

December 29, 2020

Andrea Schara:

Record it to the computer. Anne Gordon, you've been around a long time for, and even longer actually in my life, sideways, since I knew your aunt who was friends with [Gudrun 00:00:22], but I wanted to start out with, who are you? And your professional background is different than most people. And you got to know Bowen early on. And so I thought you had a unique perspective from your vantage point. So I'll just let you start wherever you want. You've already seen the 10 questions and...

Anne Curran:

Yeah. Well, I'm Anne Gordon Curran, and I have a master's degree in social work from VCU in Richmond, Virginia Commonwealth University. And that's kind of where I got started. My second year graduate school placement was at the Medical College of Virginia in the outpatient psychiatry clinic. And it was there that I... My supervisor was there, so I met people like Alan Entin and... What's his name? Schumann.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

Yeah. The oldies from MCV. And they were the core group in the outpatient psychiatry department. And Dr. Bowen at that time was traveling down about every six weeks.

Andrea Schara:

What year would that have been, like...?

Anne Curran:

I started in '72, the fall of '72, 1972.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

And Dr. Bowen would come down, with a group, usually Kathy and Mike Kerr. And Frank Giove would come over from Fort Lee and a few of those oldies and goodies, and they would, and Roberta Holt, she would come down with Murray Bowen, and they'd spend the day videotaping and creating a learning experience about family for the medical students in the Department of Psychiatry.

It was Dr. Bowen's... Well, his responsibility there was to show the relevance of family in healthcare, in getting back to good health when people were in the hospital, as well as in psychiatry. Psychiatry at that time was very much a medical model.

Andrea Schara:

So did he make any inroads into this? [both laugh] Family is important. What's the relevance of family to health? Wow. They still haven't answered that question.

Anne Curran:

Yeah, I've got the answer right on. I think he did with the allied professionals more than the psychiatrists.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

They were so focused on an individual way of thinking and symptoms and symptom relief, that they did not see the greater picture nor were they really astute to how that worked. And that was what he was trying to do, open that up.

He had a good audience each time, which was, and I met some really interesting people, [Dr. Ellie Hawn 00:04:03], who became a friend, but they were... and they, some of those people would present. Ellie Hawn did, but a lot of them they just didn't invest their energies there, I think, at that time. I don't have a reason to, I don't understand that except that medical school all by itself is a challenge. And they're adding to that, and work on your family and begin to see other families as well. Meaning other patients in the context to their families in your head. So I think-

Andrea Schara:

Did they draw family diagrams or introduce...

Anne Curran:

Yes, they did.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

And he would show his early tapes of teaching tapes. I saw those many times. And they're good because he's very precise in those, he's very thoughtful and exacting in presenting those ideas. And he does it slowly. And he opened up the audience for questions. And he also did videotapes. They were group, they were two or three family groups in one tape, two or three couples in one tape. And he would spend 20 minutes or 40... yeah, about 40 minutes with each of three couples in the same room together. That was the multi-family tape time.

And it was really fascinating. And the rule of thumb was that the families were not allowed to talk to each other. They could only talk to him in their turn.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

So they could listen to the other two couples being interviewed by him at that time and listen to the work that they were doing in their own families through his questions. And then they would come and sit in the audience, but usually way in the back, and then he would open up the audience for questions,

indicating that these people are in the audience, and we were not to communicate with them. And it had to do with confidentiality, but it also had to do in a big way with not screwing up what he was trying to accomplish. And there were people that broke that rule quite openly. In fact-

Andrea Schara:

Meaning that they went and talked to the people who were on the tapes, they would-

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

One lady was schizophrenic, and two women who had a clinical practice here and a very popular one wanted to hire her to work with their youth. And so they engaged her on those Friday meetings to do that. And Dr. Bowen was not a happy camper on that one.

Andrea Schara:

He was fond of taking things up with people. Well, how was your first interaction with him? Do you recall?

Anne Curran:

I was very quiet in the audience. Most people these days don't believe me to be quiet, but especially in my family. I just listened for a long time and thought, "This is just too simple. It makes so much sense. I don't get it." But I was newly married in the fall, in September before I started graduate school, so I had been married about a year at that point, and I was having marital problems. And so I thought it was my marriage that was "the" problem. And after listening to Dr. Bowen for an academic year, most of that year, I finally asked him once if I could meet him individually. And I would travel to D.C to do that. And he said, "Well, I don't know if I have any time," which now I understand. At that point I thought, "Yeah, you do. I'm desperate."

