

# Step Into the Solution

by Rita Klemmayer und Dr. Petra Müller-Demary

Systemic structural constellations offer a wonderful method to look at concerns and problems in our our lives with new eyes. The method of systemic structural constellation was developed by Insa Sparrer and Matthias Varga von Kibed. It is based among others on the work of Virginia Satir (family sculptures), Milton Erikson (hypnotherapy), Heinz von Foerster and Umberto Maturana (radical constructivism), Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg (solution-focused therapy).

The setup of a system makes it possible to place the inner images and constructs, which we unconsciously have on a topic/problem, in space and thus consciously perceive an actual situation. Interaction patterns and connections in the system become visible and understandable. The body is used as a great "organ of perception".

Through suitable interventions it becomes possible to change one's perspective, to find new solutions and thus take steps in the desired direction.

Using systemic structural constellations is like using another language. There is a clear grammar of how the interventions are carried out and a big space to experiment with different options.

## **Procedure of a systemic structural constellation**

- After a solution-focused preliminary discussion, the central elements belonging to the topic/problem are defined with the client. These can be people, goals, resources, obstacles and much more.
- The client chooses representations which each stand as one element of the system and sets them up in space according to her intuition.

This first picture often gives already surprising and deep insights.

- In the next step, the representations are asked about their physical perception and their relationship to the other elements.
- In the third and last step, changes are made and the constellation is completed as soon as the representations of the client is in a resourceful position in relation to the topic.

## **Central Grammar of Systemic Structure Constellations**

- The work is solution-focused.
- The accompanying coach makes suggestions for change, the client or representations decide whether and how an implementation is appropriate.
- Different options for action can be tried out

- Every constellation ends when the client is in a resourceful state.

Important: In contrast to Hellinger's theory of family constellations, systemic structural constellations are based on the theory of radical constructivism. Every constellation reflects the inner construct of the client on the subject, not the objective reality. In other words: When an employee sets up a team the representations will take different positions and express different perceptions than when the same team is set up by the boss.

This assumption encourages the client to find new ways of solving the problem, because when an inner construct creates a problem image that changes into a solution image through the constellation, the perspectives and thoughts on the topic change as well. The door is open in order to act differently and more purposefully from these realizations.

Systemic structural constellations offer different formats and procedures for different topics. To name just a few, there are organisational constellations and family constellations, constellations for decision-making and for achieving goals.

### Micro Constellations

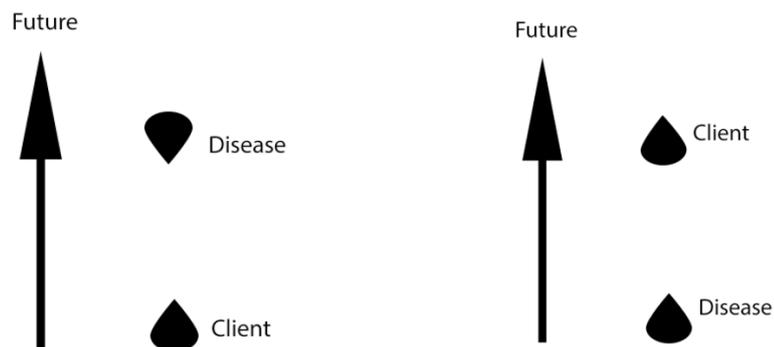
Micro-constellations have been developed to be used in individual coaching, therapy and counseling. The work gives the client the possibility to look at a topic from different perspectives, to change their perception, understand the dynamic in a system and to construct a new, more useful reality which enables them to deal better with the situation. Our body has the amazing ability of "representative perception". When we stand in a system we think, feel and act differently depending on our position. While the underlying factors causing us to act differently remain unexplained, we make use of them in the work for our clients.

Micro-constellations can be easily integrated into coaching conversations and add the dimension of space to our language. For example, when I am in a conflict with a partner about a specific project I might perceive the partner as standing opposite of me while the project behaves like an obstacle between us. My communication will be quite different then when I perceive my partner standing next to me with both our gazes directed *towards* the project. When we invite our client to take a look at the project from both positions by asking solution-focused questions in the different positions, we often unveil new insights in how to approach and solve the situation.



The constellation also gives us the opportunity to experiment with different options of interactions: we can explore the impact on the dynamics in the system and how the relevant elements might react. Especially in more complex situations, this gives a safe space to experiment and understand the impact our actions can have.

Constellations can also help us take a systemic view in our inner world. For example, I was working with a young woman who couldn't fully enjoy life. A couple of years ago she had suffered from a life-threatening disease and has now healed. Although the doctors told her she overcame the disease and had no risk of falling back, she still was very afraid to take action. When I asked her to position herself in the room and also give a place to the disease, she positioned it right in front of herself, blocking the view and taking all her attention. When I changed the position and placed the disease in her back, which in this case represented the past, it was visible how her whole body language changed. After assessing the relation to the disease through statements such as: "you belong to my past and I will now take care of my future", she turned her direction towards what symbolized the future, and we continued the session by exploring the shape of her next steps and signs of progress.



As coaches we work in constellations mainly with 2 kinds of interventions:

1. Positioning = changing the position of an element in perspective to another element (i.e. positioning the element of the disease from the future to the past position).
2. Process work = interaction between the different elements (ex. simulating dialogs, expressing recognition).

Both types of interventions can help the client to get better in contact with their resources or the desired outcome. For instance, I worked with a client who could not imagine how things might improve when something like a miracle would happen. As long as we were exploring this option just verbally in the coaching conversation this option was not accessible to her. When I asked the client to position the "miracle" in the room, she put it outside the room where she couldn't even see it. By going into the position of the miracle she could develop ideas how the miracle might function and what it would take to access it.

In other situations the position of the miracle can be a wonderful resource enabling the client to look at the topic from a fresh and new perspective. In the miracle state we are simply "at our best". Of course we invite the client to explore this world of the miracle in conversations and we all have this powerful ability imagining what can be. Inviting the client to literally "step into the miracle", involves the body even more. Micro-constellations are a great tool to use the power of our mind as well as the wisdom of our body.