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An overview of Virginia Satir's method of family therapy and an evaluation as to its use in the substance abuse rehabilitation field

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The family, mistakenly perceived as an inert system in our culture, is in reality a dynamic and constantly evolving unit both in structure and function. More quickly than ever before, the roles family members play, values, and beliefs are changing. (1975, p. 18) Since the Industrial Revolution, there has been a move from an agrarian to an urban society along with rapid economic and social change which has had a major impact on all institutions. New values in family living have emerged. The nuclear family was considered ideal. The institutional family of rural society, with its subordination of the wife to the husband and with parental authority firmly established, was challenged by the new industrial society where the new companionship family emerged valuing self-expression, democracy, and personality development in family living. (1975, p. 19)

The Industrial Revolution affected families in one way by relieving mates of many burdens but at the same time exposing them to extra pressures. First of all, the work world became de-personalized and mechanized due to technology such as automation and specialization. Individual worth being rated by income left many females feeling downgraded. Many family functions were now taken over by outside institutions such as food preparation and education. Individual mobility was looked upon as an essential for advancement which meant families had to follow the money earner. This contributed to the separation of parents from grandparents which resulted in the failure to replace the functions they had previously performed. At the same time, revolutionary social and intellectual influences caused the modern family to question old assumptions, norms, and values. (1967, p. 23)

All of these economic and philosophical trends left people feeling confused
and unimportant. (1967, p. 24) As soon as the two World Wars further dis-
illusioned men and women, they turned to family-building (house building and
baby production) as a total reason for being. The parental role took control
as males and females found themselves disillusioned with each other. (1967,
p. 26).

Today, there are an increasing number of problems facing the family.
Due to progress in medicine, the life span continues to lengthen causing an
increasing population of senior citizens. Another conflict results due to
the many youths who feel alienated from a society whose social institutions
they believe are not keeping up with the accomplishments of today. At the
same time, mass media has produced a very informed citizenry where it is no
longer possible to fool all of the people all of the time. The Social Revolu-
tion has a great affect on family life. For example, the prevalence of the
"pill," laws of abortion, women's liberation, disintegration of the roles
of parents, adoption regulations, and the creation of life in a test tube
all have a lasting impact on family life. (1975, p. 21)

In the field of family therapy, Virginia Satir is a widely known
authority. She earned her bachelor's degree from Wisconsin State University
in 1936 and Master's degree from the School of Social Service Administration
at the University of Chicago in 1948. She has had experience in a broad
array of settings. On both the international and national scene, Satir
has conducted training institutes for psychiatric departments of medical
schools, social workers groups, government agencies, and legal and religious
groups. She is the author of several books and has written numerous journal
articles and contributed chapters to professional books dealing with the

treatment of families. (1975, p. 36) Virginia Satir's methodology of family therapy is unique and can be used in all types of counseling and therapeutic situations. The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of this method and evaluate it looking at its strengths and weaknesses in its implications for use in substance abuse rehabilitation counseling.

Family pain is dealt with by family therapists. Satir sees the family to behave as a unit based on the concept of homeostasis in which the unit strives to maintain balance. (1967, p. 1) Although many treatment approaches call themselves "family therapy" but differ from the definition in that family members are treated as individuals not as a unit, clinical observation has concluded that therapy must be oriented to the family as a whole. (1967, p. 2) Once therapists start to see the whole family together, other aspects of family life which produce symptoms are revealed. Earlier this had been largely overlooked. (1967, p. 3)

Satir begins her involvement with the family unit by considering the extent that the family is troubled. She considers the nurtured family to be the ideal situation. If one can answer yes to the following questions, one can be considered to live in a nurtured family: (1) Is it fun and exciting to be a member of the family? (2) Does it feel good to live in your family right now? (3) Do you feel you are living with people who you like and trust and who like and trust you? (1972, p. 9) Characteristics of a nurturing family include aliveness, genuineness, honesty, love, open display of affection and pain, good communication, and planning. (1977, p. 14) Parents in nurturing families realize that their children are not intentionally bad and that for a child to be corrected one must consider listening, touching, timing, understanding, and awareness of the child's

feelings and natural desire to learn and to please. The nurturing family realizes that problems are a part of life and is alert to creative solutions as each new problem appears. On the other hand, the troubled family places all their energies into trying to keep the problems from happening, and when they do happen, there are usually no resources left for solving them. (1972, p. 17) Therefore, the distinguishing feature of nourishing parents is the realization that change is inevitable. There is an acceptance of change as an unavoidable part of living and an effort to use it to its fullest to make the family still more nurturing. (1972, p. 18) Hope is there in that any troubled family can become a nurturing one since most things that cause a family to be troubled are learned and can, therefore, be unlearned. For a family to change, they need to recognize that the family is troubled, have hope that things can be different, and take some action to start the changing process. (1978, p. 19)

Satir considers the misunderstanding of rules within the family to be a source of pain. One of her goals in therapy is to help the clients discover the rules, conscious or unconscious, by which they live. The rules families most frequently point out are those that make it possible for people to live in the same house together and grow in some respect. (1972, p. 96). All too often people assume that everyone else knows what they know and this, therefore, leads to misunderstanding and problems. Therefore, pinpointing and discovering rules can be very enlightening. A nurturing family has the ability of adjusting rules to keep them up to date (1972, p. 97).