But he finally, after I approached him a couple of more times, said "Send me your family diagram." Well, if you don't really know what he's trying to gain from that diagram, I had an enormous diagram that went way back to 1600s and I didn't know any of those people. It was all taken out of books and papers that I had. And then he scheduled an appointment with me, and I used to go up about once a month and visit and spend about usually a two hour session to make the trip worthwhile. Because it's a two hour drive up and two hours back and two hours with Dr. Bowen, about once a month. And that started up, I would say, in '73.

Andrea Schara:

That's a quick one year.

Anne Curran:

Well, I mean-

Andrea Schara:

Taking this serious. Seriously.

Anne Curran:

Well, '72, '73 was an academic year when I finished my graduate training. And then of course my marriage was a challenge from the get-go, and I couldn't see it.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

And one of his questions was, "Well, tell me about your family." And I said, "My family's fine." And-

Andrea Schara:

Lucky you.

Anne Curran:

Lucky. They're wonderful people, not a problem. It's me, or this marriage that I can't understand or manage well. And I stayed in the marriage for four years. And then when I saw that there was not much progress in the marriage relationship, meaning I was trying to... I didn't understand the concepts that I could operationalize in Bowen theory, in depth. I didn't know how to incorporate them or see them and understand them, but I knew what they were.

And I think that's one of the biggest hurdles for anybody learning Bowen theory, is how do you not only learn what the concepts are, intellectually, but how can you integrate them into your own work in your own life and see them as in-play. That's sort of the third arm of the learning process. See them, and then being able to work with them under the circumstances, respect them. So that was the beginning.

But the other thing that I had a challenge with, with Dr. Bowen, is that my own personal challenges were of... I couldn't remember things over time. I had a mother that I learned eventually, eventually began to see, who... she had her own ideas about what I needed to do and how I should live my life. And I saw those as appropriate teaching things before I met Dr. Bowen, the mother knows these things, but then later I became the one child of the four of us, number three of four, with two sets of children, two older ones, and then nine years and then me and a younger sister. So there are two sets.

Andrea Schara:

But same mother and father?

Anne Curran:

Same mother and father.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

And they were very clearly wedded to each other. I mean, I didn't see any outside choices for them, meaning that's where they were happy. And it was shown affectionately and it was shown through laughter and it was shown through a lot of what they did. But later on, I began to see other things too. Lack of ability to cope well, understand symptoms well, things like that.

Andrea Schara:

So you're suggesting that your memory was bad, but your mother's memory was much better, and you could rely on her or something like that, I gather. And that didn't seem to be a problem till you met Dr. Bowen and you started observing better or something.

Anne Curran:

I didn't see it. Yeah, I didn't see it.

Andrea Schara:

You didn't see it. So, that's hugely important, I think.

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

The coach, Dr. Bowen, in this case, just through talking with you, enables you to see, perceive the world more accurately. That's what I hear you saying.

Anne Curran:

Yes.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

I started off in public schools until eighth grade, and then I went to private school. And I was at bottom of the class. I mean, me and one other, or me and two others. And it was a really good school with great opportunities, but I could not memorize, which we had to do in high school.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

Shakespeare and plays. I mean, excerpts from poems, and all kinds of things. But when I would get up to present, to say my part to the class, brain freeze, total. I could get the first line or two out. And I had rehearsed that thing all night long, awake and asleep, and I knew it. And I was so intimidated by the teacher that I couldn't do the work that she had assigned in that sense. And she told me to sit down because I was just tearful at that point. I would get about four lines into memory work and then just tears would roll down my cheeks and she'd say, "Sit down and write it."

So I sat down, but when the brain freezes it just doesn't thaw out all of a sudden, it takes a while for that to happen. And so I would listen to the next students coming along and write down two more lines, every time they did their memory work before the class. So by the time everybody had done their piece, I had managed to get it written down listening to them, not because my brain was unfrozen. And my classmates to this day, because we get together often, have since our 20th reunion, our high school classmates to this day remember the agony that I went through at that time. So it was quite apparent to everybody.

Andrea Schara:

So you've somehow changed and they notice it too, that you've changed from the way you were?

