

Through the Lens #17 — Winter 2016

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN SYSTEMS¹

The following short paper was written for a panel presentation on organizations, some years ago. Because each presenter had a limited time slot, it is short. It also appeared in a somewhat different version in *The Cornerstone Concept*, but I think the original has value and bears publishing here. It represents my first attempt at working out guiding principles for the Center for the Study of Human Systems, and Extraordinary Leadership Seminar.

Guiding Principles need to be brought out and referred to periodically – so here they are. I welcome feedback.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN SYSTEMS

MISSION: The mission of the Center for the Study of Human Systems is to disseminate the ideas of Bowen family systems theory, assisting in the development of leaders with as pure an understanding of the theory as possible, using it in their lives and leadership.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

1. Bowen family systems theory is a theory about leadership. It describes high and low level leadership based on the concept of differentiation of self and the other 7 concepts of Bowen theory.
2. Extraordinary Leadership Seminar exists to produce high-level leaders. Differentiation of self indicates that they will not be trying to lead others as much as to lead self emotionally and intellectually. They will be working to this end in their family as well as their organization relationships. This is attractive leadership, influencing others in the organization.
3. High level leaders are guided by their principles. Their relationships are characterized by separate boundaries, open communications and equal postures. The relationship posture of the leader is critical to the functioning of the organization.

4. “If you know theory you can use it. If you don’t, you can’t.” A defined curriculum and well-trained faculty is necessary to learning theory well.
5. Structure of the seminar includes didactic teaching, reading, group and individual coaching opportunities, and opportunities to work on self in the context of family relationships.
6. If group emotional process can be managed, the participants have something to offer each other.
7. People change old patterns slowly and with difficulty. They need “time on the calendar” for this to occur. Thus, a three-year program with coaching opportunities and advanced seminars for indefinite follow-up is a strongly recommended commitment.
8. Communication with Bowen Center for the Study of the Family is encouraged and scholarships are offered for attendance at some meetings there.
9. These guiding principles are implemented in the lives of faculty members or the seminar will fail in its mission. Faculty is chosen with much care. Few are eligible.

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**If you have a question or comment you would like addressed in this column,
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