

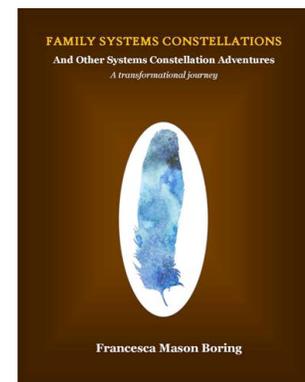
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BOOK REVIEWS

Francesca Mason Boring. *Family Systems Constellations and Other Systems Constellation Adventures: A transformational Journey.* All My Relations Press 2015. 336pp. No index. \$22

Francesca Mason Boring is a highly unusual person and therapist. She brings to her work the wonderful instrument of herself, including her own family constellation with Native American Shoshone roots, a Western education, many years of education and training and experience and teaching in family constellation work, and a keen mind that is firmly rooted in wholistic perspectives. She also has a great gift of pattern recognition, enabling her to see, describe and explain wholistic perspectives that can broaden and enhance psychotherapeutic interventions.



Family constellation therapy addresses the collective consciousness of a family, as manifested in the lives of individual family members. Manifestations of symptoms generated in individuals by stresses and traumas in other members of the family, often from previous generations, may include physical symptoms such as a pains in particular parts of the body of one family member; emotions such as depression or anger that originate from unresolved issues in previous generations; tensions or conflicts between individuals in one generation that reflect residual, unresolved conflicts from previous generations; and more.

The therapy is provided through the group process of participants in a workshop, guided by the family constellation therapist. People who are strangers to each other come together and, in turn, role-play the families of various group participants. The group's collective consciousness is activated to manifest and clarify the issues that are relevant to the family of each participant, in turn. This provides each participant with insights and healing interactions for the relevant issues that are causing their presenting problems.

Boring promises in her introduction, "This book is one which will support your journey, as a facilitator of family constellation, a healer who works in service to people, or a human being who has a feeling that a broader understanding makes sense, and you feel drawn to read this...even if you're not certain why." (p. 8) She generously delivers insights and examples that amply fulfill her promises.

Here are just a few of the many gems I found interesting and helpful in this book:

- Bert Hellinger is one of the principal founders and teachers of family constellation therapy. He points out that cognitive dissections of the constellation process following the group

experience may dissipate or vitiate the therapeutic effects of the insights and energetic shifts that are generated by the group. It is far better not to invest efforts in recalling what happened in the group, but to just let the insights and altered awarenesses percolate and manifest themselves in your life. (p. 18)

- Many of the problems people experience derive from entanglements that children experience in their families as they are growing up. The clarifications of such issues that are experienced in constellation therapy are best left to bring about their effects without analyses and dissections within the group. (p. 19)
- The group enables people to re-engage childhood experiences from the perspectives of an adult, thereby bringing about shifts in awarenesses and relationships.
- In groups of four, participants explore aspects of racism that have manifested in their families. (p. 94)
- Disease can be a manifestation of family issues, revealing past traumas and current tensions between family members. (p. 166)

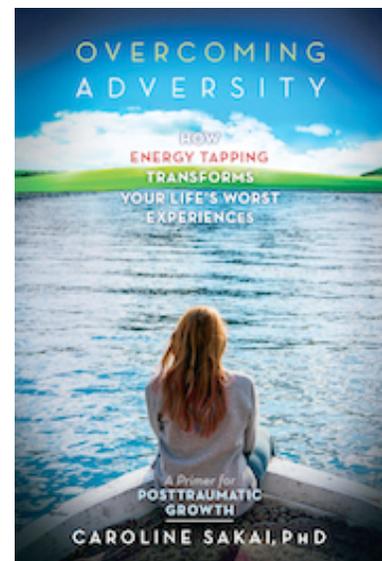
Technically, the book suffers from occasional oversights in editing, which at times may leave a reader unclear or confused about the materials that are presented. An index would also be helpful for readers who would like to revisit particularly interesting and helpful. These criticisms don't seriously diminish the enormous value of this book, which I highly recommend to anyone interested in broadening and deepening their understandings of family constellation therapy.

