

Interview with Eileen Gottlieb

Conducted by Andrea Schara

September 18, 2023

Eileen Gottlieb:

Got it.

Andrea Schara:

Good morning, Eileen. We've had a little bit of a workout getting your audio straightened out.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Kind of like my life.

Andrea Schara:

It's kind of like your life. You want to turn up the volume on your life.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yeah, exactly. Or down, depends.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. Turning it down might be good. I took my microphone off so that we would be about the same as far as the sound goes.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Okay.

Andrea Schara:

Hopefully.

Eileen Gottlieb:

And you can hear me pretty well right now?

Andrea Schara:

Pretty well. It's about maybe 14 after 11, and today's Monday, the 18th of September. But when you're in Florida the weather is always good.

Eileen Gottlieb:

So they tell me.

Andrea Schara:

See if it's possible for you to move in closer to, yeah ... So that when you tilt the, yeah, that's it. Now your face is equal to mine in size. Okay. We'll start again. It's Monday, the 18th of September 2023. Eileen Gottlieb, I've known you a long time and I've sent you the 10 questions and I'm just going to let you-

Eileen Gottlieb:

Oh my God, I don't have them in front of me.

Andrea Schara:

Oh, that's okay. The first one is just who are you and what was your professional background?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Okay. Who am I? I am a 76-year-old practicing clinician. I've been practicing marriage and family therapy for 45 years and been associated with the Bowen Center for about 40. Also have been very involved in the Florida Bowen Network going way back to 1993.

Andrea Schara:

1993.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yes, working with Dr. Polly Caskie and Dr. Myra Schneider and Kathleen Cauley and Vicky Topcik—not much has changed.

Andrea Schara:

A good team.

Eileen Gottlieb:

A terrific team. As a matter of fact, Dr. Kerr used to call us "Team Bowen."

Andrea Schara:

That's great. I love it.

Eileen Gottlieb:

The exciting thing is that we're going to have that Fourth International Conference here in Miami in February.

Andrea Schara:

What date will that be?

Eileen Gottlieb:

That is February 22nd through 24th, 2024. And there's a whole new generation of Bowen thinkers and clinicians and researchers. We've come a long way in four decades.

Andrea Schara:

Well, that's beautiful to hear about, and keep up the good work. Looking forward to the conference. Let me ask you, what attracted you to Dr. Bowen or maybe Bowen theory first, how did the connection get made?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, my life was a bit of a mess. In 1980, I was separated after 10 years of marriage with two very little children. Six and just under two. And I had a very dear friend who grew up with me in Washington D.C., David Gottlieb. And so he said to me, "Would you like to come and live in DC for a year and see how you like it?" I hadn't lived in DC since I graduated from high school. So, I did. And during that year in DC, he introduced me to Dr. Lilian Rosenbaum. They had had a relationship for many years. Before that, David had been the Hebrew teacher for Lilian's four children. In meeting Lillian and having some time on my hands, because I wasn't able to practice as I had been doing in Florida in DC, she suggested that I learn about the Bowen Center and the in-town postgraduate program, which I did. And I can remember exactly where I was filling out that application. It was 13 pages. And I couldn't imagine these questions. It was like, "What?"

But I persevered and had my interview with Kathleen Kerr and she said to me, "To be perfectly honest, given the state of your life, we would not normally be inclined to invite you into the program, but you sound like a pretty interesting gal, so what the hell, we'll give you a shot." And I did the year. Yeah, I did the year in town. And then we moved back to Florida. We eventually got married, and I did two more years in the out-of-town program-

Andrea Schara:

What year was this when you went to-

Eileen Gottlieb:

It was 1980, was the in-town year, and '81, '82, actually it was '83, those three.

Andrea Schara:

You were married then in '83, or to David?

Eileen Gottlieb:

No, I was married in 1980.

Andrea Schara:

In 1980, okay, good.

Eileen Gottlieb:

In October of 1980, which was when, just about when I started the in-town program.

Andrea Schara:

Oh, that was great.

Eileen Gottlieb:

The timing was really perfect.

Andrea Schara:

Your motivation was, "My life is a mess. I have young children, a new husband, and I need to figure out what's going on."

Eileen Gottlieb:

And a previous one.