A set of rules that frequently causes problems within the family has to do with the freedom to comment. Seeing and hearing experiences are

constantly occurring in the family situation. Whatever the feelings may be that are aroused, if they go without comment or unrecognized, the feelings may hide and eat away at the family's well being. (1972, p. 99) Without explaining the experience for himself, the family member has no opportunity to check out the explanation, and, therefore, it becomes fact whether it is accurate or inaccurate. This will be the basis upon which the individual will base his actions and opinions. (1972, p. 100) Most families only permit the expression of feelings when it is justified not because it is. The self only has a chance to expand when the rules suggest that all feelings are human, acceptable, and should be discussed. (1972, p. 101)

Another set of rules that often cause problems are those about affection. Due to homosexual overtones, families do not know how to make affection "safe" and thus they develop rules against all affection. The problem originates in the confusion people experience between physical affection and sex. If there is no distinction between them, then the feeling is inhibited. (1972, p. 104) Our sexual parts are integral facets of ourselves and personal pain will result if our sexual side is not acknowledged, understood, and valued as well as that for the opposite sex. (1972, p. 106)

Satir places a lot of the stress of her work on the couple: the feeling of love and the process. "Love is a powerful feeling that releases the potential of one person to strive for his dreams without threat of judgment, to momentarily transcend his need for the need of another, to be patient and not lose his feeling of worth as the struggle to find meaning with the other person occurs, as bridges between individual differences are built, and while he bears the loneliness that inevitably exists from

time to time when each person must, in order to live his own integrity, take separate ways from the other." (1972, p. 123-124) According to Satir's vision of love, only about four and a half percent of the couples who plan to marry are actually prepared to do this. (1972, p. 124) There are three parts to a couple: you, me, and us. Each part has a life of its own while at the same time making the other parts more possible. How the love relationship grows and flourishes depends on how the two people make the three separate parts work, otherwise known as the process. There has to be room for all three parts and no one part must dominate. The process consists of the decisions the couple reaches together and the way in which they act on these decisions. The feeling that begins a marriage is love, but process is what makes it work. (1972, p. 128)

The couple begins by the process of mate selection. Satir sees self-esteem as having a major impact on one's choice for a spouse. People with low self-esteem usually have high hopes of what is expected from others but at the same time have fears. They always expect disappointment and are ready to distrust others. (1967, p. 8) They marry for several common reasons such as ability to see the qualities one would like oneself in the spouse, wanting an extension of oneself, wanting the others esteem of oneself, and wanting an omnipotent, selfless percent in the other. (1967, p. 8) Although often there is a disillusionment when the spouse turns out to be different from what he was like in courtship. This differentness, the whole area of individuality, can be used in a destructive sense rather than for enrichment purposes. (1967, p. 11) If the differentness leads to conflict, it can threaten one's autonomy and self-esteem. (1967, p. 12) On the other hand if the spouse has self-esteem the differentness could

be used for growth. When functional people disagree, they often try to coax, take turns, find an alternative to please both, balance separate wishes against the wish to be together or use a third person to make the decision. On the other hand, when dysfunctional people disagree, they try to postpone, coerce, delude each other, undermine each other or accuse and evaluate in a moral fashion. (1967, p. 14) Although, often they are too afraid to accuse due to the fear that the spouse won't value them anymore. Therefore, the disagreement process goes underground in a covert fashion. (1967, p. 15) The more indirectly and covertly people communicate, the more dysfunctional they'll tend to be. (1967, p. 17)

Satir sees the marital disappointment and dysfunction of the couple as having grave and lasting consequences for the child. The stresses and strains of modern society confront all families although some manage to produce self-confident children who have the ability of coping successfully with a difficult environment. Satir believes that outside forces are important to the extent that they affect the parents since parents are the ones to translate the meaning which outside forces will have to the child. (1967, p. 27)

If the parents of the child tend to have low self-esteem, the child is often used as a way to represent their worth in the community and to maintain self-esteem about the family and self. (1967, p. 28) Problems arise as the child gets caught between conflicting demands when each parent comes up against the other spouse's wishes. The child is looked upon as an ally against the other mate and a messenger to communicate and pacify the other mate. Each parent's desire for an extension of himself gets blocked or challenged by the other spouse's wishes. Trouble emerges since

the child is already sexually identified with one parent by virtue of
being male or female. (1967, p. 29) Therefore, if the child seems to
take sides with one parent, he runs a risk of losing the other parent.
Making this choice is inevitably stressful. (1967, p. 30) Trying to re-
spond to his parent's contradictory and unlabeled wishes, the child's be-
havior reflects and characterizes the unsolved conflicts existing within the
mates. (1967, p. 32) Therefore, Satir feels the duty of raising a child,
peoplemaking, correctly is crucial in determining his behavior now and in
his later life.

A heavy responsibility is felt by most parents to do the best they
can for their child. The job is difficult but holds some of the most joyous
and rewarding experiences of a lifetime. (1972, p. 197) The problem not
only consists of what the parents want to achieve in their children but
also the question of how to teach them. (1972, p. 198) Most parents
strive for their children to have at least good or better lives than they
did and hope to be the means for this to happen. (1972, p. 199) Most
people want to parent differently from the way they were parented since
often some of the things one's parents taught turned out to be wrong in
their eyes. Therefore, knowledge is the most important tool for people-
making and help is needed for parent training. (1972, p. 202)

Satir speaks of the parental cloak which is the part of the adult
that one uses to live out the role of parent. Problems occur when the cloak
never changes or ceases to exist. The major factor affecting the parents'
blueprint is the kind of parental cloak one wears and whether or not it is
worn all the time. Satir suggests three linings to the cloak: the boss
lining, the leader and guide, and the pal. (1972, p. 208) Although, in

none of the parental cloaks can a trusting atmosphere develop. Therefore, Satir recommends that parents strive to be leaders who are firm, kind, understanding people who direct from a position of reality rather than power. (1972, p. 211)

Keeping in mind parental cloaks, Satir recommends some essential ingredients for peoplemaking. The first one the child needs is to be physicially comfortable from birth on so that the transition from the womb to the home is smooth. The child also needs continuity in relationships while at the same time learning to influence and predict the responses of others. It is also important that the child learn how to structure the world by classifying and differentiating beyond the immediate world of the self, mother, and father, by learning to evaluate and predict, and differentiating between good and bad. (1967, p. 46)

As Satir is a firm believer in self-esteem, she feels it is crucial that the child learn to esteem himself in two areas. The first area is to see himself as a masterful person who is able to do for oneself. This can be done if at least one parent validates his developmental growth. (1967, p. 46) Although, if the parent does not appropriately time the validation or does not validate the ability at all, the child will have trouble integrating the ability. (1967, p. 47) If the one parent contradicts the validation made by the other parent, the child will manifest what he knows in a less consistent way and learning will be more difficult. When the parents do not validate abilities at all, the child will still continue to grow but not in as easy a fashion. (1967, p. 48)

