

# **The orders of helping**

## **by Bert Hellinger**

### **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 in it.

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 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 in to 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 their 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 responsibilities for things that he or she need 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.

**Necessary qualities in the process of helping are perception, observation and intuition.**

This is a summary from the article below.

# THE ORDERS OF HELPING

## Introduction

Slowly become quiet and collect yourselves - becoming ready for something new. I want to say something about psychological disturbances. How do they arise? How is it that a person becomes psychologically disturbed? Usually he has been cut off from someone and most often this is his parents. As soon as someone becomes cut off from one or both of his parents he loses energy and strength. He becomes weak and develops physical or psychological symptoms.

The solution is very simple. Join together that which has been separated. How is this achieved? What does the helper need in order for this to succeed? He or she needs to be in contact with his or her own parents and ancestors, with his or her own fate and personal guilt and most importantly with his or her own mortality.

We will do a short exercise: Close your eyes and feel your parents with you, in your body. All that is in us came from our parents to begin with. We are our parents. Open wide inside until you can feel the presence of both your parents as a unit, exactly as they are and were, without wishing that they had been different.

And feel your grandparents, your great-grandparents, all those who belong and have belonged to your family, those who have died young, and all those who have been excluded. Feel them all present in your body. Accept them all with you, in your body. Come close to them and allow them to embrace you. Become one with them. Feel your unique fate, that comes from your parents and your ancestors as well as from what you have done and from your own personal guilt. And agree to this fate

Yes this is my fate and I accept it.

Then feel yourself connected to something more that comes from your soul. Beyond your parents and ancestors you are connected to something greater in whose hold you all live and have lived.

From this come your unique destiny or task and the energy to accomplish it. When you agree to this you become free, undistracted by superficial desires. You are filled by something greater.

Now if a client comes to you for help you can look at him and see his parents as they are or were and agree to them with love and respect. You can see his grandparents and great-grandparents and all those who died young or were excluded in his family. They are all present before you, through him and you bow before them. You can ask them for their help.

Then it is not you who cares for him. His ancestors support you and, with them, something greater in which we all share. You may perceive his destiny, his task in life and his fate. And you agree to it all.

## What is Helping?

Helping is an art. And as with every form of art there is a skill that can be learnt and practised. It necessitates insight of what is appropriate and measured and also an understanding that goes beyond into something greater and all-embracing.

## **Helping as Balancing Out**

We are all dependent on the help of others. We need others in order to develop. And we are dependent on being able to help others. If we cannot be useful, if we cannot help others we become isolated and cannot flourish. Helping is not only good for others, it is good for us too.

Helping tends to be mutual. If we receive something from someone we want to give in return and balance the relationship. Often this is only possible to a limited extent, for example in relation to our parents. What our parents have given us is too great for us to be able to equal it by giving something in return. All we can do is honour the gift and give them our heartfelt thanks. We can also give to others what we ourselves have received. In this sense balance and the release that goes with it can be achieved by passing on, for example to our own children, what we have received.

Giving and taking works on two levels. The first is between equals and remains on an equal level. It requires mutuality. The second is between parents and children or those in authority and those over whom they hold authority. This involves a change in level. In this case giving and taking is like a river that carries with it all that is within it. This giving and taking is the greater of the two. A consciousness of the future is inherent in this kind of giving and taking. Helping in this context increases the gift. The helper is embraced by something greater, richer and more lasting; something deeply supportive. Helping presupposes that we have first received and taken for ourselves what we need, because only then can we have the desire and the strength to help others, especially when much is demanded of us. And it presupposes that those we wish to help want and need what we are able to give. Otherwise our attempts at helping will separate rather than connect us.

## **The First Order of Helping**

The first Order of helping is that we only give what we have and only expect what we need. The first disorder of helping begins when we try to give what we have not got and take what we don't need, or when someone expects and demands something of someone that that person has not got to give, or when a person's gift is to take on something for another person that that person alone can and must carry for themselves. There are limits to giving and taking. It is part of the art of helping to recognise the limits and to respect them.

This is helping with humility. It actually renounces helping in the face of expectation and of suffering. Family Constellations show us what the helper and those who seek help must be able to stand and it is important to be aware that this humility and restraint go against accepted ideas about helping and may therefore open up the helper to serious attack and censure.

## **The Second Order of Helping**

Helping furthers both our survival and our growth.

But survival and growth are determined by circumstances, both inner and outer. Many outer factors are predetermined and unchangeable, such as genetic conditions and the consequences of particular events or of personal guilt. If helping ignores these circumstances or disrespects them it will go awry.

