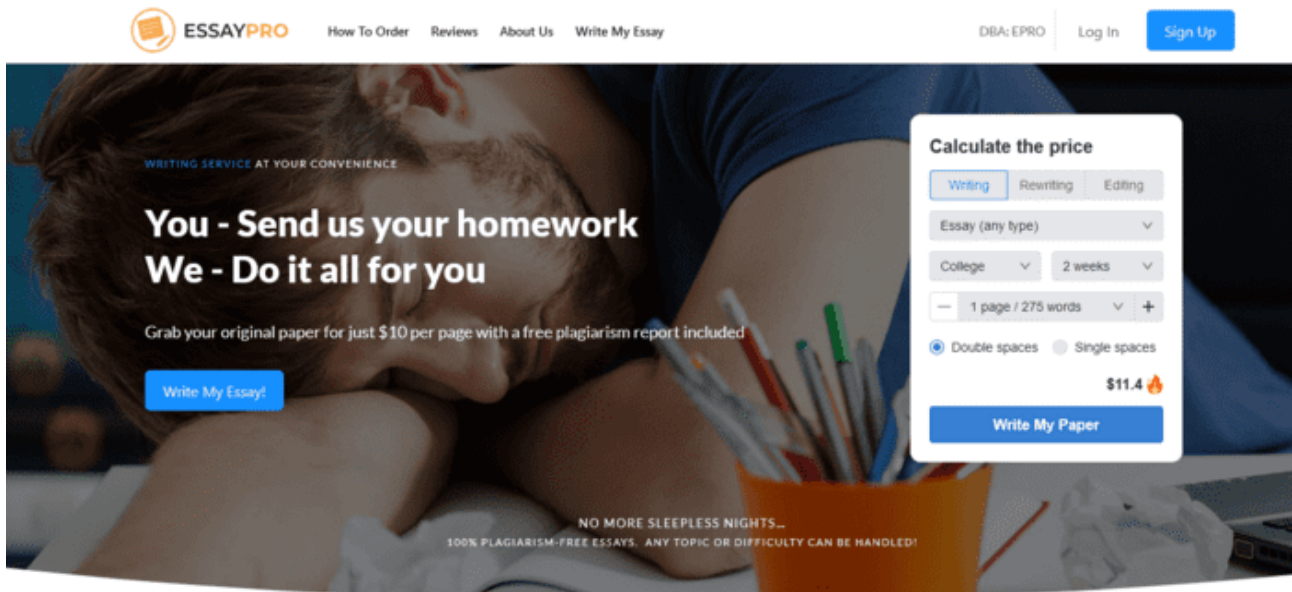


# Family Systems Theory



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According to Richard Charles (2001) “the effectiveness of family systems theory rests not much on empirical research but on clinical reports of positive treatment outcomes, the personal benefits experienced by the families that underwent this kind of treatment, and the elegance of Bowen’s theory” (p. 279). Bowen’s family systems theory views the family as an emotional unit and is a theory of human behavior. Systems thinking are used to describe the complex interactions in the unit. However, the client’s ability to differentiate himself/herself from the family of origin is the basis for Bowen’s family systems theory. In addition, the primary focus for growth within the emotional system is differentiation of self. Differentiation of self will be explored as well as how it relates to a church congregation. Furthermore, “the central premise of this theory is that one must resolve all emotional issues with the family of origin, rather than reject reactively or accept passively that family, before one can become a mature and healthy individual” (Charles, 2001, p. 280). Bowen believed that the change in the self occurred through the change in relationships with others, so he encouraged the client to reconnect with the nuclear family members and resolve all emotional issues with them. This is because Bowen believed that unresolved conflicts with the family of origin would catch up with the client and affect his or her present relationships. Also, conflicts do not exist in the person, but in the family system. The necessary changes must take place in the self as well as in the larger

system. Meanwhile, Bowen described the differentiation of self as the ability of a person to separate physically and emotionally from their family of..... middle of paper .....ctioning as adults, as well as the pastor and church leaders play a huge part in the functioning of the emotional system of the church. If individuals in families and churches asked the question, "What do I need to work on to improve my functioning within the emotional system?" Amazing things can begin to happen in such emotional systems. References Charles, R. (2001). Is there any empirical support for Bowen's concepts of differentiation of self, triangulation, and fusion?. American Journal Of Family Therapy, 29(4), 279-292. doi:10.1080/01926180126498 Murdock, N. L., & Gore Jr., P. A. (2004). Stress, Coping, and Differentiation of Self: A Test of Bowen Theory. Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal, 26(3), 319-335. Richardson, R. W. (2005). Bowen Family Systems Theory and congregational life. Review & Expositor, 102(3), 379-402.

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