

## **TRAINING AND CONSULTATION SEMINAR IN BOWEN FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY AND ITS APPLICATIONS: COURSE OUTLINE AND READING LIST 2011-2012**

The Training Seminar in Bowen Theory is a small training and consultation group for postgraduate professionals in health and human services seeking expertise in Bowen family systems theory. The seminar is structured to guide and facilitate learning the Bowen theory and how to apply it in practice.

**Over the course of the eight sessions for 2011 to 2012 the training seminar will address five basic subject areas. They are listed here with subtopics that will receive variable emphasis depending on the needs and interests of the individuals in the seminar. For the most part the topics are not sequential but interweave continuously throughout the meetings.**

### 1. Basic assumptions and scientific basis of Bowen family systems theory

The biological basis of the family emotional system – the family as a natural system  
Family and the brain in evolution  
Counterbalancing forces for individuality and togetherness  
Differentiation of self in the emotional system

### 2. Evaluating the family emotional system

The family diagram  
History and functioning of nuclear and extended family  
Symptoms and problems of the family emotional system  
Case formulation and therapeutic focus based on family evaluation

### 3. Stability and change in family systems

Symptom development, maintenance and resolution  
Anxiety binding mechanisms – Conflict, distance, dominant subordinate relationships, projection of problems to children  
Emotional Cutoff  
Triangles  
Chronic anxiety and emotional reactivity  
Unresolved attachment to the past  
Differentiation and fusion in the family emotional system

### 4. Basic principles of helping relationships

Differentiation of self and the clinician/consultant  
The triangle in addressing difference and conflict  
Reducing anxiety  
Teaching about emotional systems  
Neutrality and emotional objectivity  
Coaching the individual towards self regulation in the family  
Operating inside vs. outside the emotional system  
Intervention with multiple people

5. The therapist/consultant's own family

Self-regulation and containing emotional reactivity  
Observing the emotional system  
Chronic Anxiety  
Triangles  
Differentiation of Self

**In addition to the four basic topics the following topics will be addressed according to the needs of the seminar participants in their area of professional practice:**

5. Extension of principles of the emotional system and differentiation of self from the family to other systems, e.g. work systems, family business, administrative systems, organizations, congregations, civic groups and non-profits.
6. Comparison to other theoretical, therapeutic systems adapted to needs of seminar participants, e.g., Attachment theory, Emotion

Focused therapy, Cognitive Behavioral, Interpersonal, Client Centered, Freudian, Group, etc.

7. Special Topics as adapted to needs and interests of seminar participants and special expertise of visiting faculty. Some examples on the agenda for this year may be succession in family business, mediation and other court-mandated services such as anger management and emotional process in societal institutions

**Consultation and Training Seminar Structure:**

The seminar topics are covered through didactic presentations, teaching videos, discussion and consultation and feedback to participants in their efforts to use theory in practice. The didactic morning session is followed by consultation and supervision of participants' efforts to apply theory between meetings. Seminar participants are asked to present something they are working on or are thinking

about at each seminar. These presentations are based on the participant's effort to use apply theory in their cases and work systems as well as in their personal efforts towards differentiation of self. The effort to apply theory in one's own family to learn systems thinking is an important in learning the phenomena of the emotional system first hand. The goal of feedback from the leader is to help sharpen and clarify the participants' effort to apply theory to the problem being addressed.

**Assignments:**

Reports: At the heart of learning is the effort to apply theory then report on the effort for feedback in the seminars. Participants are encouraged to write a brief description of their efforts between meetings for the purpose of clarifying their thinking as much as possible in order to get the most out of presenting their work and receiving feedback.

Reading: There are three basic texts that are suggested:

- Bowen, Murray, Family Therapy In Clinical Practice, Jason Aronson, Inc., New York, 1978
- Bowen, Murray and Kerr, Michael, Family Evaluation: The Role of the Family as an Emotional Unit That Governs Individual

Behavior and Development, WW Norton, New York, 1988

**Papero, Daniel, Bowen Family Systems Theory, Allyn & Bacon, Boston, 1990**

Participants will be introduced to the growing bibliography relevant to Bowen theory in science, research and clinical practice and directed to resources for special topics as relevant to their interests and practices.

**Seminar Participants:**

Some participants have continued in the seminar over a period of years either continuously or by returning to the seminar from time to time. Thus the composition of the group usually involves new and advanced participants, which has worked well and has been stimulating for the learning for both advanced and new students of Bowen theory.

**Optional individual coaching:**

For serious students of Bowen theory individual coaching is usually important at some point. 7 private coaching sessions in person or by phone are offered as an option at a reduced rate for those who wish regular individual consultation over the course of the year.

**Leader and Visiting Faculty**

Laura Havstad, PhD, director of Programs in Bowen Theory and a clinical psychologist in private practice in Sebastopol, California maintains responsibility for the clinical consultation and training seminar in her clinical practice. Dr. Havstad, who has taught this seminar for over 20 years, was trained under Murray Bowen. She is a consulting editor for the journal *Family Systems*, and leads Programs in Bowen Theory as a network program of the Bowen Center in Washington in Washington DC. Visiting faculty participate when the opportunity arises. Two faculty members from the Bowen Center will be visiting faculty in 2011 – 2012, in conjunction with the public conferences they are leading in Santa Rosa. Kathy Wiseman, family business consultant and CEO of Working Systems will be guest faculty on November 11, and Dr. Dan Papero, will be visiting faculty May 11, 2012.

**Location, Schedule & Cost:**

Location: 120 Pleasant Hill Ave. N, second level meeting room, Sebastopol, CA 95472

Schedule 9:30 to 4:30 on the second Friday of the month: September, October, November, January, February, March, May, June

Cost: Eight days of the Training Seminar in Bowen Theory \$875. With 7 individual coaching sessions \$1500.

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