This is still more true for inner circumstances such as tasks that are personal to us, entanglements in the fate of others and blind love which under the influence of the conscience is in the sway of magical ideas.

To many helpers the fate of others may seem too difficult to bear. Then they may wish to try and change or alleviate it, not because the person concerned wishes for or needs this but because the helper himself cannot stand the situation. The other may then allow this nonetheless, 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. It has strength.

The disorder is when helping denies the 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 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. Parents are big and powerful, children are small and vulnerable. But because parents and children are bound in a relationship of deep love, giving and taking between them can be almost boundless. Children can expect almost anything from their parents and parents are willing to give almost anything to their children. 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 only works 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. Does this mean that the parents love them any less? Would they be better parents if they didn't set these limits? Or do they prove themselves to be good parents precisely because they make demands that prepare their children for adult life? Many children get angry with their parents at this point because they would prefer to maintain the original dependence. But because the parents withdraw little by little and 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 Third Order of Helping**

Many helpers who work as psychotherapists or social workers imagine that they must help those who come to them in the way that parents do their children. 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 from them that they actually still long for and expect from their parents.

What happens if helpers try and meet these expectations? They let themselves in for a lengthy relationship. Where does this relationship lead? The helpers find themselves in the same situation as the parents in whose place they have set themselves up by wanting to help. Gradually they have to set limits to the person seeking help; they have to disappoint him until he develops the same feelings for the helper that he has for his parents. In this way helpers who have put themselves in the place of the parents and who maybe even

imagine that they can do better for the client than the parents, become in effect the same as the parents.

Many helpers remain caught in the transference and counter-transference of the child and parent relationship and create a situation where it is more difficult for the client to leave his parents and also difficult to leave his helper.

At the same time a relationship based on the parent/child model hinders the development and maturation of the helper. I'll try and clarify this with an example: When a young man marries an older woman it is assumed that she is a substitute for his own mother. But what is the woman seeking? A substitute for her father. This is equally true in reverse. When an older man marries a younger woman it is assumed that she is seeking a father substitute. And what about him? He is seeking a mother substitute. Thus as strange as it may sound by persistently remaining in a superior position and going as far as to seek this out and maintain it, one avoids taking one's place as an equal among equals in the adult world.

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 in the transference situation the helper in this case only represents the real parents and does not set himself up as an improved substitute mother or an improved substitute father. So the client does not have to free himself from the relationship later on. The helper himself leads the client towards his parents with love. That is how the client is able to leave the helper and the helper to leave the client. Both are free. Using this pattern of accord with the real parents helpers can thwart the transference/ counter transference from the beginning. By working with respect for the real parents and being in accord with them and their fate the client is able to meet his parents in the helper so to speak. He can no longer avoid them.

The same is true with children or the disabled. Because the helper only represents the parents, the client can feel supported by him. He is not trying to substitute himself for them.

The Third Order of Helping is, thus, that helpers confront their grown-up clients as adults and thereby turn aside any expectations about seeking a substitute for the parent role. It's understandable that many find this position harsh and are critical of it. Paradoxically they criticise this 'harshness' as arrogance although on closer examination a helper in a child-parent transference/ counter-transference relationship is assuming a good deal more for themselves.

In this case the disorder of helping would be if one allowed an adult to make demands on the helper in the manner of a child to his parents; if one treated him like a child and consequently took over responsibility for things that he alone needs to shoulder.

It is in the acknowledgement of this third order that family constellations and the movements of the soul differ most significantly from conventional psychotherapy. Here we come to a parting of the ways. Further developments must be independent from each other.

### **The fourth Order of Helping**

Under the aegis of classical psychotherapy many helpers see their clients as isolated individuals. This puts the helper at risk of child-parent transference. But the individual is part of a family. Only when I become aware of him as a family member can I also be aware of who he needs and to whom he is indebted. The minute that I become aware of

his parents and his ancestors, and maybe his partner and his children together with him, I become truly aware of him as he is. Then I am able to see, too, who in the family needs my special respect and attention most of all, and to whom the client must turn in order to find the significant next step and to take that next step.

To do this my sympathy must be not so much personal as systemic, so to speak. I don't enter into a personal relationship with the client. That's the fourth order of helping.

The disorder of helping here would be if the essential people, above all those who have been excluded, who hold the key to a solution, are overlooked and consequently disrespected.

Here too the risk is great that this sympathy with the system will be seen as harsh by the client, and especially by those who have childish expectations of the helper. Those however who search for solutions as adults, see the systemic method as liberating and feel its inherent strength.

