

The Bowen Technique

Children – anxiety and behavioural problems

by Janie Godfrey

It is always very upsetting to see children struggling with anxiety, panic and worry, often expressing their turmoil through difficult behaviour. This only compounds their problems as it alarms and annoys those around them and they are often excluded from peer groups. There can be many causes for this state of affairs from undiagnosed physical illnesses or conditions, family tensions or break-up, bullying, school or performance pressure, abuse, etc. It has become very clear over a large number of cases from many practitioners that the effects of Bowen on the emotional level can be very marked indeed, and last for a long time. One of the most common statements adults make after their first or second Bowen treatment is that they may have suffered the same levels of stress or anxiety during the week but they had been able to cope much better and could "see what had to be done and did it" whereas the usual previous pattern had been to do nothing about stressful, worrying or difficult situations and therefore experience them as anxiety with all its physical and psychological symptoms.

There has been a great increase in the use of The Bowen Technique to address these problems in children with some very good results. Children are very open to Bowen because it is gentle and non-invasive and the experience of a treatment is very calming and relaxing to receive – and if a child is very agitated and restless, it has been shown that Bowen can be adapted to still give an effective treatment.

Bowen practitioner Angela Casey has treated a number of children with these problems. 11-year-old 'James' improved dramatically in four treatments. About a year previous to his Bowen treatment, around the time of his SATS exams at primary school, 'James' changed from an easy-going relaxed boy to feeling generally anxious and panicky, sleeping poorly, with attacks of claustrophobia. He found himself getting very anxious being left with a sitter when his parents went out, worrying about accidents, illness, germs and other disasters. School assemblies and church services became an ordeal, and he had to sit near the door to lessen the feelings of panic. His parents had been worried enough to ask their G.P. for a psychiatric referral, which was in the pipeline at the time he started Bowen treatment. After the first treatment he felt an increase in energy and released a lot of anger. A similar picture followed the second treatment. During these two weeks he had no panic attacks, and felt a reduction in anxiety about being away from his parents. Assembly had become less of an ordeal, and after the second treatment his parents were aware of much improvement on an emotional level. After the third treatment there were only small pockets of anxiety remaining, and when 'James' came

for his final treatment, his mother said he was so much improved she had decided to cancel the psychiatric referral.

Another child who benefited greatly from Bowen treatment was 9-year-old 'Anne'. She was feeling anxious about school, having nightmares, difficulties with concentration, and making odd repetitive movements with her arms which other members of the family were finding irritating. Sessions one and two produced considerable improvement in general anxiety and behaviour. By the third session she looked much happier and more relaxed. School friends commented on how much better she was concentrating in class, and she herself found she was able to get on with schoolwork much faster. After five sessions, all odd arm movements had stopped; she was sleeping well, rarely having bad dreams.

Bowen is best known as a treatment for musculo-skeletal problems but this consistent reaction to Bowen in the emotional area has to be taken on board. We don't doubt there is a mind-body connection when someone blushes, for instance, and treating the body as a way into an emotional blockage or problem appears to be valid in the clinical experience of many Bowen therapists – and other therapists too, of course. In 1997 the book entitled Molecules of Emotion: the Science behind Mind/body Medicine was published. Its American author, Candace Pert, Ph.D. researched "new paradigm" healing at the Georgetown University Medical School where she was a professor of Physiology and Biophysics. Her research reveals how the "bodymind" functions as a single psychosomatic network of information molecules which control our health and physiology. It is a fascinating book and connects the biochemistry of the body with the mind/emotions very clearly. Reading her conclusions, it is no wonder that in treating the body, where anxieties, fears and traumas can become lodged, the effect can ripple through to the non-physical source of these problems and effect a change in the way they are perceived and dealt with.

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