

# WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

**Trying to Live Your Own Life: Exploring the position of a Bowen family therapist working with sexuality and gender diversity in couples and families.**

Presenter: Rochelle Oshlack

This presentation extends and integrates the thinking from the Bowen Centre Spring Conference April 2025 on Sexual Diversity and The Human Family where Rochelle presented a paper entitled “Trying to Live Your Own Life” and posed the question: What would Bowen family systems theory look like if it included a scientific biological understanding of the gender and sexual diversity inherent in nature?

Several further case studies will be put forward of families and couples of who represent diversity in relationships, sexuality and gender. These will be explored through a Bowen lens. The heteronormativity in many of BFST writings will be discussed in the context of the times they were written, directly contrasting the times we are in now and how our unexplored assumptions of normativity may impact our neutrality as therapists.



## **Presenter Bio:**

Rochelle Oshlack (she/they/her) is a couples, family and individual therapist practicing Bowen family systems theory and specializing in gender, sexuality, and relationship diversity. Rochelle works with families who have an individual family member transitioning gender.

They also work with same sex couples and couples in polyamorous and diverse relationships. Rochelle applies a systems lens to all her work as an educator, clinical supervisor, and group facilitator.

## **How does understanding Triangles help us navigate complex organisational systems?**

Presenters: Lyndal Power and Josh Onikul

Triangles are the building blocks of emotional systems. Dyads are inherently unstable; as tension increases, one will draw in a third. If these are not resolved, a complex web of interlocking triangles develops.

Schools are complex emotional systems, where there are differing views as to what is the problem, who is the problem and how to intervene. There are those in the inner position and those on the outer in triangles.

In this workshop, the concept of Triangles in Bowen Theory will be outlined, along with the effects of these triangles on organisations. Attention will be given to how to de-triangle oneself and develop an "I Position".

### **Presenter Bios:**

Lyndal Power is a social worker and family therapist with 35 years of clinical experience. She has taught theory and practice subjects in family therapy, in undergraduate and post-graduate social work courses at University of New South Wales and also Relationships Australia's Graduate Diploma of Couple and Family Therapy Course.

She is currently the Coordinator of the Family Clinic, providing family therapy to students and their families in the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD). In 2024, she co-facilitated a group of school counsellors, as they learnt about Bowen Theory and applied it to their work settings.

Josh Onikul is a Psychologist and board approved supervisor with over 13 years of experience working with young people and adolescents, in the fields of severe and persistent mental illness. He came late to the party of systems thinking, and has spent the last 4 years thinking the social worker might have got it right, and trying to reform himself to their ways of formulating.

He is currently working part time as a School Wellbeing Counsellor within the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD), and also works in private practice.

## **The changeback process: exploring the ways in which Bowen Family Systems Theory provides a map for navigating service systems to increase capacity**

Presenter: Kim Rowan

This presentation will explore, from the perspective of a service user, the efforts to engage with services in a new way, underpinned by the Bowen Family Systems Theory concept of differentiation of self. The presentation explores what the changeback process has looked like and the service user's observations about the emotional process between service provider and client in relation to the range of nuclear family emotional process mechanisms in operation. The presentation will also explore how taking responsibility for self has increased functioning, including improved ANS functioning and emotional regulation, and a reduction in chronic physical symptoms.

*"Overall, the emotional process in social and work systems is less intense than in the original family. However, there are exceptions to this in which the intensity of relationships in work systems approximates the intensity in the original family. This is more pronounced in people with lower levels of differentiation who have higher levels of unresolved emotional attachment to their parents. ... Those who use physical distance in "cutting-off" from the parents tend to have the most intense relationships with those outside the family." (Family Therapy in Clinical Practice, Bowen, p. 462).*



### **Presenter Bio:**

Kim Rowan was introduced to Bowen Family Systems Theory in 2023. She gained certification as a NeurOptimal Trainer after utilising biofeedback and neurofeedback as tools for working on differentiation of self.

Kim is currently studying the FSI's Certificate in Family Systems Theory and Application. She is passionate about using her lived experience to advocate for improvements to responses to domestic, family and sexualised violence.