Anne Curran:

Oh yeah. We can talk about all those things now, but I say this because it inhibited reading for me because I couldn't focus, I couldn't concentrate. I had to work six times as hard as other students. And I think as I've begun to see it in recent years through neurofeedback, I've realized that it's probably more intense anxiety that just put a cloud over my brain when it came to learning. And because I guess I was not real happy about not being able to learn. So I was caught in that double bind completely. And it wasn't until I used neurofeedback for quite a while that I realized what the challenge was. So it wasn't through Dr. Bowen that I got that.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. That was through neurofeedback, you were more able to observe what was going on.

Anne Curran:

I was more able to read.

Andrea Schara:

And then it just loosened you up.

Anne Curran:

Absolutely.

Andrea Schara:

But you saw something with Dr. Bowen. I think you said "My mother knows these things." And that was the beginning of some kind of inhibition about being your own person, having your own skills different from her, or something like that.

Anne Curran:

Well, definitely that part.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

But the other part too was I was very close to my father. Among the four of us, I was the closest.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

I was born at a time in their lives that they were ready to have children. The first two children came along in the honeymoon phase after marriage.

Andrea Schara:

No. Sorry about that. People are entering the house and the dog alarm goes off.

Anne Curran:

Your alarm goes off.

Andrea Schara:

The dog alarm.

Anne Curran:

I had an in with my father that the other three did not have. They had the first two children right after marriage, and then they went and they lived in Puerto Rico and they had a daughter, and then 20 months later, a son. And they lived in Puerto Rico for six years, for the first six years of their marriage. And then they moved back to the States. And this all had to do with my father's work. And when they moved back to the States, they moved to Washington area. No, they moved to Pelham, New York, where they lived for a while.

And then the Second World War was going on and Father did not want to leave his wife and two children. So he worked for the government in something that helped the cause for the war. And they moved to the D.C. area from Pelham and lived in McLean and then Falls Church. And then after the war, moved to Richmond, which was home for them, for both of them. And I came along and my youngest sister came along in the Falls Church time. So we were born in Northern Virginia. So I always had a little in with my father that the others didn't have. And he could be difficult to penetrate.

Andrea Schara:

This is before Bowen. Your father was difficult-

Anne Curran:

Well before.

Andrea Schara:

Well before, okay. Just setting the stage for-

Anne Curran:

Yeah. I mean, this is as a child growing up.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

I just had the attention of my father in ways that the others did not. And-

Andrea Schara:

Is that an advantage when you look at it from a theoretical perspective? Did it give you an advantage?

Anne Curran:

Yes, but I also was there to have to be advantageous, not because I was looking for that, but because I thought, this was in later years, I had learned some things from Dr. Bowen and it had been a number of years and we had... there's a lot of history between moving back to Richmond for them when I was five and then moving, staying in Richmond all my growing up years until I was an adult, and moved to Charlottesville for a few years, but I had already met Dr. Bowen and that was during the Richmond years.

Andrea Schara:

So how did that change you? I think that's one of the questions is, how did meeting Bowen... So you have this over-involved mother and the close thing with your dad and your other siblings-

Anne Curran:

Well, close things with the older siblings was not so easy because there was a nine and 11-year age gap. So they were up and out.

Andrea Schara:

So they didn't enter into your effort or with your parents or -

Anne Curran:

Well, they were in their own private boarding schools and then they went off to college. And so when we moved to Richmond, and I was five, my oldest sister was at National Cathedral in Washington. And she had been a day student, so she stayed one more year and boarded, and finished.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

And then my brother, when we moved to Richmond, went to public school. And then mother got fearful because he was such a lovely child, that things might happen there. So she sent him off to Christ Church in... which is an Episcopal school, for boarding. And he finished there, and then went to UVA. So they were gone a lot.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.



Anne Curran:

When they were present, it was a nice family unit with a lot of flexibility in it, I thought. I mean, we did things as a family...Christmas-

Andrea Schara:

Right. So the only, I'm trying to gather the way your family was before you met Bowen and then what changed? And how would you account for changes in your family? I think has your family and your life been changed? Is the question. And then from going to your individual experience, how might that affect psychiatry? And you started out with psychiatry finds systems thinking too difficult and likes individual thinking. Maybe it's not going to be impacted by changes in the system.

Anne Curran:

Well, it was years later that I got involved with Bowen theory. Because I finished undergraduate school, worked, and then went to graduate school. And it was graduate school that I had met Dr. Bowen. And it took me a while to understand, I mean, like years, to really understand what Bowen theory was all about.

