

Family therapy

Title: *The Answer Within: A Family in Therapy Re-examined*

Authors: Moshe Lang and Peter McCallum

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Reviewer: Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen

ABOUT 50 years ago, the field of family therapy was born through the work of Murray Bowen, a hospital psychiatrist in Washington, DC. He noted that patients who were getting ready to return to their families would return to the hospital after a week-end pass, decompensated and not faring as well as they had while hospitalised. Bowen began to look at the environment to which his patients were returning and realised the need to treat the entire situation and not just the person.

One of the founders of the family therapy movement in Australia, Moshe Lang is a Director of the Williams Road Family Therapy Centre in Melbourne. *The Answer Within* re-examines work Lang did more than 20 years ago, which he published under the title *A Family in Therapy*.

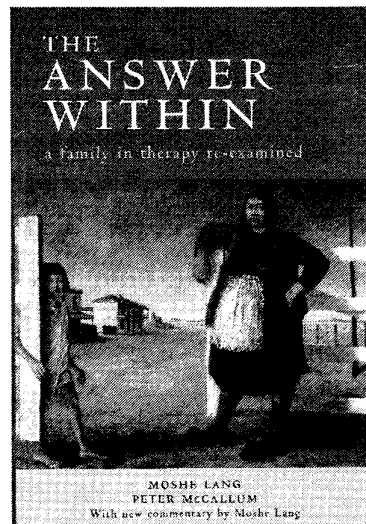
That family was the Black family, who entered therapy because of long-term relationship problems. They agreed to have their sessions

videotaped, primarily so that the therapist could return to them after the session to review all the components, including cues which he initially missed.

Lang inserted comments into the dialogue, explaining what he was attempting to achieve, as well as providing insights into the dynamic between the family members. In the original work, he also gave a summation at the end of each session. In this edition, he has added to it, reflecting both the development of the theory behind the family systems movement, as well as his own growth in understanding over the years.

What makes *The Answer Within* important for those interested in therapeutic techniques is the final section, "Reflections". Not only does it tell us what happened to the family members post-therapy in a journey which has lasted more than 20 years, but Lang also discusses theoretical developments and what he terms "bad therapy".

In a summary of an article he wrote in 1982, Lang argues that "bad therapy" relates more to the role of the therapist than to the needs of the client. In particular, he is concerned about how much the therapist controls the session, rather than allowing it to be led by the thoughts and issues presented by the person seeking help. Part of the problem is that whenever a therapist moves from a passive



role, there is potential to take control, reflecting his or her insights rather than the client's problems.

There has been ongoing debate about whether short-term therapy, involving a fixed number of sessions, works. This book discusses five sessions which the Black family experienced. Advocates see short-term therapy as cutting to the core of the problem quickly and forcing the issues into the open from the first session. Others argue that short-term therapy enables the client to avoid the real challenges because they can maintain their defences for five or six sessions. Both sides have their advocates. In the Black family's case, as presented in *The Answer Within*, short-term therapy seems to have worked.

Publication Reference:

Cohen, Rabbi J. (2000, December 1). *The Answer Within: A Family in Therapy re-examined*. *The Australian Jewish News, Melbourne Edition*, 38.