

THE LONE RANGER

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In addition to the training programs at the Georgetown Family Center, there are a number of training programs throughout the country. Some are still going; some have imploded or dropped out from sight. Most of these programs have been started by people who have attended the post-graduate programs at Georgetown. Motivation for these people's efforts varied. One's enthusiasm for the learning provided, at least initially, a fair amount of energy to start their programs. Many invited Dr. Bowen and his faculty to participate and present at the training programs, which helped keep the programs focused on principles. Of course, no program had a "Dr. Bowen" on board to direct the process through the various emotional minefields. Some were led by a small group or co-directors which necessitated a "group" solving process, with the potential for compromise to and erosion of basic principles. (There are a lot of Second Baptist Churches in America.)

The history of major movements, their leaders, and their followers is full of documentation of how "differences" and individuality was rejected and people being ostracized. Freud, his students, and followers provide many examples. Some of his followers became more "Freud than Freud," fighting wars that Freud had already ended (e.g., approval of lay analysts). Franz Alexander reported a conversation with Freud, asking Freud if he was concerned about enemies of psychoanalysis. Freud replied he was more concerned and worried about his followers than he was about "enemies."

Can one be a serious student of Bowen family systems theory and a practitioner using his principles and not disappear in the pull of fusion? Are there dangers in one becoming "more Bowen than Bowen?"

There are many similarities in the training program processes and the process when one takes on responsibility for defining self in one's family.

Dr. Bowen responded in a letter of April 1987 to a Midwestern program trainee who was caught up in various triangles and was struggling with the “togetherness” forces of the training program and her awareness of her own sense of self. Dr. Bowen is careful not to see these forces just as a phenomenon of this particular program, but a more universal one in both organizations and in people’s families. The principles are eloquently offered to guide one through these pulls and struggles.

Monday nite 4-27-87

Old habits are a problem. If I don't respond to a letter immediately, it gets tabled, and time passes. And you are kind of different with your own "go power". I have thought about you many times as I have hacked my way thru "differentiation" with others.

There was nothing in your last letter to refute my original impression! It is a guess that your real estate "self", plus your intermix with , somehow enabled you to be different in the togetherness triad at . You did not ask for that! Your number simply came up, and there you were. As I see it, and are the two major forces at . They need each other too much for either to make a move that does not involve the other. Then you came along, like the day with your two parents, the day you were born. If either of the "other two" is a pure bastard, it is easy to get out as soon as there are wheels that roll. But, what if both are nice people, like ? Get mad and scream – or stay stuck, – or grow out of it? Growing out is the difficult task! You please one, and automatically displeas the other. Lock, interlock, frustration! Then, along the way – some 30+ years ago, came the notion of differentiation. Far too complex for the average to understand, but as simple as a sky-dive for one who has the basic equipment (built in by nature), knows the rules (learned), and who has the conviction in one's own head. When the differentiating one can quietly persist, out of one's own head, without fanfare or notions of self gain or without having to prove a point to the others, one's own success then becomes a model for others to follow in their own inimitable way.

Over the years, there have been more failures than successes in the search for the family member who can take the first step. A failure is good for learning the rules of WHAT NOT TO DO. A blown fuse, is a blown fuse, is a blown fuse!!!! One time I spent 5 years recovering from a "blown fuse" in my own family, all advised by a well meaning psychoanalyst. Don't trust analysts!!! They mean more well than parents! Over the years, there has been an interest in the places that teach some version of Family Systems Theory. Most leave out differentiation!!! This included some secret sniffing around at . It was a surprise to guess that you were probably more gifted to "lead off" than those who drive Seviles and Oldsmobiles.

When one lone person has the courage of his/her own convictions, and the fortitude to quietly stand there, in spite of the flood tide of togetherness inundation, the organism settles down. Then others begin their own versions of differentiation, and everyone automatically pulls to a higher level of self. If my guess about you is accurate, and you can be the quiet YOU, out of your own head, and you do not wither and fade (or counter attack) when the togetherness tide builds up, YOU will automatically have become more important to than riches or gold or material things. If you are really IT, then softly thank your ancestors for the loan of basic equipment, quietly thank you for having the courage to use it, and gently commit the loan to the generations who will follow presently.

Treat your new Integra nicely.

Lest we forget,

Murray Bowen, M.D.