Andrea Schara:

The previous ex-husband to deal with.

Eileen Gottlieb:

There were a hell of a lot of triangles. At that point I had no idea what I was doing, but I did know-

Andrea Schara:

You were flying by the seat of your pants.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Right. I did know that I was very distraught about how things had played out and determined to try and understand, make sense of it, and do a better job with it. It was really a commitment to the children and to my family. I didn't want them to have to pay a bigger price for what had happened than had already taken place.

Andrea Schara:

And in that 13-page application you saw that maybe there was another way to think about all this or to deal with it?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, it definitely piqued my curiosity. I hadn't thought about my family and its impact on me really.

Andrea Schara:

Isn't that amazing? I mean, so many people say this, "I'm in a family, but my grandfather dies or my mother dies. And I never thought that it was going to have an impact on me, alter my functioning."

Eileen Gottlieb:

I was, I think very, very clueless.

Andrea Schara:

Very curious. I think, what did Bowen say? He used to say things like, "When I start to give a talk and then people in the audience get up and leave I look at that as a good sign. And I only really want maybe the top 1% or maybe 10 if it's a good audience. My metric is, when they leave I'm successful."

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, I certainly hear that, and I knew there was something there.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, you were the 1%.

Eileen Gottlieb:

The timing was so interesting, because I hadn't lived back in Washington where I was born, and where so much of the important early events in the family played out. That all converged and I had the opportunity to think about my home and my early life differently.

Andrea Schara:

Can you give me an example of thinking about your life differently?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yes. I think I ran away from Washington. There was so much chaos when my father died. He was only 38 years old, I didn't even know him.

Andrea Schara:

He was 38, and how old were you?

Eileen Gottlieb:

18 months.

Andrea Schara:

Oh my goodness.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yeah, and my older brother was four. My younger brother was 12 days old. My mother was 32, and it was a pretty chaotic time. I don't think I wanted to think about all of it. I just wanted to try to hold up and get through it, which I did. Now, looking back from the perspective of Bowen theory and how much I've worked to understand my family, I think my mother was remarkable, I think her mother was remarkable. I think it could have turned out a whole lot worse. And all things being equal, things are pretty settled, at least for the moment.

Andrea Schara:

Were you the only girl, this is?

Eileen Gottlieb:

I was the only daughter and truly my mother's confidant, she leaned on me. She called on me. I worked in her business. She had a hair salon. She was not a beautician, but she was a fantastic manager and businesswoman. Both my younger brother and I worked in that business from the time we were teenagers. I was doing manicures at age 14. I'm not at all adverse to hard work, and I thank my mother so much for that. Because I watched what she did to put our family on very solid ground. And there were challenges, for sure, and there was some fallout, but overall I just have utmost respect for her.

Andrea Schara:

But initially, if I was listening, you had some reactivity and you ran away to Florida when you were how old?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, I didn't run to Florida. First, I went to the University of Maryland, and then I went off to Boston to live and go to graduate school at Northeastern. And by that time I was married to my first husband. And we had the opportunity when he finished his training, he was an oral and maxillofacial surgeon, we could go anywhere. And I said, "Let's go to Canada. Let's go live in Toronto." I had visited it several times and was very taken. But I now understand anywhere but DC would have been good. Of course, the irony is that when our relationship fell apart, we were in Florida, because he had made the move to Florida because I wanted to go back and have the children be near my mother. And she was there. She eventually remarried. She remarried literally a year after he and I got married.

Andrea Schara:

What year was that you got married?

Eileen Gottlieb:

1970.

Andrea Schara:

In 1970. And then your mother remarried in '71?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yes. And she had not been married for 25 years, so it really is interesting.

Andrea Schara:

And in terms of the theory, did that help you to look at your family differently? I'm just thinking about the switch that happened that somehow you were able to see your family differently, or be more aware of your family, period.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, I think yes, be more aware. I don't think that I was any more grown up in my family when I first started at the Bowen Center. When I think back, the running away was one version of dealing with the reactivity and then the coming back and living 20 minutes from my mother was another version.

Andrea Schara:

But she was there to help you with your two children and-

Eileen Gottlieb:

Not really.

Andrea Schara:

Even, you're close to your mom, you're 20 minutes away-

Eileen Gottlieb:

Never babysit a day in her life.

