

soldiers in discussions with their parents, and he devotes a full chapter to conversations he sees as helpful in constructing a moral imagination. But he is particularly concerned by “normalized discourse”: clients’ ways of talking and making sense of traumatic experience that are anchored in the normalcies of their everyday conversations. Such conversational normalcies too often inflexibly constrain other possibilities for therapeutic meaning and ways of staying interpersonally connected after traumatic experiences. Our biographical reconstructions after trauma are far from autonomous projects, this book says: they require “constructive dialogues” where new ways of meaning and relating can emerge.

The book itself is primarily laid out into two sections reflecting its title: a section on the indescribable, or what he terms soft impediments to discourse; and a section on the undescrivable, or severe impediments to discourse—the practices used in silencing traumatic experiences and the experiences of those so silenced. In the first section (four chapters or approximately 100 pages), he examines how trauma survivors struggle to find words adequate to describe the truth of their experiences. A bridging section—Bar-On’s interlude of 30 pages—examines discourse in terms of cultural contexts, how discourse can be considered “located,” and how all discourse has an ideological component. The final section (a further four chapters of 140 pages) examines why it can be so hard to sometimes speak of traumatic experiences given how others close to us may respond. I found the book, overall, to be well written and full of interesting anecdotes from Bar-On’s extensive and diverse research on the topic.

No counsellor wants to think of her or himself as complicit in conversations that constrain the possibilities for therapeutic meaning-making that a client needs. Bar-On, however, suggests that counsellors welcome the ambiguities involved in “constructive dialogue,” welcoming and jointly learning from clients’ experiences as apt words for them are constructed in the back and forth of client-counsellor interaction. Constructive dialogue requires genuine curiosity and spontaneous responsiveness; this is quite a different approach to expert-based models of counselling where the counsellor structures both the conversation and what occurs within it. While offering a framework for understanding recovery as a discursive process, what Bar-On describes in this worthwhile book is a conversational way of being he sees too often eluding our clients: an opportunity to grapple for and try on the best words for overwhelming experiences in extraordinary ways with caring others.

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Rovers, M. (2005). *Healing the wounds in couple relationships*. Ottawa, ON: Novalis. ISBN 289-507569-7. 145 pages.

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*Healing the Wounds in Couple Relationships* is written for individuals who are seeking to improve their intimate relationships through a thorough self-exploration of entrenched relational patterns. Based on the premise that insight and self-acceptance will permit novel and healthier choices, author Martin Rovers gently introduces theoretical principles to prompt the reader to establish parallels between current emo-

tional responsiveness and the qualities experienced in historical and primitive bonds with significant others. Dr. Rovers, a marriage and family therapist and counsellor educator at St. Paul's University in Ottawa, acquaints the reader with concepts from *Attachment and Bowenian Family Systems Theory* in an elegant and gradual manner and makes them accessible to the self-helper. His didactic exposés are delivered in clear and concise segments, peppered with compelling examples and followed by experiential exercises.

In the first five chapters the reader is introduced to the main constructs and is guided through his or her idiosyncratic collection of hurts and how these may interact to draw out the similarly acquired weaknesses in the intimate partner. Each chapter culminates with concrete exercises that invite the reader to interact with the knowledge acquired. Although these exercises have the potential to reach readers in a profound way, more guidance for processing the elicited material would have made them much more powerful. Also provided are food-for-thought lists and poems that aim to be either provocative or soothing. That is, readers are urged to reconsider their role (from passive to active) in their own misery. However, the potential drama is defused through normalizing and offering hope-filled examples of resolved personal and interpersonal crises. Some readers may find these snippets affirming and self-validating, but they are presented superficially, likely in an attempt to render them more accessible to a wide audience. These somewhat colloquially presented passages stand in sharp contrast to the rich theoretical material that precedes them.

Chapters 6 through 9 are forward thinking, "now-what" chapters. They propel the self-helper toward more functional ways of relating through urging a shift from awareness toward taking ownership and responsibility for both past and current relationships. Four themes are proposed to aid the reader into embracing a more proactive and self-respectful role in creating and re-creating relationships: (a) self-awareness, (b) communication, (b) emotional connectedness, and (d) forgiveness. Of these four, the chapter on emotional connectedness is central; it fundamentally demonstrates how one can set up an emotionally corrective experience within a current relationship given a trustworthy and caring partner.

Writing to accommodate a wide audience, Dr. Rovers avoids jargon and technical language. The reader will immediately recognize the systemic constructs of intrapsychic and interpersonal differentiation, multi-generational transmission processes, triangulation, and homeostasis in the system. Attachment theory notions permeate the discussion, particularly in regards to the role of the internal working models of early attachment figures and relational blueprints, as well as the mechanisms by which these patterns are repeated. The contrast created by using simple language to explore profound life-moulding experiences works.

The elegantly presented discourse aims to convince readers to gain some objectivity and to achieve an intellectual grasp of highly charged historical material. Readers are thus inducted into the very intrapsychic differentiation process that is required for them to progress according to Bowen. By establishing a firmer boundary between rational operations and emotional reactions, the person can become more differentiated intrapsychically, which has immediate and direct bearing on their level of interpersonal

differentiation, a sure sign of mental health in this approach. The more differentiated one is, the more that person avoids unrestrained emotionality and repetition of dysfunctional relational patterns. Hence the person is better able to enter into true intimacy without fear or risk of being engulfed into the whole. The likelihood that the couple will reach equilibrium at the expense of the dissolution of the self of one of the partners is in direct proportion to the level of differentiation of both parties that make up the dyad. When one moves along the continuum toward greater level of differentiation, significant gains are made in terms of healthy functioning. Principally, the individual becomes better able to contain, analyze, and make decisions about feeling states. Liberated from visceral, impulsive, and raw emotional reactivity, one can choose how best to proceed in a relationship given a set of emotional needs and constellation of strengths and fragilities. Awareness is indeed liberating, and knowledge is power. The key issue, according to Bowen and clearly articulated by Dr. Rovers, is not of intellectual supremacy but rather a question of freedom. One may still respond to an occurrence with intense emotion when particularly painful material is stimulated by here-and-now relating, but the individuated person has a measure of control and choices about how to manage those emotions. The book invites and then offers to guide the committed reader through this process.

Emphasis is placed on individual growth and on *power within* as opposed to *power over*, as reflective of Bowenian belief that it takes only one individual to change a system. While an understanding of internalized models of attachment and levels of differentiation as they occur in current day pattern repetition involves examining the role of other players in the emotional field, the onus is clearly on the help seeker to know and change. The reverberations in the system are a hoped for byproduct, but engaging in a change process motivated by a desire to change the other is not recommended. Understanding *self-in-relation* to other is where it's at. Knowing how to extricate oneself from compulsive re-enactments of family of origin dynamics seems to be the ultimate aim of the teaching and coaching that Dr. Rovers delivers in this manuscript. Two principles (albeit somewhat overused as metaphors), wounds and dances, are used to incite the reader into examining how vulnerabilities acquired during early childhood relationships, usually with parents, will get replayed in adult relationships. Like the book, this exploration is divided into two major movements: understanding the patterns and re-deciding for the future. This set-up parallels Bowen's therapeutic process whereby individuation is gained through intellectual mastery and change is achieved through individual choice actions afforded by this mastery.

*Healing the Wounds in Couple Relationships* offers a very good integration of contemporary and classical theoretical constructs, packaged for a non-academic audience. The book is hopeful, accessible, and empowering. It is useful for counsellors and psychotherapists as a bibliotherapy recommendation. This book is an excellent introduction to the application of attachment and systemic theory in applied settings.