Review by Daniel Benor, MD
IJHC Editor-in-Chief

Caroline Sakai, PhD. *Overcoming Adversity: How Energy Tapping Transforms Your Life's Worst Experiences, A Primer for Posttraumatic Growth.* Fulton, CA: Energy Psychology Press, 2014. 203 pp. References and Resources 5 pp. No index. \$18.95

Caroline Sakai shares a treasure-trove of clinical examples of how Thought Field Therapy (TFT), an Energy Psychology technique, can help people with issues related to trauma, pain, fears, phobias, relationship challenges, and many other issues.

TFT involves tapping on specific series of acupressure points that are prescribed by the TFT practitioner in accordance with the problems being addressed. TFT has been confirmed to be effective in relieving varieties of problems, including physical and emotional pains, anxieties, phobias, self-image and relationship issues, and even severe post traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs) resulting from the genocide in Rwanda (e.g. see articles in this issue of IJHC by Suzanne Connolly and Jenny Edwards).



Sakai has a breadth and depth of experience as a TFT practitioner and instructor that enables her to provide detailed case histories that illustrate the range and depth of relief possible through the uses of TFT. Here are but a few of many examples:

In treating chronic depression it is common to find physiological symptoms of the depression that make it difficult for a person to function in their daily lives. "TFT can help with depression by reducing the physiological symptoms of increased muscular tension, rapid heartbeat, respiration changes, and looping resentful thoughts. Reducing irritability...can facilitate better acceptance of self and others, which in turn helps to decrease the isolation and aloneness that can compound depressive feelings." (p. 39)

Anette, an 11 year-old girl came for help after being severely traumatized by bullying in school. Sakai's interventions included resourcing Anette with positive awarenesses.

As she peeled away the layers of fearful experiences, her face broke out into a broad grin, and she felt she could be strong and follow strategies to be safer, such as not going alone into campus areas where she could be harassed. In subsequently working on peak performance... and imagining herself navigating on campus, she grinned even more broadly as she said she was braver than the bullies. She explained that as she visualized walking with a friend into the bathroom where the bullies gathered together often, she realized that they must be very insecure since they had to go around in packs and picked on children who were alone. (p. 68-9)

The deeply transformative potentials of TFT are illustrated in the case of Bud, a young man who had been incarcerated many times for severe temper problems. Bud was referred to Sakai for help with anger management. Though skeptical at first, Bud quickly was convinced of the benefits of TFT when he immediately experienced decreases in his anger through tapping the TFT algorithms. With the help of TFT and counseling he transformed from a 'rageaholic' and alcoholic to a model citizen who set the intention of helping others learn to control their addictions and rages. (p. 82)

What I found most impressive of all were the reports of child victims of the Rwanda genocide in 1994 who were able to release their severe PTSD symptoms very deeply and rapidly.

On our return visit a year later, on the anniversary of the genocide, we saw a transformation at the Rwandan Orphans Project. The children reported no flashbacks, nightmares, or rage, and said that they tapped themselves whenever they had problems. The teachers reported the difference TFT had made, with the children concentrating better without posttraumatic stress symptoms, and many had passed their competitive exams to go on to the regular secondary schools. Teachers reported marked reduction in anxiety, inattentiveness, aggressive behaviors, social isolation, and depression. They also told us that the children had higher self-esteem and increased self-confidence, leading to more assertiveness, creativity, and accomplishments... (p. 147)

Most importantly, Sakai suggests steps we can all take towards healing our world through uses of TFT. "Prevention of illness and the promotion of wellness would be the mainstays of our health care system. We would all be learning skills to enhance our health and well-being, rather than just relying on pills. We could reduce our health care treatments costs for illnesses that can be averted, prevented, or mitigated – including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer – and have more resources to utilize in education and programs for understanding lifestyle practices that enhance our nutritional well-being, physical movement optimization, psychological health, and spirituality... (p. 173)

A series of appendices provide details of steps involved in using TFT, and a surprising, brief review demonstrating significant effects of TFT when used for a broad range of problems in the context of an HMO setting more than fifteen years ago.

