

Monday 15th, 16.10 - 16.30.

**Patty Thierry Sheridan, MBA,
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**Using Bowen Theory Helps
Leaders, Managers and
Employees Manage Relations
and Thrive during and after
Mergers and Acquisitions**



Mergers and acquisitions have become the new norm in healthcare and in other industries. Companies, often competitors, find themselves combining to form one organization. The emotional system of the newly combined organization is a landmine of triangles and functioning along the scale of differentiation. System and individual adaptation to the new combined organization is made more difficult as individuals enter and leave the system and the financial goals of a merger or acquisition take priority over observing and understanding the emotional process.

As employees and business owners navigate a new organization, there are challenges that are made less daunting to navigate by understanding and applying Bowen theory. For example, it's common for the work system to be highly reactive and for cliques, cut off and conflict to emerge. It's also common for the organization's workforce to feel incompetent as they navigate new bosses, new roles, new social contracts, new technology and new policies. The stress brought on by significant change and the feeling of incompetency plays out in degrees of anxiety that is continuously present. The allostatic load and "wear and tear" experienced at system and individual levels is very real. It's not uncommon for a system to experience periods of relative calm followed by significant amounts of anxiety.

3rd International Conference on Bowen Family Systems Theory



These allostatic states impact an organization's ability to be flexible and are learning opportunities for managing self and viewing the system and its patterns more objectively. Executives are challenged to achieve some level of homeostasis post-merger as they navigate change and general transformation in the system. However, an executive's most significant challenge is to manage self and to understand how executive behaviors impact the system.

Understanding Bowen Theory provides individuals at all levels within an organization with a lens from which to view emotional reactivity and to inform one's own leadership behavior. The presenter will share, through the presentation of a case study, how she used Bowen Theory to thrive and influence an emotionally upset organization post-merger and acquisition. The presentation will discuss common organizational patterns and Bowen Theory concepts which were most helpful, including triangles, differentiation of self, emotional process, cut off and projection. The presenter will also share how her previous family of origin work became essential to her own well-being and observation of her own patterns and behaviors within the system.

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Sörbyn, Swedish Lapland, Sweden June 15-17 2020.
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