The second area in which the child needs to learn to esteem himself is as the sexual person. A child can develop this esteem only if his

sexuality is validated by both parents. He must identify his own sex and accept the other. (1967, p. 48) Problems occur if the parents are not ever able to validate each other as sexual people and therefore cannot validate the child as a sexual person either. (1967, p. 49)

Satir's ultimate situation occurs when parents successfully and consistently show they consider their child as a sexual, masterful person while at the same time demonstrating a satisfying functional male-female relationship. As a result, the child will acquire self-esteem and will become increasingly independent. (1967, p. 53) As long as the goals of the essential learnings are achieved, everything else will follow in place: love, competence, problem-solving, sincerity, and creativity. As soon as the adult grasps the idea that a human being at any age is a person, the job of parenting will become a lot easier. (1972, p. 229)

As the child grows up, his role in the family becomes more important while at the same time increasing or decreasing the family's resources. Within the family unit one needs to find out what one has, match it with what is needed, and figure out the best way to make use of it. Therefore, it is also important to investigate what one does not have and ways to get it. The planning of the use of these resources is what Satir calls family engineering. (1972, p. 256)

Satir stresses the need for family time. Modern families place so much of their time in business and seldom have time to enjoy one another. Priorities need to be evaluated. (1972, p. 262) She suggests that family time needs to be divided into three separate parts: time for each person to be alone (self), time for each person to be with each other (pair), and time when everyone can be together (group). The way one makes a living

and the size of the family influence the use of this time. (1972, p. 263)
If not all members are present and family business continues, the chances
for misunderstanding are multipled. This can be minimized if someone is
designated to carefully note what went on so that a clear report can be given
to the absentee; otherwise rumor would have to be taken as fact. (1972,
p. 266) Having group time does not guarantee that family business will be
effectively transacted, although, getting together at the end of the day
provides an excellent opportunity for sharing and renewing contact with each
other. (1972, p. 268) Satir suggests that it is wise to have a planned
time to get together at least once a day to give everyone a chance to touch
base with each other. (1972, p. 270) In effect the key to understanding in
the family unit is increased communication.

Therefore, Satir's major focus in her actual family therapy techniques
center around communication. She feels that often one's inside experience
seems to be very different from the individual's outside expression, and,
therefore, one often does not have an accurate idea of how one sounds to
someone else. Communication seems to be the source of all problems and
needs to be focused on. Focusing on each problem gets incredibly involved
such that it is more helpful to center on communication so skills will be
learned to handle each problem as needed. (1976 (B), p. 4)

Method

As the family approaches the family therapist, he can assume several
things. First of all, just their presence demonstrates their hopes of
continuing as a family and ability for change. Secondly, they recognize to
some degree that they need assistance in making those changes and just by
being there have already begun the process of change. Finally, just by

choosing a particular therapist, the family seems to be accepting that person as a guide to lead them in changing. (1976 (A), p. 12).

There are several rules that must be kept in mind while working with a family. Satir stresses the importance of the contact the family therapist needs to make with each of the family members individually. He must always keep in mind not to assume that any one person is a spokesperson for the whole family. (1976 (A), p. 15) The therapist needs to recognize the independence and individuality of each member of the family by making up a group of contracts for change, one for each member of the family. This supports Satir's basis for family therapy which is the therapist's ability to integrate the integrity of the family system with the growth needs of each family member. (1976 (A), p. 16) These two factors must be considered before a plan for family growth can be recognized.

The first step in enhancing family growth is the process of gathering information in a very delicate way. Satir suggests one way of doing this is through the use of embedded questions which do not demand an answer while at the same time beginning the process of bringing issues to attention. For example, "I'm wondering what it is that . . . " (1976 (A), p. 16) This form of questioning leaves the possibility for any one of the listeners to respond if he so chooses and leaves the maximum number of choices about when and how one will respond. After the presentation of several embedded questions, the therapist would pause to allow any family member the space to respond if he so chooses. If no verbal response is achieved, the therapist then requests a response from one family member while at the same time being careful with embedded questions. (1976 (A), p. 17) When becoming more direct in the gathering of information, the therapist can employ polite

demands. For example, "Can you tell me specifically . . . " versus "Tell
me specifically what you . . . " (1976 (A), p. 17) The polite command has
the force of a command but the form of a question leaving maximum freedom
to respond. (1976 (A), p. 18)

For the therapist to be effective, he needs to understand what re-
sources the family presently has and their uses and also on what expecta-
tions for change the family can agree. The therapist achieves the neces-
sary information about the present state through verbal and nonverbal ex-
change. Through skillful communication a desired state can be agreed upon
by the development of a reachable goal for change. (1976 (A), p. 19)
Throughout the gathering of information and the establishment of individual
contracts with each family member for change, the therapist is offering
valuable information to the family. At this point an introduction is
being made about communication by the therapist giving feedback on his
understanding of the messages presented by the family. (1976 (A), p. 20)
Most of the time, Satir believes people are not specific about what they
hope for or want. Therefore, in assistance, the therapist will ask for a
referential index in response to a generality which is a part of a sentence
that picks out a part of the listener's experience. The family gets the
message of the seriousness of understanding and communicating by the demand-
ing of clear, specific communication. (1976 (A), p. 22)

Along with the understanding of the present and desired state, Satir
suggests another important pattern of therapy lies in the therapist's abil-
ity to sense the missing parts in a family system. This is a critical fac-
tor in assisting the family in changing. (1976 (A), p. 22) This opportu-
nity is often lost since the therapist is often tempted to fill in his own

understanding of what is missing. (1976 (A), p. 24) Through listening

carefully and making intuitions about his language, the therapist can

help in understanding what the client has deleted. Checking out is always

necessary since there is no guarantee that the same meaning will be under-

stood by everyone. (1976 (A), p. 25)

The therapist always should present a model for clear communication

throughout his verbal exchange. To make sense of the family's narrations,

he needs to check the verbs the family members use to describe their expe-

riences by asking them to specify these process descriptions. (1976 (A),

p. 26) Through insisting to understand the messages of the family members,

an example for clear communication is being set while teaching specific

ways to clear up their verbal communication. (1976 (A), p. 27)

Human speech is one of the important facets of understanding. Satir

presents five important patterns of potential verbal misunderstandings.

