

## **Andrea Schara, LCSW** **What are the costs and benefits of becoming a leader?**



If the thrust of evolution is increasing awareness, then expanding the ability to observe the push and pull of relationships and to decide when to intervene or when to step aside may be crucial to our survival. Without knowledge of relationships systems, we are less able to manage self and alter our response to threats. The brain is subject to many hard-wired short cuts, like "confirmation biases."

As anxiety increases the automatic mechanisms like, child focus activates some to become other-focused, and to enlist others to confirm the diagnosis of weakness. This automated way of handling anxiety results in the weaker ones absorbing a more significant share of the family anxiety.

When a family or organizational leader can observe this process, he or she can take steps to interrupt the focus. Interruptions disrupt automatic behaviors. Others will automatically turn toward the leader to focus their anxiety on the leader to tell them to back off or change. Systems theory gives many guidelines to manage anxiety and to refocus on who is responsible for what.

### **3rd International Conference on Bowen Family Systems Theory**



Our emotional guidance system developed as the brain developed eons ago. It takes time and courage to understand the short cuts of this sensitive, prewired guidance system and to gain knowledge of the system and to then function as a more separate self. A leader capable of redirecting the anxiety has a track record of separating a self from the emotional pressures in his or her own family.

The example will be of an older sister dealing with two younger brothers who both became symptomatic in an emotional shock wave. The family leader considers the balance between overhelping and relating well to both brothers plus the medical and the mental health systems in the effort to be a responsible family leader.

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