

Teresa Edmondson, M.Ed, LPC **Relationships Undone – One family’s chronicle of how DNA testing, a mother’s dementia, and Bowen Theory intersected in unanticipated ways**



This presentation focuses on the way in which use of DNA testing kits such as 23andme and Ancestry.com have impacted one’s family response to their aging mother’s advancing dementia. As use of these technologies become increasingly popular worldwide, individuals are connecting with kin more easily, and the doors on family secrets are being opened.

This paper specifically tracks changes in extended family functioning over a period of 18 months as unexpected connections were made between half-siblings that did not know the other existed. Although the use of DNA testing can be fraught with challenges, this paper focuses on the positive way in which a family system was able to utilize DNA technology, guided by Bowen Theory, to reduce cutoff, increase contact, and lower both acute and chronic anxiousness, resulting in higher levels of functioning across a family system, even in the face of a mother’s declining health.