(1976 (A), p. 27) The first pattern is nominalizations where people

represent active portions of their experience by words that are usually

used to represent more inert portions of experience. For example, "I see

frustration." (1976 (A), p. 28) There is little hope for satisfaction

unless the therapist can connect the nominalizations with the experiences

to fill in the deletions. (1976 (A), p. 31) The de-nominalizing identifies

the experiences that all the family members will be able to accept as ful-

filling hopes and desires as family and individuals. A comparison of what

the family resources are at the present and what they will need to reach

the agreed state gives an established direction for therapy. (1976 (A),

p. 32) The next presented is that of the cause-effect semantically ill-

formed pattern. Satir feels that often sentences claim what is impossible

in our understanding of the world's operations. Usually there is a claim that one person is causing another to have a particular experience. For example, "He really makes me feel sad." (1976 (A), p. 34) The therapist needs to demonstrate to people that they have a choice about whether a particular movement from someone else has to have the effect on them they claim. If these choices are not recognized, the people will have little or no control over their lives. (1976 (A), p. 35) To help them have these choices, they need to be asked to describe in detail the process where someone causes them to feel what they are experiencing. (1976 (A), p. 36)

The third pattern is the mind reading semantic ill-formedness in which by assuming that one knows the thoughts and feelings of another person without that other person's direct communication of these thoughts or feelings, it will result in pain and unhappiness. The therapist would approach this pattern by asking specifically the process where the person obtained this information he claims to have. One reason why these people think they can understand a good deal about the inner experience of another person is their perceived ability to identify and understand the nonverbal messages presented. (1976 (A), p. 37) Also, under certain stressful situations, people often hallucinate the inner experience of others and act on them without checking to match the other person's actual experience. Being able to break the mind reading pattern is one of the therapist's most important interventions in helping a family move from a closed system to one which allows freedom to grow and change. (1976 (A), p. 38)

The fourth pattern Satir calls complex equivalence where one equates a portion of observable behavior with one's total communication and then labels it as an inner experience. The attachment of a label to some part

of one's experience and mistaking the label for the experience causes great
difficulty and pain. (1976 (A), p. 38) If this is the case, the therapist
should ask a family member to state if the mind reading-complex equivalence
is accurate. If not, it could be considered an hallucination. (1976 (A),
p. 41) The last pattern Satir focuses on is the small number of expressions
called model operators which are words or phrases that identify the limits
of the speaker's model of the world. As soon as these limits are identified,
the therapist is able to extend the model to include what is wanted for one-
self and the family. (1976 (A), p. 43) One can identify these limits by
asking, "What would happen if . . .?" or "What stops you." If the thera-
pist would receive an answer such as, "I don't know," Satir suggests asking
him to guess since often it relieves the pressure of having to know exactly
and invariably produces an answer that identifies one's limits. (1976 (A),
p. 45) Satir encourages strongly to bring another family member in by
asking them to comment on her experience of the exchange between the thera-
pist and the other member. She feels this accomplishes several important
things. First of all, it encourages the family to take seriously the
ability to understand and make sense out of their experiences. Secondly,
it makes another family member present the therapist with results of her
ability to make sense of a portion of family interaction. Also, it is ask-
ing to repeat a learning experience which is familiar to everyone. (1976
(A), p. 46)

Along with these five patterns of human speech, Satir suggests that
knowing a person's most used representational system can be very useful
information in therapy. If we can acknowledge one's most used representa-
tional system (for example, visual, kinesthetic, etc.), then we have the

choice of translating into this system. A person will tend to trust a person more if one demonstrates that his experience is understood. (1976 (A), p. 49) If a goal is to have the client feel willing to take risks and to trust the therapist as a guide for change, he must be convinced the therapist understands and can communicate with them about it. Once the initial contact is made, it is possible to assist the client in increasing their choices about representing their experience and communicating about it. (1976 (A), p. 51) Therefore, Satir concludes that better communication will occur within a family when the family can identify, use, and be sensitive to each other's representational system. (1976 (A), p. 52)

As stated earlier, underlying all of Virginia Satir's therapy is her theme that communication is the "real" problem behind the troubled family. If new techniques can be taught to understand and communicate, then one half of the troubled family's battle is over. Verbal communication represents only a fraction of the total complex process of communication. Body language also must be considered. (1976 (A), p. 54) Satir feels it is a must for the therapist to be able to identify patterns of verbal and nonverbal communication so he can intervene and assist the client to change and grow. The therapist must first be educated to be able to identify patterns of congruity and incongruity. One communicates congruently when all of the messages (verbal, nonverbal) he conveys match and are consistent with one another. An incongruent communicator presents messages with his body, his voice tonality, his word choice which do not match. To be able to detect this, the receiver must have open, clear channels to receive the full message. (1976 (A), p. 55 Most of the education needed is in the area of body language where almost no formal education is given to us; yet, it constitutes the bulk of the information

communicated by human beings. (1976 (A), p. 56) Each of the body move-
ments and tonalities we employ in non-verbal language is a result of our
own personal experiences and nervous system. Few are considered conscious;
yet, they are usually standardized within our culture. (1976 (A), p. 57)
With the bulk of communication being non-verbal, there is a lot of room
for miscommunication especially in the complex-equivalence and mind reading
patterns since little of it is calibrated. (1976 (A), p. 58) Satir cites
four communication categories which result in incongruent conversation
that people tend to adopt under circumstances of stress, each characterized
with a set of gestures, syntax, body sensations, and body posture. (1976
(A), p. 59) These ways of communicating are ways in which one learns to
survive physically and emotionally grow up. (1976 (B), p. 25)

One of these communication categories in reaction to stress Satir
calls the placater. The person undergoes some kind of experience where
he feels he's no good and everyone else is better than he is. He crosses
himself out of the triangle of the self, the other, and the context. (1975,
p. 42) The placater, then, will always agree with the other person. He
talks in an ingratiating way, tries to please, apologizes, never disagrees,
takes responsibility for everything that goes wrong, and feels he always
has to get someone to approve of him. His body placates, too, in a helpless
type of posture and inside he feels like a nothing and totally worthless.
(1976 (A), p. 60) After continuous placating responses, the person will
soon be a victim of stomach trouble since all of the physiological symptoms
are involved with the digestive processes. (1975, p. 48.)

