

Parent-Child Conflict - when negative emotions take centre stage

Presenter: Jenny Brown

This workshop explores the clinical presentation of parents and children's aggressive emotions that can repeatedly escalate to breaking property, threatening behaviours, and inflicting physical harm. First, an outline of a Bowen theory perspective on children's emotional aggression is presented. Then, drawing from clinical cases with parents utilising the Parent Hope Project, we will explore questions of family emotional process, evidence of progress and regression, and managing safety concerns.



Bio

Dr Jenny Brown has been working in the field of child and family mental health and family therapy since the 1980's. She has been a trainer and supervisor in the field in Australia and internationally for over 20 years. Jenny is Emeritus Executive Director of the Family Systems Institute Sydney, which she co-founded in 2004. She currently directs the Family Systems Practice and the Parent Hope Project (manualized interventions in child mental health). She is a clinical member and supervisor for the Australian Association of Family Therapy and, in 2018, received the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy award for

distinguished contribution to family therapy in Australia. In 2022 she received the annual research award from Bowen Centre for the Study of the Family in Washington DC.

The Emotional Process: exploring the professional contribution to the change process from a Bowen Family Systems Theory perspective

Presenter: Katherine Burke

"One never becomes completely objective, and no one ever gets the process to the point of not reacting emotionally to family situations" (FTCP, 1978, p. 541). This workshop explores the therapists' own efforts over a two-year period to work at defining a self in their family of origin alongside observations of clinical outcomes with a single client over the same two-year period. The presentation considers the emotional process as it operates outside of awareness and considers how Bowen Family Systems Theory provides a roadmap for professionals seeking to grow and be responsible for their contribution to the emotional process within therapy.



Bio

Katherine completed a Bachelor of Social Work degree in 2007 through the University of Newcastle. Following this initial training and interest in systemic thinking, Katherine continued to study and consider ways of viewing human struggles through a broader systems lens. This led Katherine to post graduate qualifications in International Development (Flinders University), Public Health and Health Management (UNSW). Katherine's ongoing commitment to finding a way of thinking that could be applied to the diverse range of human experiences led her into the Family Systems Institute (FSI) training programs.

The Emotional System and Chronic Pain

Presenter: Jane Cooper

In this interactive workshop Jane will present her hypothesis about how emotional system sensitivity can influence processes within the family that support the development of chronic pain symptoms. The process of chronic pain will be explored alongside reflections about treatment that may have practice implications for family systems clinicians. Participants will be invited to actively engage in activities and to share their thinking about the functioning of anxious family systems.



Bio

Jane is an Occupational Therapist, play therapy clinician and clinical family therapist (AAFT) currently working in a children's mental health team in Western Sydney. Jane is a PhD candidate with Monash University and is the co-author of 6 peer reviewed publications. Jane's interest in chronic pain emerged through her study of Bowen theory and she has continued this exploration over the years, investigating the occurrence of chronic pain in her family, and working to get clearer about pain science along the way.

Emotional Regulation in Marital Conflict – a comparison of The Gottman Method and Bowen Theory

Presenter: Craig Foster

This workshop will explore the differences and similarities between the Gottman Method and Bowen Theory when seeking to manage the intense emotions involved in marital conflict. The workshop will consider what each theory has to say about emotional regulation, emotional process, who is responsible and how to move beyond emotional gridlock.



Bio

Craig Foster is a Clinical Family Therapist with the Australian Association of Family Therapy. He has been working with the Family Systems Practice since 2017 and is also the Senior Program Manager of Anglicare's Central Sydney Family and Relationships Counselling team. He primarily uses a Bowen Theory approach to his work with couples but loves exploring the way different modalities seek to address challenging marriage situations.

Three Therapists, Two Theories, One Conversation – exploring the differences theory makes in clinical application

Presenters: Jo Wright, Michelle Varcoe and Robyn Milligan

In this workshop, three therapists will describe and discuss their work with the same clinical family at different points in the family's therapeutic journey with a symptomatic adolescent. One Bowen Family Systems Theorist/clinician (BFST) and two clinicians who are trained in Attachment Based Family Therapy (ABFT) will engage in a conversation together about how these respective theories guided their thinking about the processes underlying the presenting problem and their subsequent clinical activity and decision making. They will also outline their experiences of the work and the family's response to the clinical effort.

Bio



Jo is a psychologist who has specialised in couple and family therapy for many decades. She has trained in most Family therapy modalities over many years but has landed with most keen interest in Bowen Family Systems Theory. Jo was co-collaborator with Jenny Brown in the establishment of The FSI in 2004 and has since maintained strong ties with The Institute as a faculty member, programme developer and trainer. She is currently faculty coordinator for The Family of Origin Programme. Jo is in private practice providing therapy services, clinical supervision and family of origin coaching.