But I was determined, because it seemed so simple, I was determined to stay, to stick with it. Because if it was so simple, why didn't I figure it out first? But he did. So there's got to be something more to it that I can't see. So I would keep going.

And I was pretty regular right from the get-go, from MCV days. After that I started going where Dr. Bowen was, wherever that might've been. When I moved to Charlottesville, I commuted to D.C., when he opened the Bowen Center up there. And when he was still in the Department of Psychiatry, I commuted to D.C. Made it a day trip. I didn't have a lot of financial resources, so I had to figure it out. And I made day trips a lot.

Andrea Schara:

Did you change your relationships with your siblings and your parents? Or how did you use Bowen theory in those early days to guide you? Or were you experimenting with your family or just learning how to think differently?

Anne Curran:

I don't think I was experimenting in the early days with my family as much, because I didn't know how to do that. I just would listen and learn and stand back and watch until I could figure out how this whole thing came together, even in bits and pieces. But it was years before I could grasp concepts and work with them. Really. And I think that had as much as anything to do with the increased anxiety in me as a focus-child.

Andrea Schara:

And it gives a picture of the challenge of incorporating this body of knowledge into Psychiatry. On the one hand you say it makes common sense, it's so simple in a way to see it, and yet when you try to apply it to yourself and your own family as to changing, it becomes so much more difficult. And so how those two things would influence Psychiatry, who's already got a bottle of pills and some Cognitive Behavioral change things. I can just see how difficult it would be for people in Psychiatry to really grasp what Bowen theory has to offer.

Anne Curran:

Oh, yeah. I think so. Those that he was working with, alongside ,while he was developing his theory, I think had a little bit better understanding because they were working things out in relationship to each other, even though they were in different pathways. But to bring a new psychiatrist into the business of Bowen theory, they're already of the opinion that they're trained and skilled and academically achieved. So taking on something like this just doesn't... I mean, his experience at Menninger.

He was an outsider in the way that he thought, for sure. And some of his work was rejected by Dr. Carl, because it just was not... his work with family. He wanted to begin working with families, and Dr. Carl said "Nah, that's -"

Andrea Schara:

How do you know all this?

Anne Curran:

Through the archives.

Andrea Schara:

Okay. So you have been interested in how let's say that his path was difficult too like your path?

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

In understanding and dealing with relationships, you saw something that Bowen had, that you had. The challenge of explaining and changing. When-

Anne Curran:

I don't think I thought of it that way.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Anne Curran:

I just know -

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. I'm hearing it that way.

Anne Curran:

Yeah. Well, that's why I'm saying this. I got involved with the archives after Dr. Bowen's death and after Mrs. Bowen's death, when Joanne Bowen received the boxes from the attic that needed to be gone through. And they were Dr. Bowen's private papers. So I worked with that for four years and learned a lot just by reading aspects of his life experiences and seeing how the evolution of the theory began to show and how he approached it.

And that began to open up my head some more. I mean, working with the archives, we didn't have time nor were we encouraged to spend hours reading because that was not our job, but it was to recognize things that needed to be earmarked and put it all in some, not change the order of things, but be aware of what was where so we could access it for research.

Anyway, once I was able to begin to read and comprehend reading, things opened up more for me, and that happened more in the time of neurofeedback. And I've thought of that as: neurofeedback reaches into a deeper place where anxiety resides and calms things down enough for me as an individual to take the initiative more and gain something from that initiative. See, that was the hard part.

I took the initiative for years with Dr. Bowen driving to D.C, keeping it routine, sticking with the protocol, learning what I could in meetings. I went to all the symposia. I went every year, starting with the first year in '72. And I just wouldn't miss meetings. I just kept going, kept going. And the more I'd go, the more I would hear, but it wasn't until really, I don't think, that I... neurofeedback, that I could begin to do something with what I was hearing. I had difficult time asking questions on clinical days, after clinical video tapes. I couldn't think on my own, it was always a struggle. And that opened up more.

Andrea Schara:

I wonder if that isn't a pretty generalizable experience for people in a way that probably most people are struggling with this, going through the problem of comprehension.

Anne Curran:

Yeah. Well-

Andrea Schara:

In your own life, it's one thing to read about it in a book, the eight concepts, and you can memorize them, but when it comes to seeing it in your own family and seeing your part in it, that the anxiety could go up so much that you might reject the whole theory. And by using neurofeedback, you're able to calm the anxiety down, and then you can see better. You can perceive, I think is a better word. Perceive.