The second communication reaction to stress is the blamer. He feels
it doesn't matter whether he agrees with what he's saying or whether it
actually says anything but what is important is to let people know who's boss.

This does not necessarily mean disagreement, but he has to know he has power and is assured of this power by obedience to his demands. Opposite to the placater, the self is the only important thing in the triangle now. (1975, p. 43) The blamer's words always tend to be in disagreement while the body is in the blaming posture (being above the others). He feels lonely and un-successful on the inside. He's a fault finder, dictator, interested in throwing weight down and finding out about things, and loves to criticize everything. (1976 (A), p. 62) Physically, he will suffer from everything that has to do with constriction. In the blaming situation, most people tend to hold their breath which tightens the walls of the veins and arteries. Adrenalin pours into the system and increases blood pressure. All of these physiological reactions extend into the muscles, blood vessels, and all other tissues. (1975, P. 48).

The third reaction can be either called super-reasonable or the com-puter. Only context remains in the triangle of the self, the other, and the context. Words bear no relationship with how one feels, and the body shows no signs of life, somewhat resembling a computer. (1975, p. 44) The important thing for this type of person is to maintain their equi-librium since they are really feeling inferior, stupid, and bored. (1976 (B), p. 27). Characteristics of this type person is that he's very correct, very reasonable, the body is dry, cool, disassociated, uses abstract and long wording, never moves, and never makes mistakes. (1976 (A), p. 64) The main physiological effect of this type of reaction is that of literally drying up. The saliva stops flowing, tears stop coming, and the blood gets thinner. This usually leads to peculiar physical complaints that are un-diagnosable. (1975, p. 48)

The last type of communication category Satir calls the irrelevant
or the distractor. The self, other, and context are all crossed out of the
triangle in this category. The distractor uses words that are absolutely
unrelated to anything that's going on. (1975, p. 46) Its power is in its
ability to distract and disrupt. It tends to make others feel on guard and
off balance. (1976 (B), p. 27). The body position is angular and off some-
where while inside he feels no one cares and there's no place for him.
Characteristics of the distractor are that he never makes responses to a
point, his voice is singsong, he's never on the point with his words,
ignores questions, and is purposeless. (1976 (A), p. 67) When this type of
reaction is used frequently over a period of time, it does not seem any
different from the person's personality and affects the central nervous
system such that periods of dizziness frequently occur. (1975, p. 48)

These four ways of communicating are learned early in childhood and
represent the best the child can make out of what is going on around him.
After a lot of use, it is hard to distinguish the response from one's self-
esteem or one's personaltiy. These ways of communicating are common since
they are reinforced by attitudes in our society. For example, the placater
response is reinforced as we are taught "don't impose; it's selfish to ask
for things for yourself." (1976 (A), p. 68) They represent a frequently
occurring and universal pattern of incongruity. (1976 (A), p. 71) It
must be noted that each of these patterns are useful in coping when given
the appropriate context and when understood that no one pattern is complete
in itself. (1976 (A), p. 70).

One way of coping with these often misunderstood communications is
to ask of the person what certain body movements, tonalities, etc. feels,
looks, or sounds like to him. (1976 (A), p. 71) Another type of helpful

exercise is to form a group of three persons of which each would assume a family role not necessarily the one they are in reality. After this is decided, the therapist assigns each role with one of the four types of communication styles. For example, assign the father the blamer role, the mother could be given the placater role, and the child the irrelevant role. This could be done so that each role figure has an opportunity to act out all roles. (1975, p. 50) Before each communication style change the family should be asked three questions. First, they should be asked if they were aware of any physiological reactions. Secondly, if they felt they were growing farther away or closer together, and, thirdly, how they would like to get out of the situation if they would be stuck there. After this is done, roles should be changed and the same questions should be asked. (1975, p. 51) Another good exercise would be to assign all adults as blamers and all children as placaters and then switching after a few minutes asking the same questions as in the last exercise. (1975, p. 55)

Comfort and how each person feels in these communication patterns play a major role in therapy. Satir feels that too many therapists try to bring out change by demonstrating what they're doing to one another. Instead, she feels that she should help each client to do what feels comfortable to them. By doing this, the client must take charge of himself. Therefore, she contends that changing the outward behavior won't do much for the person until the therapist is able to help each person take charge of himself in terms of his own comfort. (1975, p. 59)

A second type of effective therapy to be used concerning these four types of communication deals with focusing just on the messages received. It is based solely on judgments of whether the received messages are matched

or mismatched, congruent or incongruent. Most of the time with incongruent communication, people exposed to receiving it often decide to shut off one of their major sources of information by deleting one of the sources of the non-matching messages. (1976 (A), p. 80) Incongruent communication is a sign that the person is presenting messages that do not agree, forcing others to decide which set of messages to respond to. (1976 (A), p. 81) It enhances the complex equivalence pattern from which come the mind reading pattern and the calibrated communication sequences which most often are the source of pain. (1976 (A), p. 83).

After the therapist intervenes with the family's calibrated communication cycle, Satir calls her end result and the ultimate result the feedback communication cycle. She assigns certain characteristics as general steps followed for each cycle.

