for marriage, as a means to get to know each other’s ancestral lineages.

**What Family Constellations with me is not good for:**

* Resolving seriously incompatible worldviews or ways of understanding the world.
* Lowering the intensity of conflict when there is a lot of easily-prompted blame and unresolved hurt.
* When there is active abuse taking place in the relationship.

Therefore, for a couple that is having considerable conflict, having a constellation together is not the recommended first step in addressing it. A couple needs to come to the experience more or less as a “team,” or in “partnership.” They don’t need to be in complete agreement (that’s impossible!) and there can be low-level conflict, but if the two of you have seriously different world views or are managing serious conflict, Constellation work is not the best option.

**My Professional Limits:** In light of the above, here are my limits as a Family Constellations practitioner (not a Couples Therapist!) when considering whether to work with a specific couple:

* This is not a place to either re-enact arguments that you already do as a couple, to try to make me an advocate for one side or the other, or to finally achieve a sense of justice about a hurt you’ve been on the receiving end of. These are all understandable needs or temptations. However, if this kind of pattern seems pretty likely, I am unlikely to be in service to you, and I will decline the request for Family Constellations work with me. I recommend finding a high quality couples therapist instead.
* Both of you need to be “on board” 100% with doing this kind of work together with me. If one of you is participating simply because they were asked by the other, or the other seems to need it, but you yourself don’t like much about Family Constellations work or feel drawn to it, and you are just trying to be “a good sport,” this will not work – indeed, it will only reinforce the impression of incompatibility. Again, if this is the case, I am likely to decline the request for Family Constellations work with me.

**Individual Work Instead:** Finally, if you want Family Constellations help, but maybe as a couple it’s not the right fit (given the above), I invite you to consider seeing me individually. This can often be helpful. For instance, if you want to take a look at the dynamics that you’ve brought into the relationship from your family, then this can often be very helpful. Even better is if both of you want to do this, but not at the same time (separate sessions). There is a possibility that if you both feel that that has been sufficiently helpful, so that now doing a session together would be possible without the issues above that I’ve named, then we can consider doing work as a couple together.