Anne Curran:

Well, I could listen and learn better. And the other side of that is that I had better input ideas, thoughts about what I was hearing and seeing. And then the Navigating Systems training was very, very good. I think that's one of the best, actually, because there's a lot of responsibility placed on the learners to be a part of what's going on, even though the three trainers are very clearly presenting and doing their part as well. I mean, it's a well-integrated, I think, approach to learning Bowen theory.

Andrea Schara:

So are you, in saying that, are you suggesting that there are ways, over time, there are ways that seem more compatible with learning theory, for you? It's not drop into a conference and look at what Dr. Bowen does and then go home and do that to your mother. You know, something like that. It's almost a cellular change, if I'm hearing you, that all the things that you're experiencing are helping you to perceive the family the way it is, the family as a unit, and the pressures and what you can do to change your part in this. And maybe, I don't know, generally speaking, I think about the outcome being able to be more yourself with those you really care about. I don't know what you think the outcome is of all this work and how your life has been changed, but certainly your description, there's no easy package here.

Anne Curran:

That's true. And I made some strategic decisions along the way, even in the marriage, with my second marriage. My first marriage was a bomb from the beginning, and so it didn't work very well. And that was the thing that pushed me to get help. And then when I did get help, I realized some ways of trying to understand what in the heck was going on. Then I took the initiative to get out of the marriage.

But I didn't run to get a divorce, I just simply said, "This is not going to work," and then I moved on. And with consistent, a lot of imposition on my husband's part in that apart time, where we lived in separate cities, I finally said, "No, I guess I need to follow through with the divorce." Because there were no boundaries for him and I had boundaries, but those boundaries were based on how can I step back from this relationship and see what works and what doesn't, and is there something workable to stay in this marriage? And he wasn't there, that's not where he was. And to this day, that's not where he is. He never resolved that marriage.

And then I did remarry, but I wasn't looking for a way to do that. In fact, I was living way out in the country alone in a little funny, little house at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, but I did meet someone in Charlottesville and did marry him and we were married for 33 years. So, that made a difference. And it wasn't that he was such an easy guy to be married to, but I listened to one of my friends through the Bowen Network, who said, "I decided at some point not to get a divorce from my husband, because I knew I was such a person that would meet someone else and get the same bind." And I kept that one closed. And Dr. Bowen said that. But when I heard it from somebody else that was learning too, it made that much more sense. And so I kept that as a guide for me in a second very challenging marriage.

Andrea Schara:

I'm not sure if Bowen theory helped you in accepting your part, but that's what I hear. It's like, I'm not longing for an idealized relationship. I have a pretty good relationship and I can accept the reality of my part in it and not, maybe complain, because it's not perfect.

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

Is that... I'm looking for sort of, well, how you changed. And in your years with Dr. Bowen, it seems like you're putting less pressure on yourself, having less anxiety, being more accepting, seeing things as they are rather than how you wish they were, and getting more and more into, like through the archives, more and more into what was Dr. Bowen's life like? How did he become a more separate individual in his own right against the pressure? I love the pressure of your mother, the mother pressure to conform. And it's there for all of us.

Anne Curran:

And like so many things in one's life, I wish I was a faster learner. And Dr. Bowen used to ask the question a lot, what takes a person so much so long to learn this stuff and to deal with it, and make it, incorporate it into something that's useful in a lifetime?

And I do have two sons by adoption who are both challenges for me. So I think the same characteristics that are me, from years ago, are still present at least in growing them up, as their mother, and trying to maintain an open relationship even now. And it is a challenge still, and I don't see it all,

except some of it, I think, is a hangover from the past that they hold on to. It's how does one make changes without rebuttal?

Andrea Schara:

Is it possible to make changes unless you thought of all the various aspects of it, advantages and disadvantages? Is that what you're saying, that you can't just get straight through to people? Whether it's the world of psychiatry, they should just accept Bowen theory as a better way to understand human behavior, but instead there are a lot of rebuttals from Psychiatry and what the Bowen theory has missed out on? And same thing with your sons, same thing with you, same thing with me, there is a period of rebuttal in order to make it your own, maybe.