The calibrated communication cycle usually results in pain. It is made up of approximately five steps. It starts out with the actual communication from which the person presenting the message acts incongruently, although, one is usually unaware of doing it. (1976 (A), p. 101) The receiver of this message typically selectively pays attention to the messages entering through one of his input channels and disregards the others. If one is aware that some of the messages conflict, one will regard the person as insincere while if one is only aware of the messages that fit together, one will be uncomfortable and after some time be incongruent himself in his responses. (1976 (A), p. 103) Therefore, depending upon the receiver's degree of awareness of the conflicting messages, he may translate the communicator differently. (1976 (A), p. 105) From the conclusion of the messages, the receiver will make a generalization due

to his previous experience that is activated by the conflicting messages.
This rigid generalization is the core of the calibrated communication
cycle. (1976 (A), p. 106) The fifth step of the receiver is the response
behavior. Most likely, if the receiver is not himself, he may respond
incongruently and start another calibrated cycle. This is what the
therapist must avoid. (1976 (A), p. 108)

In contrast to the calibrated communication cycle, Satir presents
the ultimate goal of the feedback communication cycle. In this case, the
communication if given congruently will cause no difficulty. Although, if
the messages are given incongruently, the communicator himself will detect
the incongruency which will present choices. Again, if the communication is
congruent, the receiver will have no problems with the experience of the
message. If there is incongruence, the receiver will call the communicator's
attention to the conflicting messages and can assist him in integrating
them which the communicator will welcome as he can accept the comment without
feeling attacked. (1976 (A), p. 112) If congruent, the conclusion of the
receiver will be fine. If incongruent, the receiver will conclude some-
thing did not work for him. If the receiver is aware of the conflicting
messages, he can explore the problem with the communicator; and if he is not
aware of the problem, he will be confused and has the choice of requesting
help from the communicator in resolving it. The strength of this cycle
lies in the fact that both the communicator and receiver have the choice
of explaining their communication without threatening their self-worth.
(1976 (A), p. 113) When incongruent messages are received, they will
trigger some experience from the past. The receiver will be sensitive
enough to immediately become aware that he is not totally present in the

interaction and that his attention has shifted. Thus, he has the choice of continuing or to refocus his attention by requesting feedback to help him resolve the pattern from the past which is distracting him. Using his confusion or distraction, the receiver can learn more about himself and the communicator. (1976 (A), p. 115) By now either receiver has detected conflicting messages and explored them. If by chance neither has, the receiver will present the original communicator with another incongruent message. This will occur until one or the other will detect miscommunication patterns, and they will explore them. (1976 (A), p. 116) In summary, the therapist's task is to assist the family members in changing their patterns of communication from calibrated loops to feedback cycles. (1976 (A), p. 117) See Table A.

Before actually entering the three phases in Satir's model for family therapy, it is important to present the role of the therapist and some useful concepts to keep in mind during therapy from Satir's viewpoint. The therapist should first and foremost be seen as a resource person. He can advance study as an experienced observer who has a unique viewpoint remaining an outsider to the family. Trust can be placed in him since he can report impartially on what is seen and heard. The second major role the therapist has is a model of communication. He must have a lack of fear in revealing himself and be aware of his own prejudices and unconscious assumptions. He first should be able to introduce new techniques of communication. (1967, p. 97) He will not only demonstrate what clear communication is but teach his clients how to achieve it themselves. (1967, p. 100) The therapist must also be aware of the many types of interaction in therapy. He acts as a member of various dyads but is also the observer of other dyads. (1967, p. 101)

There are four concepts that Satir sees useful to any therapy. She suggests exploring the techniques each member of the family uses to handle differentness which gives some insight into the family's ability to adapt to growth and change. (1967, p. 103) Another helpful concept is role function analysis. It is helpful to find out whether the members of the family are covertly playing roles different from those which their position in the family demands that they play. This is often the source of disturbance. (1967, p. 104) The third technique is the self-manifestation analysis which is whether there is congruence or incongruence in communication. This is probably the most important to Satir with model analysis running a close second. This is to find out how much the early life of each member of a family has affected his present ways of behaving. The models that influenced each family member in early life will have an effect on how the messages are interpreted in their later life. (1967, p. 105) With the use of these useful concepts and keeping the roles of the therapist in mind, Satir divides her actual model for family therapy into three phases: gathering information, transforming the system, and consolidating changes. (1976 (A), p. 117)

The first phase is gathering information in which the therapist works with family members to gather information which will help him to create an initial experience with them. (1976 (A), p. 117) The problem is in determining an experience which will best seek out information which identifies the way the family members themselves want the family experience of living to be, the desired state. The therapist must listen and watch to catch the full experience as the family begins to make known their hopes and fears as individuals and as a family. The second category the therapist seeks is information regarding the present state of the family and its resources

presently developed. (1976 (A), p. 119) No matter how different families can be, the desired state is usually a state in which all family members come to behave more congruently than the present. In order to create an effective experience, it is imperative that the therapist understands both the direction of change and the available resources with which they can work. The third characteristic of effective family therapy occurs during this phase when the therapist is working with the family members to prepare them to actively participate in order to create the desired state. They will need to take risks in order to act in ways different from before. (1976 (A), p. 120)

There are specific ways in which the therapist can assist the family members in making these changes. The first is to build up the family's trust in him as an agent of change. In order to accomplish this he must act as a model himself of congruency. At the same time he must be alert to each family member's most used representational system. He must use the skills in communication both to set an example and to make explicit the process of effective communication. At the same time, Satir emphasizes to welcome the family to comment on exchanges between himself and other family members. Through these techniques, the therapist can make individual contact with each family member in order to develop their confidence in the therapisti (1976 (A), p. 120)

The second way to help the family prepare for change is to share with the family members the information gathered using the therapist's communication skills. By understanding their own family "process," the family can have hopes about the next step which will allow the desired changes. (1976 (A), p. 122) The information is presented for the family to understand that change is possible. He describes what he experiences not an

evaluation. Just presenting the distinction between the evaluation of other people's behavior and the description of the process is a learning experience in itself. (1976 (A), p. 123) The result of these two processes is that the family becomes willing to take risks, attempts to build new bridges within the family, and ventures into unknown territory. They will be willing to place their hopes, energy, and participation to develop an experience to serve as a model for future growth. (1976 (A), p. 124)