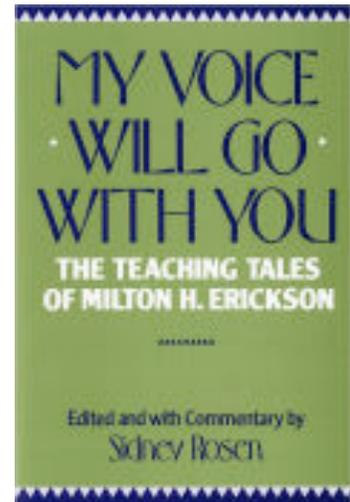
This book is very highly recommended for healthcare practitioners and for people seeking help for themselves.

Review by Daniel Benor, MD
IJHC Editor-in-Chief

Sidney Rosen, Editor and Commentator. *My Voice Will Go With You: The teaching Tales of Milton H. Erickson.* New York: Norton. 1991. 256 pp. Bibliography 2 pp. No index. \$14.95

My therapeutic toolbox has been greatly enhanced and enriched by the writings of several students of Milton H. Erickson, who was, by general consensus one of the most innovative hypnotherapists the world has known. Sidney Rosen has further enhanced my appreciations and understanding of Erickson's work.

Rosen was a long-time student and colleague of Erickson, and as such, brings us a wonderful collection of anecdotes, clinical and personal observations of this master of hypnotherapeutic transformations. As with every other book about Erickson, I savored the unusual perspectives, startling interventions, and deep wisdom of this wonderful teacher.



Erickson possessed an extraordinarily sharp gift for what I call pattern recognition. He was able to rapidly grasp, engage and manipulate the conscious and unconscious belief (and disbelief) systems, habit patterns and self-image of a person. He used his own words and behaviors to bring about changes in people that were rapid, deep and enormously therapeutic. Often they involved light hypnotic trance, but many times they were direct suggestions for behaviors that led to changes.

One of his vehicles for these interventions was to tell stories that illustrated his patients' problems, demonstrated his appreciation of where they were stuck in life, acknowledged their strengths as well as their weaknesses. He then invited them to change some aspect of their perceptions and behaviors that then led to significant improvements in the problems for which they were seeking help.

Some of his interventions were very simple.

A man from Philadelphia, whose headaches I cured, sent his aunt and uncle out to see me. He said, "These two have quarreled every day of their married life. They've been married over thirty years."

They came out to see me. I said, "Haven't you had enough of quarreling? Why not start enjoying life?" And they had a very pleasant life. And the man's aunt tried to persuade her sister to come out, because his mother was very unhappy. (p. 55)

So here is a story from Erickson, told to therapists, illustrating his suggestions that brought about rapid and deep changes. Almost certainly there were many more pieces of his interactions with this couple that he did not mention. But the essence of his message about creating change is memorably presented, framed and reinforced by the reports of the observations of various relatives of the patients.

Rosen quotes further notes from Erickson about this intervention:

Too many therapists think that they must direct the change and help the patient to change. Therapy is like starting a snowball rolling at the top of a mountain. As it rolls down, it grows larger and larger and becomes an avalanche that fits the shape of the mountain.”

Rosen gives the example of Erickson’s prescribing the presenting symptom of a fifteen year-old girl whose parents and school and school bus driver and fellow students were all sick of her loudly slurping as she sucked her thumb. Erickson got her parents to agree they would say nothing more about this behavior. He then prescribed the following behaviors: Her parents agreed to say nothing more about these behaviors. She was to suck her thumb with loud, slurping noises while her father read the newspaper and while her mother did her sewing. She was to suck her thumb selectively at school, particularly in front of other students and teachers whom who disliked. Within a month she had stopped her thumb sucking.

Particularly endearing are stories of how Erickson used these approaches with his own children, and how they learned to use them with others.

For an enjoyable and highly instructive read, this book is highly recommended.

Review by Daniel Benor, MD
IJHC Editor-in-Chief

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