Observations of Change in Physiology and Functioning Associated with Working on Differentiation in One's Family Victoria Harrison, MA, LMFT for

FOR SELF AND FOR FAMILY: THE PROCESS OF DIFFERENTIATION



Purpose

To investigate changes that can be observed in physiology and in functioning for an individual and his or her family that accompany working on differentiation of self in the family, the basis for applications of Bowen family systems theory in psychotherapy.

Hypotheses

◆That steps involved in working on differentiation of self will be associated with

Increased ability to observe & manage anxiety
Increased awareness of patterns of reactivity in
triangles

Increased ability to function and think for self in relation to others

Decreased anxiety & symptoms with increased functioning in self & other family members

and

◆That changes will vary based in part on

level of differentiation of self degree of chronic anxiety cutoff in the family

"The human is the first form of life that has been able to observe the feeling process with his intellect. Thus far there are definite characteristics of those who can do this readily, and those who are a few years slower. The name of that is differentiation of self. Everyone can do that when they are more motivated to do it for themselves than they are to depend on others."

Murray Bowen, Odyssey Toward Science, the Epilogue in Family Evaluation by Michael Kerr. P. 385-386

Design of Research Project

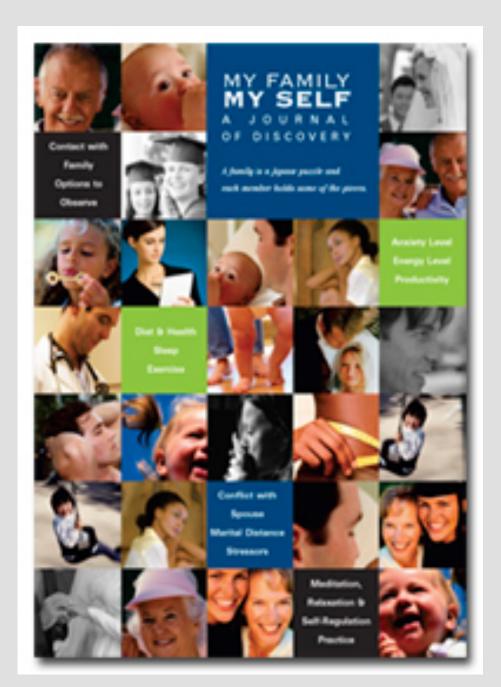
Volunteers from the Bowen Center Postgraduate Program

- 1. Obtained measures of physiological reactivity(EMG, DST, EDR and cortisol) & EEG & Salivary Cortisol: 4 X a year
- 2. Maintained daily observations of metabolic activity (Blood sugar, peak flow oxygen, heart rate) & medical blood work
- 3. Recorded observations of nodal events in the family, symptoms that occur in self & family, contact with family, & steps related to differentiation of self
- 4. Completed the Skowron Differentiation of Self Inventory periodically

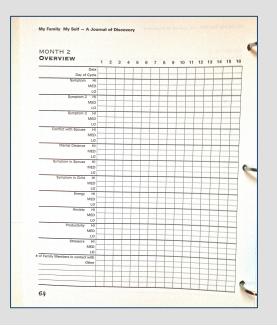
Steps Toward Differentiation of Self as the Basis for Change