Andrea Schara:

What?

Eileen Gottlieb:

She never babysat a day in her life. She was there to help me, because at that point I didn't have the emotional strength to believe that I could think for myself, decide for myself, and manage my decisions. That took three more decades.

Andrea Schara:

If you can't think for yourself, who are you thinking for?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, exactly. What she thought was way more important than what I did. And thank goodness I hung in there with Bowen theory, because that really enabled me to turn it around. And not in a reactive way, in a very thoughtful way. I was able to appreciate what she had to offer. Her sense of responsibility, her competency, her intelligence, her commitment, all of those things, which I believe are part of how I function too. But by the same token I was able to understand that I had my own life to live, and there were things that I wanted that were different than her.

Andrea Schara:

And what would they be that you wanted more knowledge? Is that the?

Eileen Gottlieb:

No, I wanted my life to look somewhat different.

Andrea Schara:

Okay.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I didn't want to be alone for 25 years. I knew what she had gone through and what we had gone through. And even though we, I think did remarkably well, I believe that I would be better off with a partner. I still believe that.

Andrea Schara:

How, yeah. I mean, your children, when you married David, your children were still kind of needing a dad, I guess. And you needed more stability and he seemed to offer that?

Eileen Gottlieb:

He had a lot to offer in that regard.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Eileen Gottlieb:

They still talk about him, both the children and the grandchildren.

Andrea Schara:

Oh, that's great.

Eileen Gottlieb:

What he brought to their lives in terms of a sense of security. Of stability and wellbeing, which doesn't mean that ... Again, there were enormous challenges, but we figured it out over and over and over again.

Andrea Schara:

And that's partially driven by gaining more and more knowledge about Bowen theory as some kind of a compass or a guide, or you have this body of knowledge, and then you apply it somehow to your family. And you're the kind of researcher on yourself using Bowen theory as a way to make decisions, or?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yeah, I was thinking about this yesterday before the interview. I was thinking about how much experience I've had over 76 years. And then having a way of making sense of that experience that I believe is useful and that is grounded in facts. Not just facts about my family, but facts about all families, facts about human life. That objective lens just has made all the difference. And I especially see it when I look around at my extended family and at my friendship network, and just the community in general, society. I think there are lots of people who are struggling and suffering. And it's not because they aren't capable, or they don't have good intentions and they aren't working hard, but I don't think they have a way of thinking that is enabling them to get beyond their early experiences and biases and the subjectivity. That is such a big part of what shapes us.

Andrea Schara:

Subjectivity rules.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Indeed. And I'm very invested and have been for a long time in challenging that. Yesterday I was in temple for Rosh Hashanah, and I thought to myself, "I believe I'm more prepared than ever to recognize when I am swimming in that subjective soup. And how unhelpful that is and make the correction, first in my head and then in my deed." And I believe the evidence for that is that I am in very good contact with everybody who has been important to me. They move toward me-

Andrea Schara:

That's a lot of people I would imagine.

Eileen Gottlieb:

No, not really. Maybe I'd say 35 to 50 people that are really a part of my life.

Andrea Schara:

I remember Jack Calhoun thought you should have 12 important relationships to manage the stress of the population increasing, but you're almost three times more than he advised.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, I've been in three different families, let's be fair.

Andrea Schara:

And you should be able to manage a lot of stress knowing, having what he called it, social roles that each family you belong to, you're a different person. You're exposed to different ideas.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yes.

Andrea Schara:

And so the more of this kind of experience that you have, yeah, the stronger your tribe is, so to speak.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I'd like to think that I'm a resource to those three different families. And it's interesting, Andrea, I am having a break-fast for Yom Kippur. I'm having it at the clubhouse where we live, and it involves all three families. It involves my children's father and his family, which includes his sister and nieces and great-nieces and nephews, includes David Gottlieb's son to whom I'm very close, and his family. David's sister and nephew are invited. I don't know that they're going to come because it's a bit of a schlep for them. It's a long drive. And then it involves my current husband and his nephew in Miami Beach and his cousins in West Palm Beach. And I tell that to people and they look at me like I have four eyes.