The initial focus of the therapist is to find out what changes the family wants to occur. He must ask specifically what they want for themselves and the family. (1976 (A), p. 125) As members begin to respond to the therapist's questions they will tend to present ideas in terms of nominalizations. These nominalizations involve deletion, lack of referential indices and unspecified verbs. By challenging these the therapist can understand what the family members really want. (1976 (A), p. 126) This de-nominalization process is extremely important to adequately connect what they say and what is actually experienced. Therefore, it is helpful to use and explain the meaning of deletions, lack of referential indices, unspecified verbs, nominalizations, and model operators. Also, it is necessary to have the family members act out a sequence of behavior which represents what they want. (1976 (A), p. 127) By acting out an experience rather than just talking about it with the family, the therapist can use all of the family members' channels for experiences (auditory, visual, etc.) (1976 (A), p. 128)

The major task for the therapist in this first phase is complete when he has connected language with experience for each member of the family which is de-nominalization. This de-nominalization for each member of the

family may result in a set of experiences which are relatively unrelated. (1976 (A), p. 128) In this case, it might be helpful to ask one family member to present an example of a time when he failed to obtain what he desired and then ask other members how the description is connected with what they want. (1976 (A), p. 129) The set of overlapping experiences suggest the structure to be used in the second phase. (1976 (A), p. 130)

The second phase of Satir's model for family therapy is transforming the system. The family is now ready to help create the desired state and to take the necessary steps to reach their goal. (1976 (A), p. 137) Satir suggests not getting tied down with the actual problems but instead focus on the processes of communication and coping. Change is needed at the coping level not the content level. The goal of family therapy is not the solution of problems which are numerous but to change the system of how people com- municate and receive messages within the family. First, the therapist needs to find out which input and output channels are necessary for family members to know when they are getting what they want. The therapist gains impor- tant information when he compares what is wanted with what is presently possible to express based on forms of calibration which exist in the family. (1976 (A), p. 138)

Satir uses three strategies to lead family members to the experience of achieving their desired state. The first technique is to challenge the fixed generalizations from the past (the calibrated communication cycle). Calibrated loops must be broken and a new experience must be provided of how to understand and respond using these new responses. (1976 (A), p. 140) To achieve complete intervention, the therapist must break in as much as needed through the process until the calibration is broken and the family

members learn how to give feedback instead of calibrated communication.

Intervention is successful depending on the degree to which it teaches the

family members that feedback will get them more of what they want than

calibrated communication would, and that they will learn more about the

other family members when they use feedback to break calibrated loops on

their own. (1976 (A), p. 141) The success of the therapist in breaking

calibrated loops will be a model for family members later on and be an

incentive for further change especially when done easily and without

blame. (1976 (A), p. 151)

The second strategy is to give the family perspective of the system

process. The therapist needs to put it in a concrete form so that it can

be fully understood by the family. The therapist can open up a family

system only to the degree that he believes that the patterns of coping are

the source of the individual problems. (1976 (A), p. 155) He must be

freely involved responding to family members while at the same time remaining

outside the family system. Family members are usually so involved in

content with each other that at a certain point they must stop to look at

the process to get some perspective to go even further. (1976 (A), p. 157)

Sculpturing is one of the most powerful techniques to achieve perspective

of process. It involves translating the family's process into specific

body movements and postures that represent the communication observed in

the session. (1976 (A), p. 158) The system process provides the family

members with something to use to share their different perspectives with-

out fault-finding. It's a tool to understand differences and to learn

from them. (1976 (A), p. 160)

The third strategy is to transform the system by re-calibration.

The system as a whole needs to be transformed to a point where stress and

strain can be reduced and support and nurturing can develop in order for

the growth of the family. (1976 (A), p. 162) Hopefully, a snowball

effect will occur where the family members will start taking charge of the

process of change themselves. This will be the state where they will feel

free to make choices themselves. (1976 (A), p. 163)

The third phase of Satir's model for family therapy is consolidat-

ing changes which consist of reviewing the process of the family therapy

sessions, getting feedback regarding the process from each family member,

and developing and assigning homework. (1976 (A), p. 166) The purpose of

this phase is to solidify their gains from therapy which now become the base

for new confidence in taking risks to change and grow. A review of the

process allows the therapist to provide specific feedback about the session

to the family members. He first reminds the family members of the state

they were in when they first started therapy in a step by step fashion re-

counting the process that occurred. (1976 (A), p. 167) This gives the

therapist the chance to express his understanding of his experience working

with them and to emphasize the steps he feels important in family change and

the skills needed to continue the process of growth and change that

they had begun. (1976 (A), p. 168) It is also important that each and

every family member has the opportunity to give feedback and comment on

their experience of the therapeutic session. It allows the opportunity to

ask questions to clarify the portions of their experience which they had not

fully understood. (1976 (A), p. 169) Satir also suggests homework as a

technqiue to solidify the family's new skills. The first type involves

setting aside a specific time and place in their home for the practice

of interrupt signals. These are cues which the family members agree upon

and which any member of the family may use whenever one of the patterns

of calibrated communication cycles which they have been working to change

has been detected. (1976 (A), p. 170) A second effective homework assign-

ment is for the family to schedule a certain time and place to practice

the specific forms of feedback which they developed in therapy to replace

the calibrated communication loops which they succeeded changing. Satir

suggests a third possible homework assignment in which the family explicitly

reviews the steps, tools, and skills in the process of change in which they

are all involved. All of these techniques are helpful in perpetuating the

change that took place in therapy so that what was learned will enhance the

family's growth throughout its lifetime. (1976 (A), p. 172)

Application of Satir's Method in the Substance Abuse Field

Through work as an intern at one of the outpatient methadone

facilities in Richmond, the author can make predictions as to how Virginia

Satir's model of therapy would fit into the substance abuse setting. The

therapy will be evaluated by considering weaknesses and strengths in impli-

cations for use in the field of substance abuse rehabilitation counseling.

First of all there are a few problems with the therapy itself that

Satir has not considered. One of the problems lies in the fact that even

if the congruent state could be achieved by members of the family, there will

still be the problem of how to negotiate if opposing sides are taken in a

situation. They may be able to communicate clearly and congruently but

negotiation will come as a whole new problem in itself. Also, congruency of

communication does not guarantee that rejection will not take place or that

one will get what one wants. "Bad" results in the eyes of the communicator

could still occur since congruency will not guarantee that one will get

what one wants. The communicator and receiver may understand each other clearly, but it does not guarantee agreement. The third problem with the therapy itself is that there is no such thing as total awareness. One might think that one is behaving congruently but through feedback may find out that they have not. Feedback may not even expose the incongruency because the receiver may not necessarily be aware of the incongruency either. Therefore, it may not be possible that total congruency can be achieved since no one has total awareness.

