

*The early period from 2000 onwards was very much dedicated to understanding what it meant to be a Helper or Facilitator of Constellations. The article below was written by Bert Hellinger and passed on to me in 2003 around the time that he held one of his few workshops in London. On the occasion he gave an introductory talk on 'The Art of Helping'. In the same year his book 'Die Ordnungen des Helfens' was published in Germany by Carl Auer.*

*The article describes beautifully and concisely the essence of systemic thinking in relation to constellation work and the ground rules of practice as helpers.*

Jutta ten Herkel  
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## The Orders of Helping

- How does psychological disturbance occur?  
It occurs when we are cut off or in conflict with someone – usually this is with one or both of our parents.
- What is the solution?  
To join together what has been separated.
- What is required of the helper?  
A helper needs to be:
  - i. in touch with their own parents and ancestors.
  - ii. in touch with their own fate and personal guilt.
  - iii. in touch with their own mortality.

## What is Helping?

- Helping is an art, it is a skill to be learned and practiced.
- Helping is not possible without insight and perception of what is appropriate.
- Helping is an understanding that goes beyond, into something greater and all-embracing.

## Helping as Balancing Out

- Helping is good for others and for the helper.
- Helping tends to be mutual, it balances the relationship. Balancing is not possible between parents and children as parents give and children take - the balancing out in this relationship comes through honouring the gift of life - we can pass on what we have received.

## Giving and Taking

- Giving and taking occurs on two levels:
  - i. between equals - and here it requires mutuality.
  - ii. between parents and children, or those in authority and those over whom the authority is held. This kind of relationship is on a different level, here giving and taking is like a river that carries with it all that is within it. This kind of giving and taking is the greater of the two. A consciousness of the future is inherent.
- Helping presupposes that we have first received and taken for ourselves what we need, as only then can we have an altruistic desire and the strength to help others, especially when much is demanded of us. Helping also presupposes that those who we wish to help actually want and need what we are able to give. Otherwise our attempts at helping will separate rather than connect us.

## The Archetype of Helping

The archetype of helping is the relationship between parent and child, above all the relationship between mother and child. Parents give and children take. In the relationship between parents and children the expectations of children and the willingness of parents to fulfil them are both necessary and in order.

But this works only as long as the children are small. As they grow up parents begin to set limits by which the children can mature and against which they test themselves. Many children get angry with their parents at this point because they would prefer to maintain the original dependence. But as the parents withdraw little by little, and in this way also disappoint their children's expectations, they help them to relinquish their dependence and gradually become self-reliant. In this way they begin to take their place in the adult world and change from people who take into people who give.

## The First Order of Helping

We only give what we have and only expect what we need. It is important to recognise the limits to giving and taking. It is part of the art of helping to recognise, acknowledge and respect these limits.

**Disorder:** When we try to give what we don't have or when someone expects or demands what we can't give, for instance when someone tries to take something on for another person that only they can and must carry for themselves.

## The Second Order of Helping

Helping furthers both survival and growth. Both are determined by inner and outer circumstances. These have to be respected. This is particularly true for inner circumstances, such as tasks that are personal to us. Entanglement in the fate of others and blind love (under the influence of conscience) is in the sway of magical ideas.

Many helpers wish to help not because the person concerned has asked for help but because they cannot stand the situation. The other may then allow this situation nonetheless but the allowing comes from an internal pressure or a desire to help the helper. Thus, helping is transformed into taking, and receiving help becomes giving.

The second order of helping requires that circumstances be respected and interventions only go as far as circumstances permit. This form of helping is restrained and has strength.

**Disorder:** When helping denies circumstances instead of facing them side by side with the client. Helping in spite of the prevailing situation weakens both the helper and the person who is expecting help.

### The Third Order of Helping

Many helpers are in danger of entering into a parent-child relationship with their clients. Equally, many who look for help expect their helpers to treat them as parents do their children in the hope that they will get something that they are still longing for and expecting from their own parents. Both helpers and clients can get caught in this paradigm. As helpers we have then to slowly withdraw to avoid remaining in a transference relationship. A relationship based on the parent/child relationship model hinders the development of the helper.

There are situations however when it is appropriate to stand in for the parents for a short time. For instance, when an early interrupted movement has to be completed. But, unlike transference, the helper in this case represents the real parents and does not set himself up as an improved substitute mother or father. In this way the client does not have to free him or herself from the relationship later on. The helper leads the client to his or her parent with love. By working with respect for the real parents and being in accord with them and their fate the client is able to meet his or her parents in the helper. He can no longer avoid them.

The third order of helping is about confronting grown-up clients as adults and assisting them in accepting and respecting their parent's process and how they have lived their lives.

**Disorder:** When an adult is allowed to make demands on the helper in the manner of a child to his parent. When the adult is treated like a child and responsibility for things that he or she needs to shoulder or face alone are taken on by the helper.

### The Fourth Order of Helping

It is important to see the client not as an isolated individual but as part of a family system, which includes his or her ancestors. A helper needs to look at who in the family needs to be seen and acknowledged. The risk here is that the helper's sympathy with the system is seen as harsh by the client, especially if the client has childish expectation. Those who are seeking solutions as adults see the systemic method as liberating.

**Disorder:** When the people essential to the system are overlooked, particularly those who have been excluded. They hold the key for the solution. This may also include someone from outside the system who has suffered at the hands of someone from within a family system.

### The Fifth Order of Helping

Family constellations join what has been separated. They support reconciliation, especially with parents. Distinguishing between good and bad hinders reconciliation. Many helpers, who are influenced by their own conscience and by public opinion, similarly bound up by conscience, come up against this problem. If a client complains about their parents, helpers need to explain that this stance will lead to greater separation and disconnection rather than reconciliation and freedom. Reconciliation is giving every person a place in your heart and loving them as they are, no matter how different they may be from you. True helping is done without judgment.

**Disorder:** Judging others and taking on the superior moral stance that this position presupposes.

### Constellators in Relation to The Orders of Helping

As helpers it is necessary to work in a way that is in tune with the soul and fate. It is important not to be pulled by transference, but instead learn to respect all, especially the rejected. Helping requires a shift of perspective from what could be described as 'what I am against' to 'what love requires'.

Helping is about doing the least. It is not looking for completion but simply for movement – in this way the gestalt remains open. Helping involves placing a high level of trust in the client to manage what they are given.

Traditional therapy works with the relationship in the room as a resonating chamber – through this therapists merge and take on transference energies, which they can then reflect on. Therapists become the relevant other. They usurp the parents' role (for a while), which at times can inadvertently insult the parents and also undermine the capacity of the client to feel grown up enough to get on with life.

This way of working depends on us being seen as a helpful friend – transitory, impermanent, possibly wise, but mostly available to reveal what else is hidden in the field. We have to be detached enough to see and to report on what we see, rather than to build trust that pulls us into conscience group of the family of the client. Love equals seeing plus distance minus judgment.

This text was taken from an article by Bert Hellinger, extended and translated by Jutta ten Herkel and Sally Tomblason in 2003.