Andrea Schara:

You're just the modern woman adapting well to the circumstances.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I'm trying. I was having that conversation with Andy Gottlieb, David's son, and he says to me, "Well, of course they don't understand that. They haven't experienced it, they haven't lived it, but we have."

Andrea Schara:

Such a good point that he's making that you have to have experience to really... to learn Bowen theory maybe, or to be guided by Bowen theory somehow or another. It doesn't work if it's just an intellectual thing. You bet Freud had it as an intellectual thing. Let's say, we're going to give you some insight. Let's have a good conversation, you'll get some insight and don't talk to your family about it, by the way. Bowen comes along with this completely radical idea that, "Hey,

analysis takes too long. Half the time you can do this. It's like regroup therapy," he used to say. Yeah, managing yourself in-

Eileen Gottlieb:

The faction.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, being so curious about human behavior and about your family and these people that are important to you, and meanwhile they don't really understand your compass. Where did it come from? Or that you even have one maybe, I don't know.

Eileen Gottlieb:

No, except they don't need to, as long as I can show up and manage me in such a way that it's not a problem for either of us or any of us. Which has really been my effort, more in the last decade than ever.

Andrea Schara:

How do you think, the reason for studying Bowen theory, I think you answered really well. And how has systems knowledge changed your family? I think you're really addressing that with this idea that you've got to manage me. A good title for a short book.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Also thinking about leading by example.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, leading by example.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Doesn't mean that people are necessarily going to think the way I do, or be who I imagine them to be. But I do think what I'm seeing is that they're able to be what they can be, and I'm very supportive of that.

Andrea Schara:

It's important. When you come to look at the use of Bowen theory for you to manage yourself and your family and to have these important relationships over time, I guess the next question is, will Bowen theory impact psychiatry or society?

Eileen Gottlieb:

I wish I could say yes.

Andrea Schara:

You can.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I don't see a lot of evidence to this point in time, but if we keep at it, I have yet to see anything in my own life that is more useful. And not just for me, but for my family when I'm able to act out of a thoughtful presence. And for my clinical families and looking at research, its potential is enormous. But it also has to go up against a very closed system.

Andrea Schara:

In mental health, mental health being a very closed system.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I don't like to think about it very much, because it's very disturbing to me. The whole idea of people being helpless, of people needing to be rescued, of people not being able to think or decide for themselves. I can clearly remember Dr. Bowen talking about the sheep going over the cliff. Do you remember that cartoon? I don't know if it was hanging in the Bowen Center or where the heck I saw that. But one is just following the other and they're just-

Andrea Schara:

Dropping off.

Eileen Gottlieb:

... piling up on top of one another, off the cliff.

Andrea Schara:

Sounds like a Dr. Seuss thing. Yeah, the urge to follow the leader. And yeah, he would call that the Pied Piper. People will follow maybe what you were talking about, subjectivity. And the more the subjectivity, the more exciting, the more emotional, the less rational, and the less able to take a decision for yourself against, in many times the hyped up emotionality of the group that's following the Pied Piper off the cliff to what he called societal regression.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Being able to stand up to something that doesn't make sense to you. Based on your own experience and your ability to think factually and objectively about what you've learned from that experience, which is I think that's a very hard thing for the human to do. It has been for me. But when you can do it, it opens up all sorts of possibilities that otherwise would not exist.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, I think that's-

Eileen Gottlieb:

Like having a break-fast for three different families.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, fabulous. And I think that you're really hitting on also why it's a hard sell to mental health. Because they like helping helpless people, rescuing them, and people get more and more dependent.

Eileen Gottlieb:

What they know how to do. And until they come to wonder, "Is this really helpful? And if not, what else might be?" You're right. It's a hard sell.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, but that's okay. I don't know how it will impact psychiatry or society. Bowen used to say it would take three generations, so that's 75 years, and it probably is going to take another three generations. Or I don't really know. But it seems like a very helpful way of organizing your life for the people who are able to get out of maybe the fusion. I sometimes think about it as the "confusion" and the need to go along with others is so strong.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, yeah, I think that's built into us.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, I hear you.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Putting together my presentation for symposium, and I'm thinking about interdependence as an ever existing phenomenon. It's absolutely essential for life on planet Earth. Likewise, how do you create the circumstances in which independence can go up against it and yet still respect it? Because I think they're so deeply integrated, the two processes. The other thing is, I don't think that the world will be changed by psychiatry or mental health. I think it's going to come through biology.

