

A graphic with a dark green, textured background resembling moss or a forest floor. Overlaid on this are glowing, white, branching lines that look like roots or neural connections. The text "Workshop Presentations" is written in a large, bold, orange font across the center.

# Workshop Presentations

## **Observing, Returning Home and Unlearning to Learn; Exploring the Differentiation Process to Develop a Natural Systems Research Question.**

Presenter: Katherine Burke

Dr Murray Bowen wrote extensively to the process of developing Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST). Dr Bowen wrote to an inductive process of observing and working with facts as they built over time, synthesised facts into findings ultimately leading to the development of concepts and a theory that describes a way of seeing how family systems operate as single emotional units in interacting with broader society and the environment. Bowen invited students of the theory to test the theory out for themselves, to learn to think for self and to learn to see the patterns of functioning within one's family and broader systems over time. Each system interacting with the broader environment experiences challenges and successes.

This presentation explores the effort to think about research as a process of unlearning conventional thinking to learn to observe and see complex systems operating; to think about research as a process of learning to see verse learning to know. The presentation covers the process of observing patterns in the professional societal process and one's own family system noting this as a critical step in managing and maturing the self as the researcher.

### **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.



## **Invisible Threads: Emotional Pressure, Interlocking Triangles, and Symptoms in an Individual**

Presenter: Nicky Fortescue

This presentation explores the application of Bowen Family Systems Theory to understand the complex interplay between an individual's symptoms and the broader family and organisational systems they are embedded within. Through a personal case study spanning over a decade, the presenter illustrates how intense emotional pressures and reactivity across multiple interconnected systems can travel via interlocking triangles and contribute to the manifestation of symptoms in individuals, such as mental health issues and relational conflicts.

Utilising family diagrams and timelines, the presenter examines the way emotional reactivity can travel between nuclear family, extended family and workplace environments to amplify an adolescent's mental health challenges. The case study highlights how changes or disturbances in one system can reverberate and trigger compensatory shifts in others, underscoring the systemic nature of emotional processes.

By unpacking the layers of systemic influences, the presenter aims to validate the theoretical principles of Bowen Family Systems Theory and emphasise the importance of considering the broader emotional context when addressing individual symptoms or distress.



### **Bio**

Nicky Fortescue has spent 18 years studying Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) and working on differentiation of self. As a graduate of the Family Systems Institute (the FSI) with a certificate in Family Systems Theory and Practice, Nicky has been volunteering and working for the FSI in various roles since 2015. Currently serving on the FSI faculty, she oversees the Systems in Ministry branch, teaching and applying BFST principles to faith communities and in ministry contexts.

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## **Chickens Chimps and Instagram: Social Species, Social Media, and the uptick in teenage anxiety**

Presenter: Ken Morgan

What does the current mental health crisis among adolescents have to do with chickens, chimpanzees and the iPhone4? More than you might think. This fast-moving presentation will look at the characteristics of hierarchy in social species and explore how these might provide a lens for observing human interaction via social media. It goes on to propose some links between perceived social position and some of the increased and intensifying symptoms observable in contemporary western society.



### **Bio**

Ken Morgan has shaped a career spanning the worlds of business, not-for-profits and Christian churches. Beginning as an HR generalist in manufacturing and primary production, he's served as a consultant, trainer and coach to some of Australia's most-recognised organisations. A graduate of the Family Systems Institute, he currently serves as chair of the board.

## Family Emotional Process

Presenter: Lily Mailler

The focus of this workshop will be the emotional/relational processes of a family linked to a well-known tragic case in Australian history.

Using a family diagram I will present information about the relationship processes of the family in question; the information I will present will be based on books, YouTube interviews and other material that exists in the public domain. Once the information on the family has been presented, I will invite participants to interact with me in thinking about how a Bowen theory lens on the family would explain the tragic events that unfolded.

This workshop is aimed at participants that have a reasonable grasp of the theory as my expectation is that they will be actively engaged with me in thinking about the emotional process in this family and its impact on its members.



### Bio

Lily Mailler is a registered psychologist whose work as a therapist is informed by her rich work and life experience as well as her continued efforts to apply a Family Systems perspective to her personal and professional life.

