



# Workshop: Assessing Family Functioning

**Tue 27 Aug 2024 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM AEST**

Crows Nest Centre, 2 Ernest Place, Crows Nest 2065

Join Dr Dan Papero as he presents this workshop live in person.

This workshop will discuss the development of a functional assessment model of the family and its possible relevance to the effort broadly to assist families as they encounter the vicissitudes of living. Dr Dan Papero will present his thinking about assessing families on a continua, drawing on Dr Bowen's work in considering how functioning differs for a person based up the level of differentiation of the person, and in light of recent developments at the RDoC away from diagnostic categories and towards a dimensional model to better understand human behaviour.

In 1955, Murray Bowen and his research team began to refer to the family as a system or an organism. This conceptual leap led to a focus on the functioning of that unit or organism. In personal conversations Murray Bowen often floated the idea of a system of family diagnosis or assessment. He believed that it would be possible to create a family diagnostic system that could be used alongside or even in place of the DSM.

Like an individual, the family organism adapts dynamically to its environment. It experiences internal disturbances (for example, the loss or gain of a new family member, health challenges) as well as threats to the well-being of the unit from the external world. Each adaptive effort can vary as to its effectiveness and efficiency. The functioning of family members individual and collectively determines the adaptive outcome of the unit.

In 2011-2012 the US National Institute of Mental Health began development of the Research Domain Criteria (RDoC), "...a research framework designed for studying the full range of human behavior from normal to abnormal based on biology, behavior, and context." ("NIMH RDoC Publications", accessed September 28, 2017, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/research-priorities/rdoc/nimh-rdoc-publications.shtml>) The RDoC moves away from the categorical classification model of the DSM to a dimensional or continuum model. It currently comprises 5 domains or areas of functional continua and proposes two additional. The current domains are; negative valence systems, positive valence

systems, cognitive systems, systems for social processes and arousal/modulatory systems. Two proposed additional domains include neurodevelopment and environment.

The RDoC use of dimensions led the author to consider a new approach to family assessment. Bowen describes how functioning differs for a person based up the level of differentiation of the person. He describes characteristics of higher and lower levels of functioning. From these descriptions continua can be developed to assist a person to evaluate his or her own functioning relative to a set of continua. These continua can also be applied to the family unit. This presentation will discuss the development of a functional assessment model of the family and its possible relevance to the effort broadly to assist families as they encounter the vicissitudes of living.

Workshop will be held onsite at the Crows Nest Centre and also streamed online.