Andrea Schara:

Okay. How do you think about that? It sounds intriguing.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Just thinking about all the breakthroughs in neuroscience. And the data that is just voluminous at this point, supporting Bowen's original observations and the concepts in the theory that we have the data. We understand now that physiologically we're deeply impacted by one another on every level. Every system in the body, the immune system, the endocrine system, the neurological system. Perhaps more and more of that focus will help bridge the gap between mental health and the reality of how people function.

Andrea Schara:

How to focus on the positive aspects of psychological health. Maybe that's what you're alluding to that people will have more knowledge. I heard this psychiatrist talk the other day. And he isn't a neuroscience guy, and he somehow puts light into the brain in order to deal with depression and things like that. It's still more or less focused on, we're going to help you to be able to ... They found out they actually did some work that somebody had macular degeneration, and they shined this light on the brain cells that had to do with your eyes, and the person could actually see again. And of course, because they couldn't see they were depressed. And then when they could see slightly again they were a lot less depressed.

Eileen Gottlieb:

How do we shine light on the family?

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. You're making a good case here that relationships are really hugely important in the way you live your life.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yes.

Andrea Schara:

How to manage.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Thanks to Dr. Collier, came across the book *The Good Life*, which is the Harvard Study. It spans eight decades. And they came out on the side of relationships as being the universal difference in the quality of people's lives. Exceeding everything else, diet, health, socioeconomic status, material things.

Andrea Schara:

Can you say that again that they found that relationships are universal?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Right.

Andrea Schara:

But they can be pain, painful.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yes, they can, but they found in their studies that the people who had high-quality relationships, ones that were useful to them, tended to have longer lives, healthier lives, and less, not problems, but risk of early mortality, chronic illness. It's not unlike what Steven Cole was talking about, or-

Andrea Schara:

Steven Cole, was he the guy who saw how the cells changed, or what was Steven Cole's-

Eileen Gottlieb:

The neurobiology of social relationships. And he has an enormous study at UCLA of people with inflammatory diseases. He has taken a look at people whose lives are more purposeful. They have a focus on something that's important to them, meaning whatever that is, different for each person. And compare that to people whose major thrust in life is to be happy, to please themselves. He calls that the heuristic-

Andrea Schara:

Oh, I can remember that.

Eileen Gottlieb:

... way of thinking.

Andrea Schara:

Did he show how the cells changed? I've forgotten who, with the transcription process.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I think so, yes. That's what they've been working on.

Andrea Schara:

Behavior could turn these cells on or off.

Eileen Gottlieb:

The epigenetic context.

Andrea Schara:

Mm-hmm, so that would be really factual evidence.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Exactly.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. Turning the cells on and off. Kind of fitting into this was the ninth question, have you developed ideas that could amend or refine the theory? And/or have you evidence that could further prove the theory? I think you took on the second part of that, but the first part, amend or refine the theory.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, I've been looking at chronic illness for a couple of decades. Most recently I'm looking at aging. Trying to grasp how the effort to be clear about self, taking responsibility for self and figuring out what one's responsibility is to others, how that intersects with the way in which people age. How it accounts for the variation. And I've been trying to look at it through the Papero dimensional model, which would be, as I understand it, the way families manage themselves across time. A lifetime and then generationally. I think all of that has something to do with what aging looks like. And whether or not that'll add to the theory remains to be seen. But I think it's a very important undertaking. Which comes at a time in my life when I know, this is it, baby.

Andrea Schara:

Don't throw in the towel now. I mean, you're more than halfway over the bridge.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Three quarters.

Andrea Schara:

Three quarters over the bridge. But what I'm hearing is the importance of what is one's responsibility for and to others.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yeah.

Andrea Schara:

And the Papero... he has a kind of look at something that's far beyond diagnosing others with some label or another, but to just kind of do a field study. And one of the most important in the field study, it would be, man, what do people want to do? What's your goal? What's your, yeah. Instead of treating people because they're depressed, what's your goal?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Growth.

Andrea Schara:

What?

Eileen Gottlieb:
Growth.

Andrea Schara:
Growth.

