



FAMILY STORIES FROM REAL LIFE

Presenting

Friday Bowen Family Systems Shorts

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#4. Managing Self in Relationship to the Natural World

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In the silence created by the human slowing down as we shelter at home, for many this time has been a challenging hardship in unthinkable ways. The Earth, on the other hand, has responded differently. The bird song is more audible, the air and water are cleaner. Going forward, how do we balance consideration for all humanity and all life on Earth?

The human, Bowen says "...is intimately connected with all living things."¹ As we work on managing ourselves better in our family, work, and social systems, we can extend taking responsibility for ourselves in our relationship with the Earth. In 1974 Bowen predicted that the type of person who can survive the coming environmental crises "will be one who can live in better harmony with nature."²

A central take-home idea for me from the Bowen Center's Spring Conference, **Creating a Climate for Change**, (held April 3 & 4, 2020) is that if we (humans) can 'function up,' be a part of the solution instead of the ongoing problem, **hope** for the future can come from that **action** from each and every one of us to make efforts to managing self better.

For your consideration:

- Basic relationship patterns developed for adapting to the parental family in childhood are used in all other relationships throughout life – in our family, work and social systems and, yes, to the Earth. How respectful are we of our planet? How much thought do we give to our daily activities that affect our environment and the natural world of which we are a part?
- Bowen suggests that if we can control our own emotional reactivity and accurately observe the functioning of the system and our part in it, if we can refrain from counterattacking when provoked, and if we can engage respectfully and thoughtfully with others without withdrawing or becoming silent, these efforts can lead to more responsible, more mature behavior. How we manage ourselves today has an impact on future generations and the sustainability of life on Earth.

Thoughts or comments? Please email selden.dunbar.illick@gmail.com.

1. Murray Bowen, MD. 1975. "Family Therapy after Twenty Years." In *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. 1978. New York: Jason Aronson. p. 304.
2. Murray Bowen, MD. 1974. "Societal Regression as Viewed Through Family Systems Theory." In *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. 1978. New York: Jason Aronson.