

A Vancouver publisher raved to me about *Family Secrets* over the phone. He said that author John Bradshaw has taken his popular self-help techniques to a more powerful, deeper dimension. In his view, Bradshaw's latest book far surpasses even his best-sellers *Homecoming* and *Creating Love*.

A friend of mine dismissed Bradshaw's work. "I'm ticked off at him," she said, although in somewhat stronger language.

"He's so absorbed in self-indulgence. I'm sick of his stuff."

Who to believe? Well, it all depends on how deeply you are prepared to look at your own family and previous generations. Bradshaw's premise, and the subtitle of *Family Secrets*, is that what you don't know *can* hurt you. He asserts that children will act out or repeat their parents' or grandparents' secrets, even if consciously unaware of them. This applies to anything from a mother's abortion or out-of-wedlock birth to a father's hidden addiction to pornography.

Bradshaw uses the multi-generational genogram or "family map" to provide real-life examples of repetitive behavior patterns.

At first glance, these family-tree diagrams with squares, circles and diagonal lines look more like electrical schematics than codes for human imprinting. But once the author uncovers the behavior behind these symbols, he reveals shocking results. In one case, an alcoholic womanizer

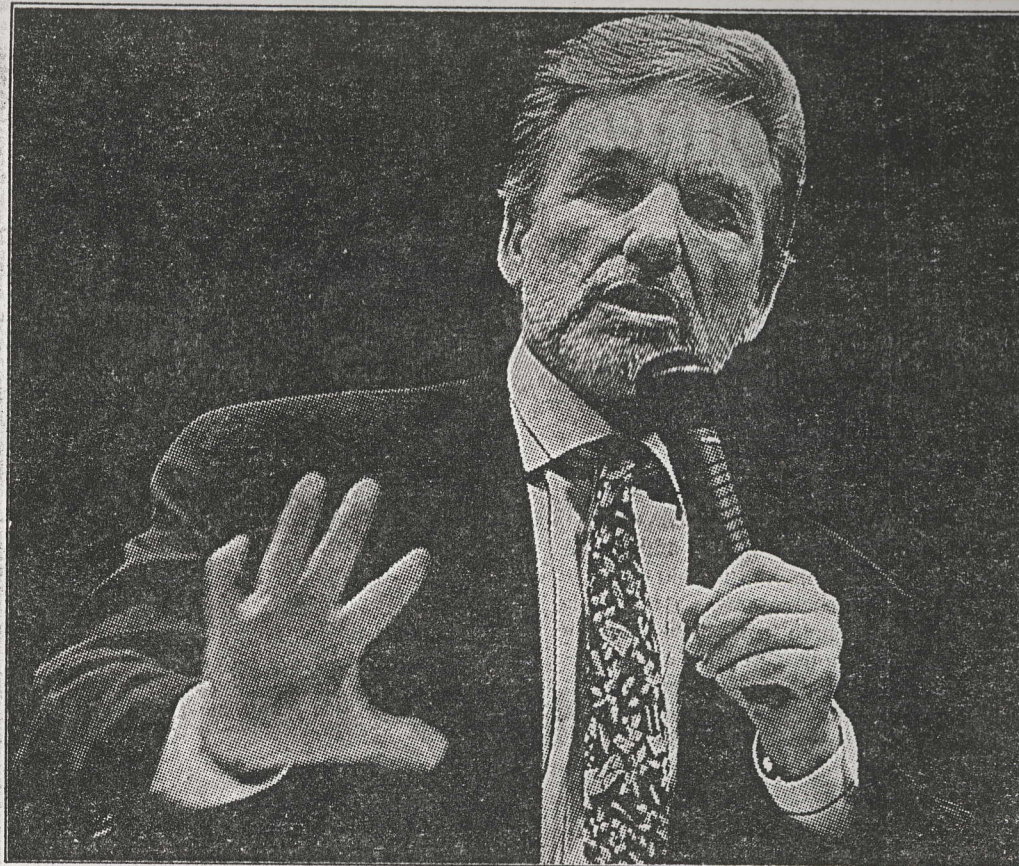
repeats the drunken sexism of his great-grandfather. Alcoholism appears through each generation of this family. Secret incest four generations earlier spawns sexual acting out in each later generation.

A reader might think: "Well, those are extreme cases. None of that happened in *my* family." Bradshaw's response is that in his 20-odd years of counselling, these so-called extremes proved to be the norm. In his words: "Start with the assumption that nothing in your family is as it seems." He believes that repression of feelings is itself a dark secret and can severely damage a child. He includes four categories of secrets, ranging in severity from criminal activity and sexual crimes to ethnic shame and cultural shame over socioeconomic status. He reminds the reader: "The darker the secrets, the more likely the family will resort to a pretence of stability."

For those courageous enough to risk exploring their family's secret past and breaking the trance-like emotional power it holds, *Family Secrets* is a valuable step-by-step guide of support. As a recovering alcoholic raised in an abusive Catholic family, Bradshaw shares numerous painful memories from his own past. He includes practical exercises to explore one's relationship with each parent and grandparent, and shows how to create your own genogram.

Bradshaw addresses post-traumatic stress disorder and the controversial issue of repressed memory syndrome. He stops short of taking a stand on the latter, and instead outlines different types of memory and how they are triggered

SELF-HELP



JOHN BRADSHAW: real-life examples of repetitive behavior patterns

Healing therapy unlocked along with family secrets

FAMILY SECRETS

By John Bradshaw
Bantam \$32.95

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT TO ME

By Suzette Haden Elgin
Wiley & Sons \$18.50

JUMP START YOUR BRAIN

By Doug Hall
Warner \$27.95

the damaging impact that some therapists can have on pushing for full disclosure and confrontation before a client is ready. In advocating personal healing, he is not on a trash-the-family campaign. In fact, he outlines useful patterns of behavior he learned from his family.

Bradshaw stresses the importance of forgiveness and remaining connected to one's clan. In his epilogue, he reaffirms the power of the soul to heal and transform secrets into a deeper, more powerful form of freedom and creativity. He states: "Like life itself, our families cannot be totally figured out. They need to be embraced as a mystery to be lived."

With sub-headings on each page and short sections of print, *Family Secrets* is easy to comprehend, although Bradshaw's frequent use of qualifiers such as "a kind of"

ating the autohypnotic defence of denial and positive hallucination." An index would make a handy addition as quick reference to find the many syndromes, theories and psychological terms introduced.

Watch for the follow-up television series *Family Secrets* on PBS this summer.

Language — not human nature — causes verbal abuse, according to linguistics expert Dr. Suzette Haden Elgin. Author of *You Can't Say That to Me!* and seven best-sellers, she provides a self-empowering, eight-step program to combat verbal abuse. Using case examples, she shows how to take control of verbal confrontations from sarcasm to subtle putdowns. She outlines how to use language techniques to avoid arguments. Questionnaires and interactive exercises enrich the book's content and allow for practical, first-hand learning.

How many ways can you enhance creativity? As many as today's authors come up with. Doug Hall, author of *Jump Start Your Brain*, introduces a method called "Eureka Stimulus Response" which he claims can increase creativity and productivity up to 500 per cent. He offers impressive credentials to back up his claim. As former "master marketing inventor" at Procter & Gamble, he states that the average U.S. home contains 18 brand-name products that he and his team created.

The book is entertaining, chatty and informal — all great ingredients for creative inspiration or "countercorporate culture" as Hall calls it. But the too-cutesy writing style grows wearisome quickly, as do the strained rhyming couplets. Despite his claims for