Eileen Gottlieb:
What does it take to grow. All throughout life.

Andrea Schara:
See if you can expand that a little bit.

Eileen Gottlieb:
Well, I think Bowen theory is about the capacity to develop one's full potential. And to do it within the context of a network of relationships that has had an enormous amount to do with how we've developed in the first place and how far we've developed. The more I can understand about that, and then the more I can take on the responsibility for my own growth, for the things that I believe are going to help me to function better and allow me to be a resource to others, then that's an enormous contribution.

Andrea Schara:
Working on your full potential in the face of opposition of all kinds of sorts from sometimes your society, your family, but yeah, your full potential can be enhanced by, I guess what you started with, the knowledge of Bowen theory and not being emotionally blind to the impact your family's having on you, and you're having on your family.

Eileen Gottlieb:
Bumbling around in the dark.

Andrea Schara:
Turn on the flashlight. Siri, turn on the flashlight in this case.

Eileen Gottlieb:
Turn up the lights. I remember Bowen saying, "No one gets there in one generation." And I have so much respect for that. But how far can you get with the hand you've been dealt, the resources available to you, the obstacles that you confront? I have already decided that my tombstone is going to say *L'dor v'dor*, which is Hebrew for "from generation to generation." It's a basic part of the religious service and the thinking in Judaism. And it is so consistent with Bowen theory that just [gestures, hand-in-hand]. I'll get as far as I can get and theory is going to be a big part of that, which is why I feel compelled even at 76 to keep writing abstracts and doing my

part, not walking away. Some of that is for my wellbeing, but a lot of that is because I do believe I have a responsibility, not only to Bowen, but to the whole network.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, that's an important part of it too, that you, over all these years you form quite a few incredibly important relationships. And then there's the next generation. You're talking about Carrie Collier, which is, she's the next generation leader, and your responsibility to carry Bowen theory forward includes relationships with these important people.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I agree. The whole thrust of the Fourth International Conference is passing the baton to the next generation, but also think about is moving families forward.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, that's again, a good title for a book, Moving Families Forward. I like that. The last question is, which parts of our society and which professions might benefit from Bowen's ideas today, yet effectively have no access to them?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Well, certainly my interest in studying antisemitism. And not from a religious perspective, from a perspective of emotional process in society. That where it comes to government and politics, religious institutions, even universities, anywhere that people are trying to grapple with the really awesome challenges of 2023 and the next century. How might these ideas lend them a hand in terms of broadening the lens and creating a capacity for developing more options than now exist?

Andrea Schara:

Yeah, it's like just spreading out the ideas to new universities or people who are working. As you said, that there's a lot of antisemitism as part of, I think, emotional blindness that you talked about in the beginning. People don't even know they're contributing to polarization, things like that, that are pretty obvious, really in a way where you just see this intense polarization and people climb up on the backs of the schizophrenic. They climb up on the backs of the high emotionality and do unthinkable things. Just because they're in a way possessed by a feeling response to being threatened or being told that you're being threatened. And yeah, it's extremely difficult to be a presence in a highly polarized society, and especially in something where there's really generations of antisemitism, for instance. It's just often part of the culture people grow up in, is they envy Jewish people, they blame them. And now you have this whole, again, a multi-generational group of people who are emotionally blind to what they're doing I think oftentimes. And then you get these more and more fringe people that go into synagogues and misbehave terribly.

Eileen Gottlieb:

And that's one version, of course, of a much broader process in terms of the breakdown-

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Eileen Gottlieb:

... of institutions and society under pressure when there is no leadership that has a capacity to think about what is really happening in the lives of people that would contribute to such misery. But they can't even entertain the idea that they have some responsibility for the position that they find themselves in. And what they might be able to do about that. There's the blame game, which has been since the beginning of time and probably will be until the end of the universe. But in our lifetimes, can we show up differently?

Andrea Schara:

That's the real question. There are people who are not blind to what is going on, and how can they shine a light on what they're doing to make a difference, which is what I'm really getting from you is shining a light on what you can do.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yeah, I think it's your responsibility.

Andrea Schara:

Your responsibility. And what you can do to make a difference in people's lives.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Beginning with yourself, of course, you're not helping anybody if you don't straighten your own life out.