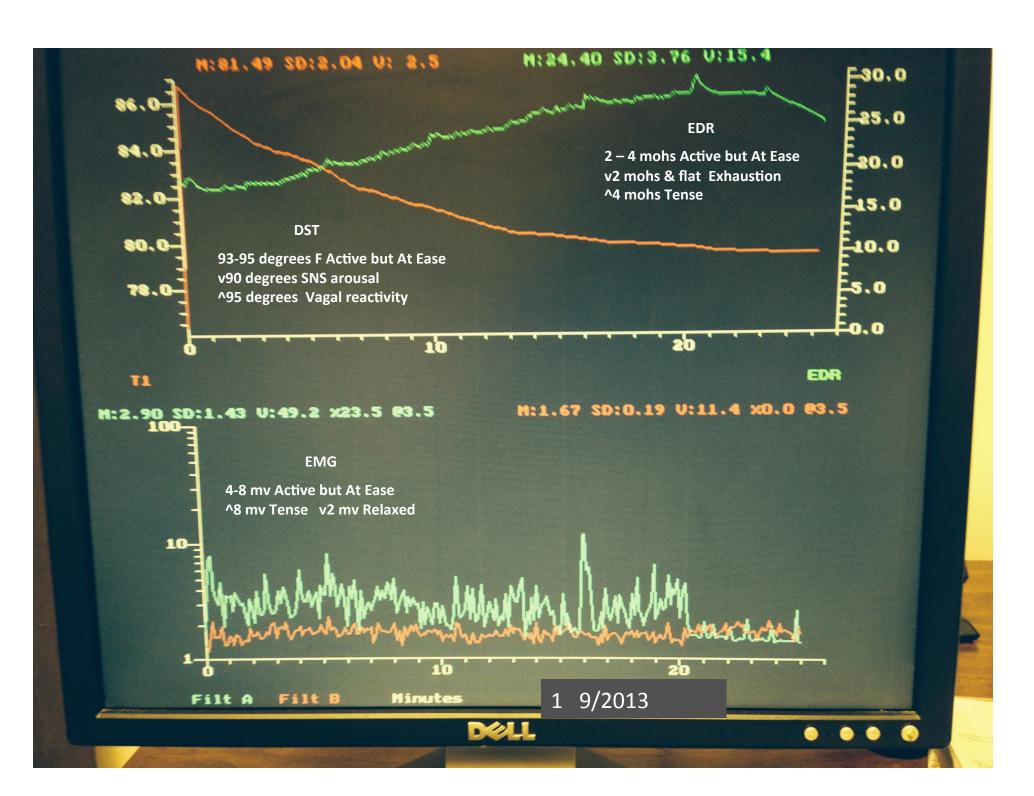
"Therapy is designed to help one or more family members to become aware of the part self plays in the automatic emotional responsiveness, to control the part self plays, and to avoid participation in the triangle moves. Therapy also involves a slow process of differentiation between emotional and intellectual functioning and slowly increasing intellectual control over automatic emotional processes." Bowen, 307

- ✓ Increasing contact with more members of the family
- ✓ Developing individual, person-to-person relationships with each member of the family
- ✓ Becoming a more accurate observer of self and the family
- ✓ Increasing ability to control one's emotional reactivity in family triangles
- ✓ Defining one's principles, life goals, and beliefs
- ✓ Being more of a Self in relationship to others



| N | ly Family My Self – A Journal of Discovery | | |
|-----|--|--------|--|
| | | | |
| | IONTH 1 | | |
| | | | . CTRESCORE |
| | IFE EVENT AND RELATION | | |
| | FE EVENTS | | Vacation |
| | ease check and date any of the following life events | | Christmas |
| th: | at have occurred in the past month: | | Environmental stressors |
| | | | Temperature |
| | Death of spouse | | Pollution Pollen |
| | | | Flood or Drouth |
| | Marital Separation | | Hurricane or storm warning |
| | | | Other natural disasters |
| | Death of close family member | ш | Societal stressors |
| | Personal injury or illness | _ | Political polarization |
| | Marriage | | Media coverage |
| | Fired at work | | Media coverage Economic indicators |
| | | | War |
| | | ш | vvar |
| | Change in health of family member | *** | SETTLING OCCURRENCES |
| | Pregnancy | | ase date and describe the occurrence of any events |
| | | tha | |
| | Gain of new family member | | Threaten emotional connections with others |
| | | | |
| | Change in financial state | | Increase dependence upon others |
| | Death of close friend | | Increase dependence of others upon self |
| | Change to different line of work | | Threaten the functioning of others upon whom |
| | Change in number of arguments with spouse | | you are dependent |
| | | | Increase one's level of responsibility |
| | Foreclosure of mortgage or loan | | (or sense thereof) |
| | Change in responsibilities at work | | Increase uncertainty |
| | Son or daughter leaving home | | Disturb relationships that provide stability |
| | Trouble with in-laws | • | Disturb relationships that provide stability |
| | Outstanding personal achievement | - | |
| | Spouse to begin or stop work | _ | |
| | Begin or end school | _ | |
| | | _ | |
| 3 | Revision of personal habits | _ | |
| | Trouble with boss | _ | |
| 3 | Change in work hours or conditions | _ | |
| 0 | Change in residence | 100 | |
| 3 | Change in schools | 100 | |
| 3 | Change in recreation | - | |
| | Change in church activities | 7 | |
| | Change in social activities | | |
| 1 | Mortgage or loan less than \$10,000 | | |
| | Change in sleeping habits | | |
| | Change in sieeping nabits Change in number of family get-togethers | No. To | |
| | change in number or rainily der-roderners | - | |