Anne Curran:

I'm thinking about several things. One is that the brain keeps growing, meaning maturing, over until not with any particular cutoff day, but well into mid 20s. And my older son left home at 19, because he became very difficult and not making progress. So I suggested he move on his own and find out what he could discover that would help him make progress. And that made him mad. And he sort of hung on to that, I think, all these years. He's 36 now. He has married, but we were not included in any of that, neither of us. And after his father died three and a half years ago, he's not been in touch at all. So, it's a significant, to me, it's a significant cutoff.

What is my part in that? How can I reach into that cutoff to bring some thoughtful interaction as adults? But maybe that's not where he is. Meaning as an adult. I always thought of it when he left home at 19, that emotionally, that things slow down in terms of development with the primary family if they don't continue to learn and go back and take some of the hard knocks and give some of the hard knocks. How do you grow from there when one leaves? That's always been how I've thought about it. Because I know I worked hard at continuing to grow, and his theme was more running away than growth. And he's a fine young man. I mean, he's a very capable young man that should do well wherever he goes.

Andrea Schara:

It sounds like you're still in a relationship with him, but that he holds onto a version or a view of the way life is. His memory is enshrined in negativity, his memory of his childhood, or whatever.

Anne Curran:

Yeah, yeah.

Andrea Schara:

Or his leaving. But he's still relating to you? He's still in the relationship, although he's critical or negative, he's still relating to you?

Anne Curran:

No, he's not communicating at all.

Andrea Schara:

Oh, he's not communicating at all?

Anne Curran:

None. Not since his father's funeral.

Andrea Schara:

Three and a half years-

Anne Curran:

Half years ago.

Andrea Schara:

And how about your other son?

Anne Curran:

He stepped up all around that time because he was more present physically and he stepped up for, around the time of his father's death. So he became my right hand in that tough time. And then he went back to his old life. And he had, before Charlie died, had had a DUI and I thought he'd learned his lesson because we did not take care of him during that time with court and weekend jail time and all that stuff. And then after Charlie died, he did it again. And so I guess he didn't learn a lot the first time. And he blames everybody else for his problem there, like the policemen. "I wasn't driving poorly. Why did he stop me?" Anyway...

Andrea Schara:

He's got a good attitude.

Anne Curran:

Well, very much like his father. Everybody else was at fault, it wasn't me.

Andrea Schara:

Well, have you learned to enjoy that? You know, being around people-

Anne Curran:

Sometimes I could enjoy it, sometimes it was like hitting a wall, because how do you get somewhere? Like when Charlie stepped on the cat once and broke its leg and I took the cat to the vet, with Charlie, and he said, "Well, what happened?" And Charlie said, "I don't know." I said, "Charlie stepped on the cat, broke his leg." "Well, it's a kitten, so just isolate it, it'll heal on its own." I don't know what he expected to be as a result, but he came from a pretty challenging family as well, far more than mine. And so he just would deny, deny, deny. And I was always dancing around that, trying to figure out how to bring reality to a denial, in my mind, not necessarily in the conversation.

Andrea Schara:

That's the 10th concept. The 10th concept will be the door that you open that lets others see reality. And all you have to do is open the door and they can look.

Anne Curran:

Well, I have so many examples like that of... And I guess it was, in saying that, it was sort of like my mother could be.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, that's...

Anne Curran:

She was-

Andrea Schara:

Well, I think that's a pretty good insight because I think you said, "My mother knows these things." My mother knows these things, Charlie knows these things, and your son apparently knows these things. And I don't know to what extent you can have fun with being in the house of mirrors, more or less... I don't know.

Anne Curran:

Well, it was interesting.

Andrea Schara:

I don't know, yeah, how Bowen theory, maybe how Bowen theory has changed your life is that you can see these things.

Anne Curran:

Oh, yeah.

Andrea Schara:

Not personal. There it is, just...

Anne Curran:

And it really did help me try to open doors in little ways, especially in the marriage. And it always surprised my husband, always, when an observation that I would make with a third-party like... That he would look at me shocked and say, "Well, thank you," but he -

Andrea Schara:

What's a third-party observation? I don't know what that is.

Anne Curran:

Well, an example. Charlie -

Andrea Schara:

Oh, okay. More about the impersonal nature of human behavior that you would use an example that would clarify this is not about you, other than you're a human. And because you're a human, these are the kinds of things that happen to humans.

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

No big deal.