Andrea Schara:

Well, that is the motivating factor. This is your life.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Yep. One and only.

Andrea Schara:

It's your one and only life as far as we know. But what does it take to overcome? The beginning of your interview here was just so good about, you can't see the impact your family is having on you. And so you follow the instinctive, or the four mechanisms, the distance, conflict, stuff is automatic without awareness. And how do you give people awareness and tools to work on? You have a lot of things to measure. You can measure longevity or increase or decrease in polarization. I mean, there are a lot of ways of thinking about what's the impact of what we're doing here. You have three families to look at, what has been the impact on people with a

tendency to say to distance, and now they're coming back to be with one another and not run away. That's huge.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I think it is. Since it never happened in previous generations.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. People didn't realize.

Eileen Gottlieb:

They didn't even see it as an option.

Andrea Schara:

They just wanted to run away, and America happened to be a good place with ... And then eventually, America's not such a good place, and you have to stop and say, "Wait a minute, what can I do to make a difference here?" And working on antisemitism is a particularly good thing to do. Because in my prejudiced world, I believe polarization and as you called it, the blame game, is really the regression that Bowen talked about. And maybe more people can see that. I don't know. But that's the hope.

Eileen Gottlieb:

We'll see.

Andrea Schara:

We'll see if more people can see it. I really appreciate your interview here and the time. It's good to get to know what you're up to and how Bowen and his ideas influenced you and what you really remember from your time just learning Bowen theory. I think that's-

Eileen Gottlieb:

And continuing to learn it.

Andrea Schara:

And continuing to learn the application of Bowen theory. Yeah. Anything else you want to put in that you can think of?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Oh, just a gift. A great fortune to have run into these ideas quite by accident.

Andrea Schara:

Seemingly. Lillian. Yeah, running into Lillian, who encouraged you, "Hey, you've got some time? There's this 13 page application."

Eileen Gottlieb:

I've never taken any of it lightly.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah.

Eileen Gottlieb:

That was an opportunity of a lifetime. And Frank Giove, when he was, my supervisor, said, "You need to coach with Dr. Bowen." And I was like, "What? How in the world could I do that?" He said, "Why couldn't you?"

Andrea Schara:

And so you did.

Eileen Gottlieb:

I did.

Andrea Schara:

How many years did that last for?

Eileen Gottlieb:

Probably at least seven. Maybe nine.

Andrea Schara:

Wow. That's quite a long time to be coached by Bowen.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Put me through some really rough stuff, and I'm so grateful for it.

Andrea Schara:

Absolutely, yeah.

Eileen Gottlieb:

And more importantly, what he left behind. The people and everything that the Archive is organizing and making available for the future generations, which I want you to know that we have decided as a board in Florida that whatever discretionary money comes out of this conference, and we hope we'll have some, we will donate a portion of it to the Murray Bowen Archives.

Andrea Schara:

That's fabulous. People ask me all the time, "Why do you put so much energy into the Archives, the guy's dead?"

Eileen Gottlieb:

It's not about the guy.

Andrea Schara:

It's the ideas, it's not about the guy. But his ideas were communicated to the second generation people like you and me and Frank Giove. Frank Giove threw you a really good, soft ball that you could hit out of the park.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Absolutely he did.

Andrea Schara:

Led to eight or nine years with studying with Bowen. That's really something. And the Archives, anyway, the Archives has, I don't think my little brain can comprehend all that Bowen did. And one reason I was motivated to do the oral histories is that people have had these relationships that changed their lives. And I wanted to capture what Bowen theory and Bowen himself have done to, I'm going to call it, wake people up, wake people up. There's another world. There's another possibility here.

Eileen Gottlieb:

He did it, and I think we are all continuing to try and do it.

Andrea Schara:

Yeah. And the Archives just contain a lot of material that may open new doors for people? Who knows? I don't know. But again, I'm generous, your generosity and thank you for giving your time and energy and this interview to the Archives, and I appreciate it very much.

Eileen Gottlieb:

My pleasure. I appreciate the Archives.

Andrea Schara:

Okay. Thanks for it all. I'll send you this tape. Okay.

Eileen Gottlieb:

Love to have it.

Andrea Schara:

I'll hope that the audio can be restored or beefed up a little bit too. All right, thanks again.