A Good Fit
The Satir Model

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An Experiential Approach

Strive to elicit change at a systemic level by encouraging family members to experience themselves more openly and fully in authentic relationship with one another.

Key Figures

Virginia Satir (Human Validation/Satir Model)
Carl Whitaker (Symbolic Experiential Therapy)
Greenberg & Johnson (Emotion Focused Therapy)
Virginia Satir

- MSW, First female pioneer of MFT
- 1955: Illinois Psychiatric Institute
- 1959-66: Mental Research Institute (MRI)
- 1964: Conjoint Family Therapy
- 1966: Director of Training, Esalen Institute
- 1970: International Human Learning Resources Network
- 1972: Peoplemaking
- 1977: The Virginia Satir Network
- 1988: The New Peoplemaking
- 1991: The Satir Model: Family Therapy and Beyond
Key Assumptions

• People are good, unique, make meaning internally, and trend toward growth when present focused (Humanistic)

• People need self-esteem, self-awareness, personal responsibility, and clear communication of the authentic self to be known (Existential, MRI)

• People live in systems that adapt to change but choose familiarity over comfort during stress (coping and communication styles learned in family of origin; GTS, MRI)

(Satir, Gomori, & Gerber, 1991)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Dysfunction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individuals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Systems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self aware</td>
<td>Opaque messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Do not understand each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruent</td>
<td>Use defensive communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good self esteem</td>
<td>Have love but low empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checks for meaning</td>
<td>Not accepting of uniqueness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible for choices</td>
<td>Assumes meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving toward growth</td>
<td>Damages self esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limits member growth</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dominating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(Guise, 2009; Satir, 1983, 1988)
Therapist’s Role

Model “Leveler”
Supporter
Resource Person
Official observer

(Satir, 1993)

Communication Stances

Superreasonable  Irrelevant  Leveling  Placating  Blaming
Satir’s Change Model

(Smith, 2010; Satir et al, 1991)
"I will make you feel guilty to feel safe."

49 Father Bernard
- Married 3 times
- Life Cycle: Divorce
- Heart condition
- Blamer

41 Mother Joan
- Initiated Divorce
- Getting published
- Computer

16 Son Walt
- Gifted Talented
- Aspiring Writer
- Plays Guitar
- Prefers to live with Dad
- Has a girlfriend
- Trouble at school (plagiarism)
- Blamer

12 Son Frank
- Prefers to live with Mom
- Wants to be a tennis pro
- Calls himself "a Philistine"
- Puberty
- Trouble at school (masturbating)
- Distractor

The Berkmans

(Satir, 1983; Piddocke, 2010)
Treatment Plan

Work with what clients bring to session and create opportunities for a transformative idea (authentic, client centered, creative)

Bernard’s Days

Modeling: Illustrate authentic, congruent communication of self to others (use of metaphor)

Family of Origin: Address family of origin models for gender norms and relationships to account for experiences with others

Parts Party: Encourage discussion and reflection on the fractured parts of the system, focus on integration

Boundaries: Safe levels of autonomy and responsibility foster good self esteem

Joan’s Days

Modeling: Illustrate authentic, congruent communication of self to others (use of metaphor)

Family Sculpting: Address protective communication and lack of safety to be authentic

Checking In: reflect on experiences to encourage growth

Boundaries: Safe levels of autonomy and responsibility foster good self esteem
# Contextual Issues

## Advantages

- Promotes egalitarian relationships
- Promotes gender equality
- Promotes individualized growth
- Easily accommodates spirituality
- Unconditionally accepts difference
- Techniques are culturally adaptive
- Values uniqueness and transparency so differences can be explored openly

## Disadvantages

- Difficult for low functioning and not useful if basic needs have not been met
- Criticized for not acknowledging social barriers and nontraditional coupling/parenting (GLTB, single parents, etc)
- Can be viewed as blaming the victim
- Does not address domestic violence or substance abuse specifically
- Promotion of self awareness and personal responsibility can be construed as insensitive to collectivism

(Bermudez, 2008)
Efficacious for:

Individuals (Morrison & Ferris, 2002; Yang & Vivian, 2010)
Couples (Lee, 2009; Morrison & Ferris, 2002)
Families (Seligman, 1981)
Groups (Root, 1989; Yang, 2001)

Clinical Populations:

Caregiver depression (Caston, 2009)
Pathological gambling issues (Lee, 2009)
Suicidal Thinking (Smith, 2010; Lum 2002)
Alcohol dependence with depression (Srikosai, 2008)
Sexually abused (Morrison & Ferris, 2002)
Bulimia (Root, 1989)

Synthesized with:

Adlerian Psychology (Bitter, 1993)
Social Constructionism (Cheung, 1997)
Adventure Based Therapy (Klien, 2008)
EFT (Brubacher & Brubacher, 2006)
Cognitive Neuroscience (Baron, 2009);
Yang, P. (2001). *From caterpillar to butterfly: An action research of educational program based on the Satir model for women in Taiwan (China).* ProQuest Information & Learning, US.
On my journey, I walk with wonderful others that show me who they are but also who I am, what I can achieve, and what makes life meaningful. I thank you all for helping me unlock my potential and achieve this moment.