Anne Curran:

Well, yeah.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. I was thinking about that because the last question is which part of our society and which professions might benefit from Bowen's ideas today and yet effectively have no access to them? Which sounds like Charlie, but can be any part of society, has no access to taking things less personally and not getting caught up in the intensity and the polarization and the blame and being sucked into it. And as you say, yeah, that's been your goal, is not to get sucked in to these intense blame and no responsibility. Blame on others and no responsibility for me, things.

Anne Curran:

Yeah. Well, to give a Currant example of where I think this could be most helpful and they don't know a clue about it, Bowen theory, is in the media.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

Is that covers such an enormous network of connectivity. And it influences how we think if one is not able to step back. And to call news, news, is one thing if you're really doing news, but we've gotten all screwed up on that, 150%. But I think that would be one area that would be extremely helpful for society, internationally, to be able to function better if they could base what they hear on, it's coming from a factual position. And then however they take it in, would be the wobble, instead of coming from the news people.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

That's a big bias, and that would be a huge help to society. And of course, leadership, leadership positions across the board.

Andrea Schara:

That doesn't get sucked into you're to blame for my dysfunction, you're to blame for my problems.

Anne Curran:

Right.



Andrea Schara:

And I mean, of course, there always is some truth to that, that we are also hierarchical animals. And so there is the pecking order, which is there. And I don't know what you do about these things, but they're there for you to see and in impersonal way. And I think that gives you a lot more freedom to think for yourself once it's impersonal, but if it's he did it to me, or she did it to me, then it's very personal and it's... Let's take your son. If you look at your son and say, "Well, he's a human being, this is how he does things," it's interesting. It's a whole lot different than trying to take out the sword that went into your left shoulder.

Anne Curran:

Well, I do, for number one son, I do communicate to him through email and an occasional letter, but not often. And part of it is to keep him abreast of important family changes.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. Well, that's good. You know, it's not having a lot of expectation, but just doing your part in it.

Anne Curran:

No expectation.

Andrea Schara:

Maybe that's what the summary of Bowen theory, what it has to offer. See, I'd like to get this little dog not to bark. He hears the vacuum cleaner and the people coming in to fix up stuff and... How do you stay lowkey when your son or your dog won't behave? You know, that's -

Anne Curran:

That's why I put the kittens outside. I hope they're still here when I get finished.

Andrea Schara:

Well, is there anything you want to say in summary, Anne, of...

Anne Curran:

No, just that I'm still keeping on going because I do have a whole... I'm connected to a lot of family people at this point as a result of the years of work with Bowen theory and family. And I use it... connected to organizations where it's helpful.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Anne Curran:

And the church, which is a challenge. I want to back out of that a little bit.

Andrea Schara:

Speaking of the media and the intensity, probably hits churches the hardest.

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. But you've got a good compass, and doesn't mean that life is easy because you've got to take up your responsibility with your family and your friends and as you say, organizations, but I think you've got a guiding star, you've got the North Star, and that helps a little bit.

Anne Curran:

Yeah. One thing that I'm still challenged by is that I tend to be on the outside of situations, and that's not always a bad thing, but it does, especially during the time of pandemic and other things that keep people more isolated, it's more hurtful because I don't get pulled in sometimes in relationship to important people because everybody's focused on themselves.

Andrea Schara:

Survival. We've gone back down to that.

Anne Curran:

Well, I don't think it has to be at that level, but it sure is acting that way.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. Yeah.

Anne Curran:

I think there's ways, because I have visited family, just the primary family, my younger sister who has Alzheimer's, my older sister, who just had a massive stroke, and then my brother who's been taking care of his wife for over a year because she's had one major thing after another. And the older two are in their 80s, so I'm the one that can travel.

Andrea Schara:

Well good for you, you know? You're...

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

You can see what you need to do.

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

And your mom isn't here to tell you, "You're wrong."

Anne Curran:

Well, and be present when there's...

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. You know that's the North Star, I guess.

Anne Curran:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

Being present.

Anne Curran:

Be present.

Andrea Schara:

During difficult times. Well, we're coming to the end of the hour here.

Anne Curran:

Looks like it.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. Bowen theory: it's a longterm effort to be present.

Anne Curran:

And I don't see me stopping.

Andrea Schara:

I love that. It's great. Well, thanks for your time. I enjoyed it.

Anne Curran:

Thank you. Thank you for this rerun.

Andrea Schara:

Oh, you're welcome. It was great. All right.

Anne Curran:

Happy New Year.

Andrea Schara:

Okay. Talk to you soon.