Bio



Michelle is a Senior Social Worker who has worked across various Child and Adolescent Mental Health services within NSW Health for the last decade. She has a special interest in family systems, and thinking systemically more broadly regarding the wider influences of communities, schools, treating teams and other institutions. Outside of work, Michelle is an avid coffee enthusiast (read: snob!), and is found most weekends enjoying the beach with her husband and two children.

Bio



Robyn is a clinical psychologist with a special interest in working with children, adolescents and their families. She has worked in the CYMHS context for many years, and enjoys the focus that this work brings to being curious about human relationships. She currently works in an adolescent service associated with Queensland Children's Hospital in Brisbane. She is also a mum to two busy daughters outside of her rewarding professional life.

What is Bowen Family Systems Theory? A brief introduction to systems thinking

Presenter: Lauren Errington

This workshop introduces Bowen Family Systems Theory for those new to systems thinking. It will highlight some key principles that underly the theory including how natural systems theory shaped Dr Murray Bowen's thinking about human behaviour and functioning and the idea that anxiety drives automatic emotional reactivity in relationships. It will include an overview of the eight core concepts of Bowen theory and time for questions and discussion.



Bio

Lauren Errington is the Executive Director of the Family Systems Institute and is an Adjunct Lecturer at CSU. An AMHSW and Clinical Family Therapist, Lauren offers counselling through the Family Systems Practice and has previous experience in tertiary level mental health services and private practice contexts in both Australia and Scotland. Lauren is always interested in the application of theory to practice which has led to her publishing articles with the ANZJFT and co-editing a book with Jenny Brown.

How Lizards Can Teach us About Pair Bonds and Parental Care

Presenter: Dr Lynea Witcza Oldfather

This workshop introduces participants to the social lives of one of the world's only pair bonding lizards: the Australian sleepy lizard (*Tiliqua rugosa*). Sleepy lizards offer a new perspective on emotional processes underlying social bonds. I will first discuss insights gained from four decades of research on this social lizard. To demonstrate how we assess emotions in animals, I will share behavioral observations of partners and their young. While discussing planned future investigations of the biology underlying pair bonding, I will highlight how this work can provide insights into why pair bonding promotes better health outcomes in humans.



Bio

Dr. Lynea Witczak Oldfather is a Fulbright Postdoctoral Scholar in Prof. Mike Gardner's lab at Flinders University. She earned her PhD from the University of California, Davis where she studied the neurobiology of father-daughter bonds and pair bonds in coppery titi monkeys (*Plecturocebus cupreus*). As a postdoc, she is investigating the neurobiology of pair bonding in socially monogamous sleepy lizards (*Tiliqua rugosa*). Her work aims to provide insight into potential shared mechanisms underlying sociality across vertebrate taxa.

Exploring Emotional Process Through Some Classic TV Moments

Presenters: Emma SurrIDGE and Dr Lisa Newling

“Anxiety ‘rubs off’ on people; it is transmitted and absorbed without thinking....” (Kerr and Bowen 1988 pp113-117) This workshop will provide opportunity for participants to track sequences, observe emotional process flow in triangles and discuss thinking about the relationship process using a Bowen Family Systems lens. Vignettes from several TV shows will highlight the challenges humans face in managing this fundamental process of all our relationships.



Bio

Emma SurrIDGE is a registered clinical counsellor and coach working in private practice in Sydney. She divides her time between her personal practice, My Blue Sky Thinking and The Cottage Counselling Centre, a Christian not for profit organisation that offers affordable counselling to individuals, couples and families. Emma has recently completed the Advanced Certificate in Couple and Family Systems Therapy at the FSI and continues to feed her curiosity in Family Systems through her clinical practice, the FSI Graduate Group, further reading and even when she is watching TV shows!



Bio

Dr Lisa Newling is a child and family psychiatrist who has been working in western Sydney for over 20 years. She completed The FSI Certificate Program in Family Systems Theory in 2018 and continues to work to learn and apply Bowen Family Systems Theory to all aspects of personal and professional life in the public health system. Emotional Process operates in all relationships, whether we want it to or not. Practicing thoughtful responsivity remains a life goal and work in progress.

The Dance of Supervision: Thinking About Emotional Process in Bowen Theory Supervision

Presenter: Meg Cook

Whether you are a supervisor or supervisee, this workshop will aim to generate thinking about the reciprocal dance of emotional reactivity in this professional relationship. We will examine the concepts outlined in Bowen’s idea of Nuclear Family Emotional Process: Over/under functioning; conflict; distance and triangles - and will see how these adaptations can play out in the supervisory relationship. We will then explore what it looks like to be a differentiated leader who works at managing emotional reactivity in the self of the supervisor or supervisee.



Bio

Meg is an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker, with a Master of Counselling Social Work. She has been associated with The Family Systems Institute for over ten years, having trained at the Institute, worked as a clinician at The Family Systems Practice, and more recently working in private practice in Willoughby, and providing clinical supervision for the Institute.