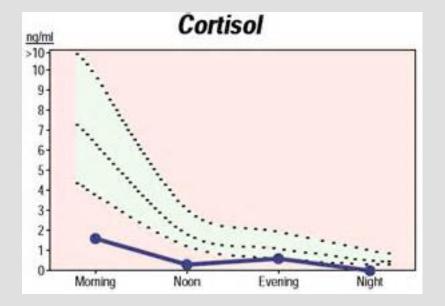
Salivary Cortisol Samples

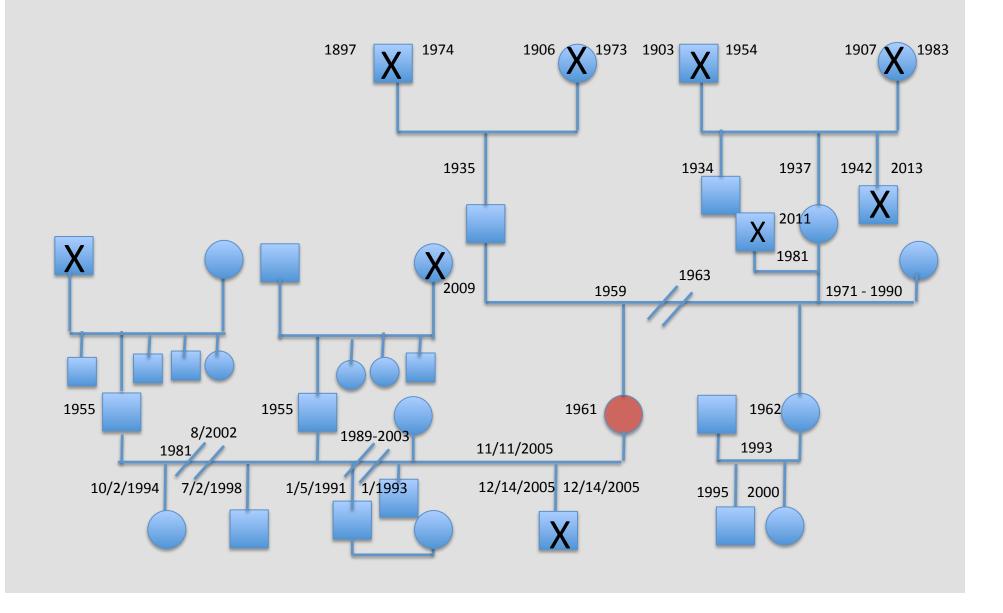


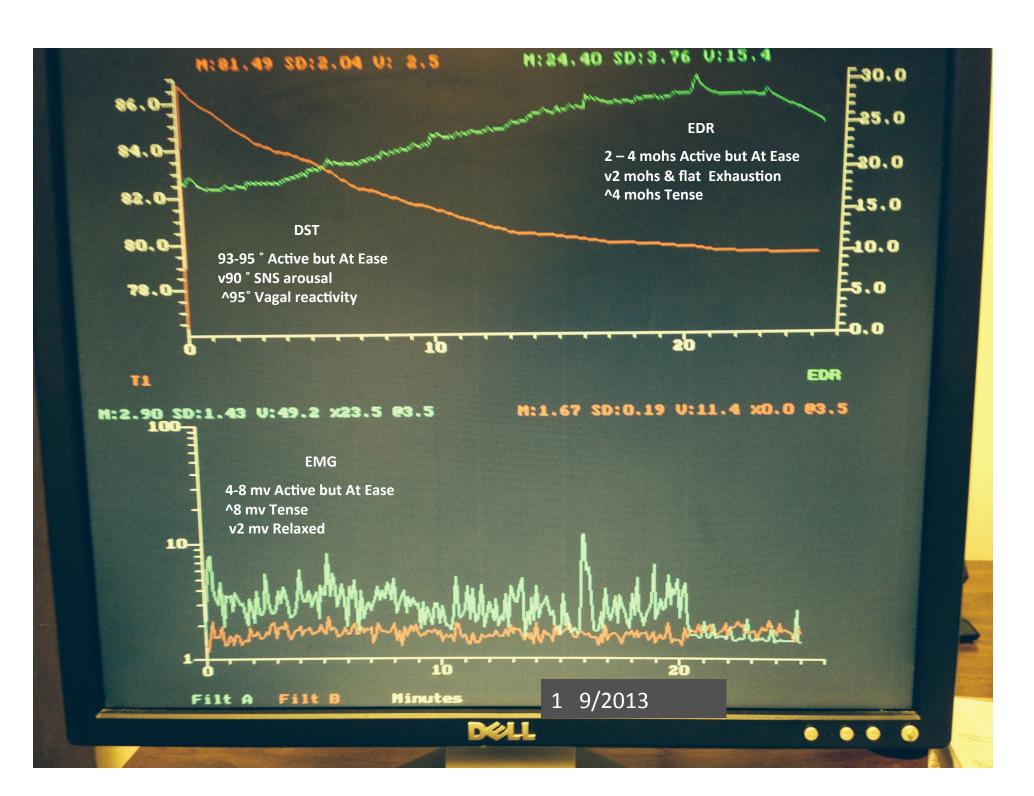
Criteria for Cortisol Level

7:30 – 11AM: .04-.56

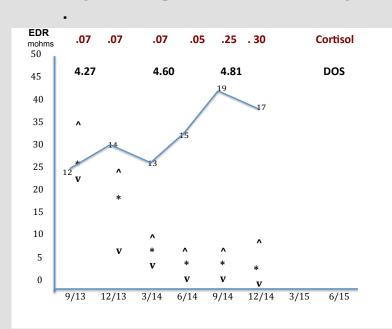