### **The Fifth Order of Helping**

Family Constellations join what has been separated. In this sense they support reconciliation, especially reconciliation with parents. Distinguishing between good and bad hinders reconciliation. Many helpers who are influenced by their own conscience and by public opinion that is similarly bound up with limited ideas of conscience, come up against this problem. If a client, for instance, complains about his parents or about his circumstances and fate, and is confirmed in his belief by a helper who adopts this attitude of accusation as his or her own, the result will be conflict and separation rather than reconciliation.

Reconciliation is supported by giving a place in one's heart to those persons and things that the client complains of. By so doing, one achieves first in one's own soul that which the client must eventually achieve for himself.

The fifth order of helping is loving each person as they are no matter how different they may be from me as helper. I open my heart to them and become a part of that which is reconciled in my own heart. Whatever is reconciled in my heart can also be reconciled within the system of the client.

The disorder here is judging others and the superior moral stance that this presupposes. True helping is without judgement.

### **Special Perception**

Acting according to these orders requires special perception. What I have said about the orders of helping must not be doggedly applied in a rigid way. That would involve thinking but not perception. One thinks and relates back to previous experience instead of opening oneself up to the situation as a whole and from that place feeling what is essential. This special perception involves both focusing and drawing back. In this way I focus on the person as a whole without wanting to achieve anything specific other than from within to sense them in a way that is all embracing and encompasses the next step for them.

This special perception arises out of collectedness. In that place I leave behind the level of experience that entails intentions, fears and distinctions. I open myself up to something that moves me directly from within. If you have ever given yourself over to the Movements of the Soul as a representative in a constellation and have experienced how surprising and

irresistible they are, then you will know what I am talking about. Your awareness extends beyond any ordinary ideas you have had, opening up your sensitivity to precise movements and gestures, inner images and sensations. Simultaneously you are guided from without and within. Perception and action become one.

This special perception is productive rather than receptive. It leads to action and becomes wider and deeper through action. The help that arises from it is brief as a rule. It keeps to what is essential, reveals the next step, withdraws quickly and leaves the person in freedom. It is help 'in passing' so to speak. The client and helper meet, share the indications that are revealed and go their own ways again. It recognises when help will be useful and when it will be harmful, when it is more likely to incapacitate than to stimulate, when it doctors one's own suffering rather than the client's. It is unassuming.

## **Observation, Perception, Insight, Intuition and Being in Tune**

It might perhaps be helpful now if I briefly describe the different cognitive forms so that, when you help, most of you can have recourse to and choose between them all. I'll begin with observation.

**Observation** is sharp and exact and focused on details. Because it is so exact, it is also restricted. It misses the surrounding picture, both up close up and more distant. Because it is so exact it is also near to, it grips you and is penetrating and to a certain extent uncompassionate and aggressive. It is a pre-requisite of exact science and modern technology.

**Perception** keeps its distance. It demands space. Much is perceived at the same time because there is an overview and an overall impression can be gained. Details are seen within their surroundings and in their place. But it confronts details because it is imprecise. That is one aspect of perception. The other is that it comprehends what is observed. It understands the meaning of a thing or an observed or perceived process. It sees beyond what is observed and glimpses its meaning.

In addition to observation and perception we have **insight**. They presuppose each other. Without observation and perception there could be no insight. And insight without observation and perception remains without any reference point. Together the three build a whole. Only when they work in concert can we be truly aware enough to act or to help in a meaningful way. In execution and in action a fourth form is added - intuition. It is related to insight, resembles it but is not the same. Intuition is a flash of insight into the next step. Insight is often shared and understands the context as a whole and the whole process. Intuition recognises the next step and thus is more precise. Intuition and insight relate to one another, as do observation and perception.

**(Being in deep accord) Accordance** is perception from within and is all embracing. Similar to intuition it is focused on action, primarily on helping action. It demands that I resonate with him, that I am on the same wavelength, and understand him or her in this way. In order to understand him I must be in tune with his past, primarily with his parents but also with his fate, all his possibilities, his limits; Also with the consequences of his relationships, his guilt and lastly his death. Because I am in accordance with him I leave my own intentions behind me, my judgments and my super ego, what it desires, what it thinks it ought and must. I become in accordance with me and with others. And others can come into accordance with me without losing a sense of themselves or needing to be afraid of me. I too remain in myself. I don't surrender myself to him. I keep my distance and space while being in deep accord with him. Because of this I am aware of exactly what I

am able to do and what is appropriate to do in order to help.

So accordance is fleeting. It lasts only as long as helping action lasts. Afterwards each of us can again move to their own tune, in their own particular way. So with accordance there is no transference or counter-transference, no so-called therapeutic relationship, no taking over of responsibility for another. Everyone remains free.

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Translated and edited by Sally Tomblason and Jutta ten Herkel*