

Stepping

A workshop exploring the complex dynamics of 'step' relationships in family systems

STORIES

With Vivian Broughton & Julia Vaughan Smith

The use of the prefix "step" - as in stepmother, stepfather, stepchild - is etymologically related to the word 'steep' - literally 'pushed out'. Historically a step-parent usually stepped into the place of someone who had died, but more recently, with a dramatic increase in partnership separations, a step-parent often steps into the place of a still living parent. Thus many family systems today are highly complex as parents separate and take on new partners, and children are forced to negotiate more complicated parental arrangements.

Such shifts in family systems play out at a behavioural level in the adjusting and forming of new relationships, but they also are informed and influenced by the much deeper, less conscious systemic dynamics of past systemic trauma, loyalty, guilt and betrayal that inform each person's ability to be present to the another. If not understood, these more subtle systemic dynamics can cause great disruption. Some questions we may work with could include:

- What might we learn, through the revealing processes of the constellations method, about the underlying dynamics and principles of these relationships?
- How does a step mother perceive her new partner's children?
- How does a later partner relate to the former?
- How do children make sense of these tectonic shifts and the resultant complex and conflicting emotions fuelled by loyalty issues?

In this workshop we will work with personal issues brought by participants to understand better some of these questions. Systemic Constellations has the ability to reach to the depth of an issue, providing insight and understanding to the most complex problems.

The facilitators are both step parents themselves, having experience of many of the difficulties commonly experienced. In addition Vivian is a systemic constellations facilitator and trainer with many years' experience of working in this way, and Julia combines an executive coaching and psychotherapeutic background and has been exploring the psycho-social dynamics of step families for many years.

6 & 7 March 2010 in Bristol.

Cost: £205, Earlybird price if paid by 1 Jan 2010: £170.

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