2PM - 6PM: .04-.15

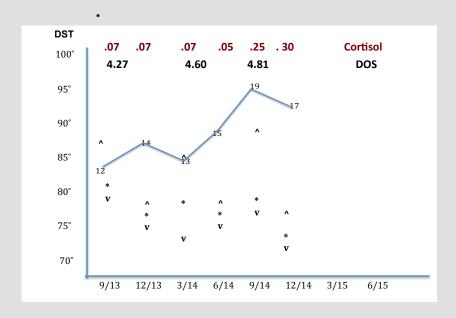


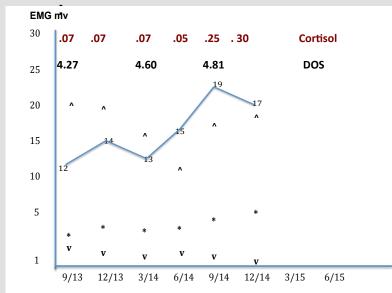


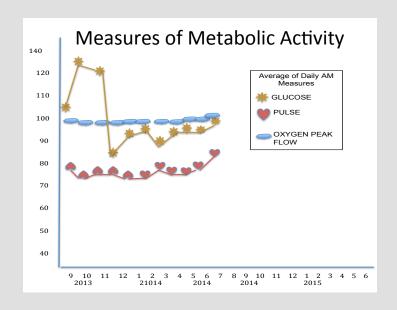


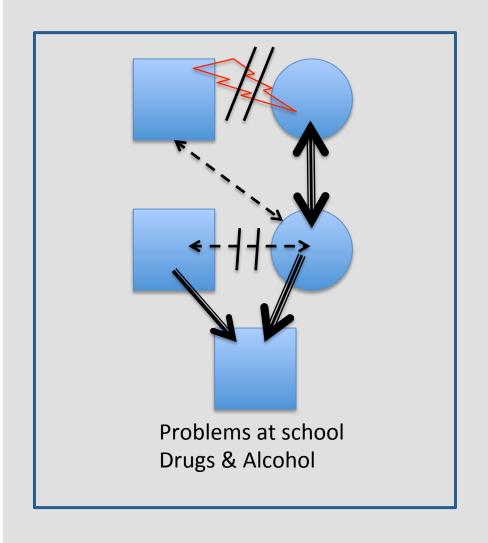
Physiological Reactivity, DOS & Contact with Family #1