Lily began using Bowen Family Systems Theory in 1999, she initially found the ideas challenging, given their counterintuitive nature, but persistence in grappling with the concepts resulted in a very interesting journey. Lily joined the Family Systems Institute in 2008 as a therapist and became a member of the faculty soon after; as a faculty member she put together a variety of workshops on Bowen Theory as well as running discussion groups and supervision sessions for certificate candidates.

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## Working with Primary and Interlocking Triangles: Parents of an Aggressive Young Person Reflect on Their Journey Towards Identifying Goals for Self

Presenters: Linda MacKay

In the latter half of the 20th Century, Dr Murray Bowen developed the concept of the triangle in his seminal research with families. The triangle is fundamental to the way in which relational sensitivity is managed in the family emotional system. Understanding how triangles manage the ebb and flow of both chronic and acute anxiety is crucial to any therapeutic work.

This video case presentation is one in which Linda asks two parents to reflect on their process of becoming clear on their steps towards finding goals for self, as they struggled to best deal with their verbally and physically aggressive 15-year-old son. It highlights the importance of gaining a broader view of the emotional process via the use of the family diagram. It also highlights how a clinician can assist parents to see their responsibilities in drawing attention to the operations of the primary triangle – how it fuels reactivity and contributes to worse and better outcomes – and how interlocking triangles in the extended family contribute to any “stuckness” in the work in terms of their influence on reciprocity and functioning.



### Bio

Dr Linda MacKay PhD is a Couple and Family therapist who provides clinical supervision and training in couple and family therapy to senior practitioners and teams across the disciplines of psychiatry, psychology, social work, and child and adolescent mental health. She is also the Associate Editor (in Practice) of the Australian & Zealand Journal of Family Therapy and is on faculty at Deakin University. Linda, who also consults to organisations and family businesses, utilises a Bowen family systems framework to assist clients in managing conflict, violence and abuse, and parenting symptomatic children and young people.

## Through the Lens of a Horse – Equine and Animal Assisted Therapies

Presenters: Elizabeth Milinkovic, Lara Cook and Samantha Gordon

Equine Assisted Learning and Psychotherapy is a therapy that involves working with horses, to help humans. Equine Assisted learning and Psychotherapy may be applied in a range of areas but can be very beneficial when working with clients who are experiencing depression, anxiety, post traumatic stress and people with intellectual or physical disability. As there is no riding involved with EAP/L, everyone, regardless of ability is able to participate increasing access to those who may not have been able to join in before.

This presentation will go into detail about the Eagala Model, its framework and the relationship between horses/animals and humans in therapy. We will talk about how that interaction is helpful as a therapeutic intervention, the main target groups we work with and give some examples/case studies from clients who have been supported through EAP. Our multidisciplinary team, alongside one of our registered therapy dogs, will be present on the day to answer any questions, guide you through how EAP works and provide some insight into how families can benefit from this type of therapy. Participants will be invited to interact with the therapy dog during the session and benefit from having the hands-on experience.

### Bio



Elizabeth is the owner and founder of Sydney Equine Assisted Learning. She is professionally trained and accredited through the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (Eagala). Eagala is the leading international non-profit association for professionals incorporating horses to address mental health and personal development needs.

Elizabeth has over 17 years of hands-on experience with horses and a great passion for Equine Assisted Psychotherapy. Elizabeth has over 13 years' experience in the Community Services industry, underpinned by a Diploma of Community Services Work and Certificate IV in training and Assessment.

### Bio



Lara is a qualified, experienced Counsellor, delivering services at Sydney Equine Assisted Learning as well as through her private practice, Blue Mountains Animal Assisted Therapy. Lara holds a Diploma of Counselling, Diploma of Community Services Work and Early childhood education qualifications. Over her career Lara has worked in child protection fields, specialising in Out of Home care programs; crisis care, early intervention, case management for at risk homeless youth exiting the care of the Minister and youth at risk or experiencing homelessness within the SHS sector.

### Bio



Samantha Gordon is a registered counsellor with ACA, and holds a bachelors degree of Social Science and a graduate diploma in counselling. She runs her own cutting-edge, highly experienced and empathetic private practice based in the Sydney region. Along with her extensive knowledge and qualifications as a counsellor, Samantha brings exceptional insight to the team as an ex thoroughbred racing jockey. She has worked in many therapeutic support roles. Samantha specialises in Trauma informed practice.