

When Hidden Loyalties Hurt Your Health

THERE'S NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN, SAYS ECCLESIASTES. Maybe that's true, but eye-opening connections have come to light recently between family ties and your overall health. And they will soon prove to be game-changers. The narrowly individual way we currently view and treat chronic suffering, whether emotional or physical, is only about half the story.

The other half is hidden loyalties—subconscious attachments to unresolved issues and events in your birth family's past. When these go unshifted, remedies too often fail, or else a chronic condition abates for only a while, before returning once again. You are the living expressions of a family system several generations deep that has typically been challenged in various ways. Here's what that can mean.

Breast Cancer: An older woman we'll call Dinah has already had one operation. But now doctors say growths are appearing again in both breasts. She has a tremendous fear of radical mastectomies. A look at her family history shows that, when Dinah was born, her mother had just lost a male child, and desperately wanted a boy. Everything—the blankets, cradle, and room—was already all blue. The story is Mom cried a lot for 3 days.

Of course, at puberty, it is budding breasts that make a “failed boy” finally, irrevocably obvious. So there is an unconscious sense in which Dinah's breasts were already, originally experienced as “unwanted growths.” Removing them would return her to the state where Mom could at least pretend. *Or so the subconscious childhood loyalty still believes.*

The unscripted psychodrama of a family constellation reveals this as a powerful dynamic, and, interacting with a representative for her recently deceased Mother--Dinah is able to repair this lack of love. Six months later, all signs of re-growth have disappeared.

Crippling Arthritis: Gregor's profession and lifelong love is gardening. Yet his swollen, deformed joints make it more and more difficult, especially in cold or damp weather. Various, increasingly aggressive treatments for this autoimmune disease have all failed.

A lost love, if it was deep and real, and especially if the lost person incurred a tragic fate—echoes down through the family system. Usually in some descendent a hidden loyalty will emerge. In this case, Gregor's mother was deeply in love with a soldier captured on the Russian

front. On learning that he had been sent to a gulag in the frozen wastes of Siberia, she despaired of his return and eventually married another.

After a constellation intake interview, a “blind” constellation looks into the possible connection between Gregor's condition and this family tragedy. Gregor stands representatives for himself, his mother, his father, and the lost love out on the floor—*without telling them whom they represent.* As their silent, intuitive movements unfold, Gregor's representative and the lost love end up facing one another with tear-filled eyes.

Gregor, who always tries to hide his deformed hands, is asked to stand now in the place of his representative. Once in place, he suddenly, openly, weeps. The lost love finds Gregor's gnarled hands and holds them for several minutes. A look of wonder comes into Gregor's face. Finally, his mother's representative comes over, moves him aside, and embraces her lost love herself. Afterwards, Gregor tells the facilitator that, during that handclasp, for the first time in 15 years—he felt no pain in his joints. A year later, his hands are not perfect, but still much better.

Anxiety and Depression: Claire has had bouts of mental illness since puberty. On and off of antidepressants, she comes to constellation work during another attempt to shake them. The intake interview is not that suggestive, and representatives for various combinations of parents and grandparents show little energy when placed on the floor. With the facilitator still in search mode, Claire recalls one last great aunt, Mary Claire, who supposedly died young.

Placed on the floor, the representative for Mary Claire seems about to collapse, when Claire's representative rushes over and holds her up. As the constellation ends, the facilitator says, “well—we don't know, but back then, when relatives were committed—in order to avoid the stigma, family members were often told they died.” Still, to be safe, he tries to clear any entanglement to this excluded ancestor.

Afterwards, Claire has a funny feeling about this. Over several weeks, she does research on Ancestry.com. Eventually, she finds the “smoking gun,” in the form of an institutional death certificate. It's dated 22 years later than the family believes great aunt Mary Claire to have died. Claire herself feels lighter. Building a life without the prescription drugs gets easier. ▲

Author's Note: For more health-related cases, see Stephan Hausner's *Even if Costs me my Life—Systemic Constellations and Serious Illness*. Not all chronic illnesses are anchored by hidden loyalties, but many are—and it's easy to find out which.