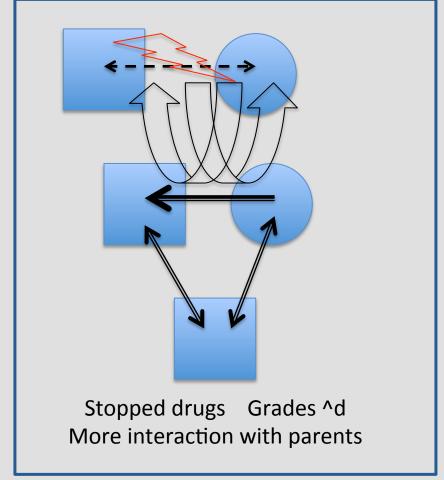




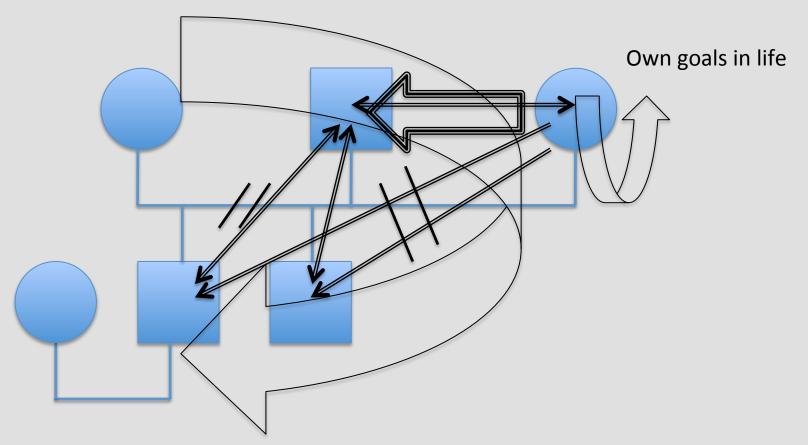




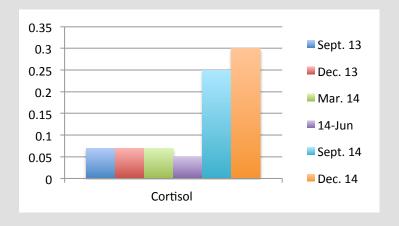


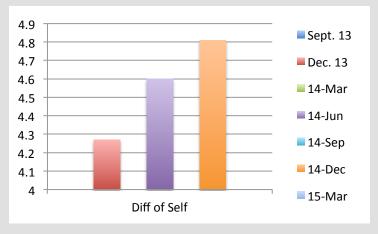


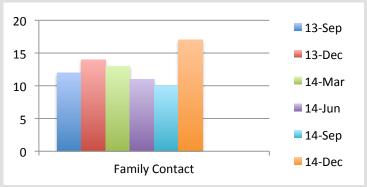
9/2013 11/2013 12/2013 9/2014

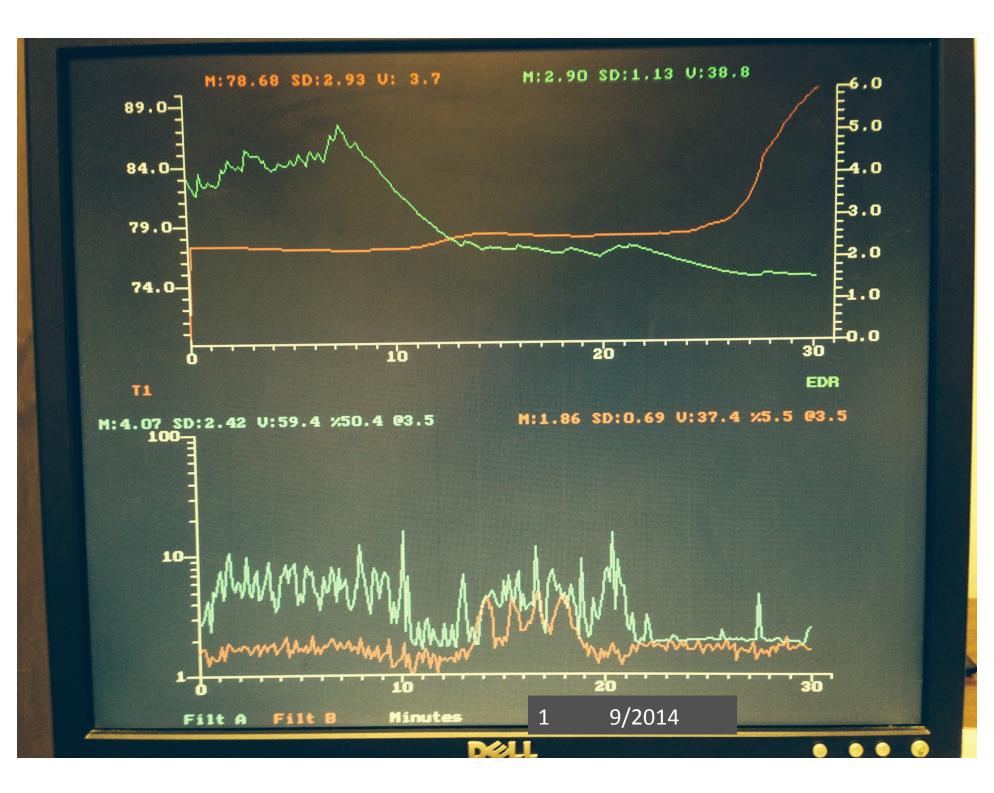


1/14 Wedding plans 2/14 Leave w/husband 7/14 Wedding 12/14 Increased contact between son and father 1/15 Increased focus on husband & marriage 3/15 Shift to focus on self









Observations and Questions

1. These observations suggest that anxiety in one family member reflects her functioning in family triangles and that changes in her anxious functioning play a part in changes for others in those triangles.

What makes the difference in where symptoms occur and for whom?

The anxious focus on another

Inability to recognize& manage one's own anxiety

Family history and patterns in triangles

What changes for others when one family member recognizes and manages anxiety differently?

3. Anxiety reactions do not change in a uniform trajectory but vary in which systems change more readily and which change more slowly or not at all. How do these differences function in recovery from symptoms? How are differences associated with increased functioning? What difference does increased thinking in the presence of anxiety reactions make?

4. Anxiety increases during nodal events in the family (such as marriage or a death) related to the challenges in relating to others and anxiety also occurs during steps toward differentiation of self.

What distinguishes anxiety around progress in differentiation of self?

Sneak Preview

- 1. Investigate each participant as a single case study
- 2. Look at changes in 14 Hz EEG to see if that reflects steps in differentiation of self and the difference they make.
- 3. Compare differences between participants to see what can be learned about factors that contribute toward those differences, ie. functioning of family system, cutoff/contact with family, nodal events during study, particular steps toward dos that are taken.
- 4. Look at Differentiation of Self Inventory scores more closely.

Thanks

To participants in Observations of Change Year 1 & Year 2

To The Bowen Center for hosting this project

To Jessica Chen and Kimberly Capehart for assisting with cortisol assay logistics, a process that required many details

To Bowen Center Director and Faculty for thinking that helped define the project & make use of the observations in supervision consultation with participants

Especially to Priscilla Friesen for her collaboration and to Donna Toisi for her help with Cortisol Assay, DoS Inventory procedures and for Statistical Analysis

Thank you, Dr. Bowen

"Vicki, you can do better."