Most of the clientele at this methadone facility suffer from a lack of communication and a lack of knowledge about communication and interpersonal relationships. This is a major problem for many people in today's world; although for drug abuser and other unfortunates, communication may be a small portion of the total problems existing. Satir suggests not to touch on their problems very much but most of the drug abusers main problems have to do with mere survival which in turn affects communication and coping strategies. Whether the client is able to afford to eat everyday, is molested by a stepfather, or simply just doesn't feel well due to the effect of drugs will rate as first on the client's list of problems. Communication will probably be seen as his last problem. People come to the facility to detox from heroin or other drugs which is one of their many problems. Others go to a family therapist to learn specific skills to cope with families and others. It is a problem of where the client rates the seriousness of his problems. If Satir's ultimate communication pattern could be achieved, there is still no guarantee that it will stop the drug use in itself. One must keep in mind that drug use involves both physiological and psychological dependencies. Satir stresses the point that her goal is to make her clients

be in control of themselves and having choices available. When one takes drugs, heroin, or even methadone, he does not have control over himself. The client may be physiologically in control but psychologically dependent. Since Satir centers her therapy around learning to be in control, it would be very difficult to use Satir's therapy until all of these dependencies had been dealt with first. Communication is only one facet of the move from dependency to complete control.

Another weakness in Satir's therapy is that it seems to be centered around the middle class person who is educated and capable of understanding complex and intricate concepts easily. Most of the clients at this particular methadone facility are not very educated, if at all, and would find it difficult to understand what is taught or would not be patient enough to work through it to find out what would be waiting for them at the end. Drug abusers tend only to think in terms of the short run and what is beneficial to them at that moment. This is why drug abusers get addicted to drugs since so often they will escape from problems by the immediate and reinforcing effect of the drug. They normally would not give thought to possible long term consequences but only to what immediately relieves the pain. Therefore, this type of therapy may not be useful for drug clients who tend to look for immediate satisfiers.

Satir states that the therapist needs to develop trust in his sessions with the clients as soon as it can be achieved. She suggests several ways to enhance the trust relationship. At the methadone facility, this would be a major problem since the clientele do not tend to trust freely. In their past and in their present, they have faced a lot of hurt which has greatly affected their interpersonal relationships and ability to trust.

Therefore, with the type of background these people have, trust would even be harder to achieve.

Along with all of these weaknesses, Satir's method of family therapy has strengths for its use in the substance abuse facility. Satir stresses gathering information as the first and most important step to find out where the family is at the present and where the family wants to be in the future. She suggests using a family life chronology questionnaire to enhance the process of gathering information. The methadone treatment facility is beginning to administer these questionnaires to intakes for two reasons. First of all, it is helpful in finding out more about the client. Many of their childhood and past experiences have contributed to their reliance on drugs. Also, the drug abuser's problem is not only his but also who he lives with. It not only affects him but also his family or whoever has contact with him. The facility often brings family members in for group sessions when the counselors feel it would be helpful. The second reason for using the family life chronology questionnaire is that it makes it easier for new counselors to take over the counseling process. Due to the rapid rate of employee turnover in this field, it is helpful that the new counselors do not have to start over totally with therapy since certain information will already be known to the counselor. It takes a long time to build up trust, and the advancement of this process will only help matters.

The drug abusers presently at the facility have multiple and complex problems. The counselor has no hope of solving all of them for the client. Satir's focus is on the few major problems which would be helpful in the methadone facility. A lot of the problems these clients have at home are their communication skills which affect everyone around them. Helping them

with these skills solves a large part of their problems since the whole
family will carry with them lasting effects due to the misuse of communica-
tion which will in turn effect the next generation. All of these clients
tend to fall into one of the four communication types Satir expresses as
reactions to stress. The importance of these lies with the effect of these
on children involved. For example, at this facility there is a Mrs. X, age
25, and a Mr. X, age 24. They have child 1, age 5, who is a product of
another relationship; child 2, age 2½; and child 3, age 4 months. Mr. X
has a job with a computer company while Mrs. X only socializes with drug
addicts. She does not want to change and refuses to know straight people
since she thinks that they don't know how she feels. Mr. X is on the pro-
gram, too, but is trying diligently to stay straight. Just for that
matter, Mr. And Mrs. X do not get along. Mrs. X does not love Mr. X and
presently is having an affair with another man. Mrs. X tends to hate men
in general since she was beaten physically by her father. This is a classic
generation case since the children are all abused by the mother. Their
communication is that of children. They never talk but always yell. All
of their conversations center around finding something to jab the other one
with and accusing the other of accusing. Mrs. X always sees Mr. X as coming
down on her and blames all of her problems on the husband. The family
situation is bad enough but the worst effect is on the children. Their
counselor feels that child 1 and 2 are suffering from a somewhat develop-
mental lag which could be caused by brain damage. Child 1, who is five
years old, cannot say the alphabet. Thus, the communication problem plus
the physical abuse are having major and lasting effects on the children.

The dominance of drugs in most of the clients' lives is primarily
due to their lack of communication skills and useless coping techniques.

During their dependence on drugs when they are in no control of them-
selves, Satir's therapy would not be as helpful unless this dependence was
broken. Therefore, the primary strength and importance of this therapy
would come in during the drug free phase of the facility's therapy. In
this case, the client would have control over himself so Satir's therapy
would be effective. Now would be the time to teach Satir's communication
skills and coping strategies in hopes that in the future their problems
would be handled effectively so that the drug use cycle would not recur.
At the same time it would increase their interpersonal skills for inter-
action with others so that there would be less possibility for regression
to their previous drug dependency. Therefore, the strength of Virginia
Satir's therapy would be the drug-free phase to enhance the client's pos-
sibility of continuing his success in recovery.

The Future Family

Adults who have charge of the bringing up process lay the founda-
tions of life in the childhood. Therefore, the future is today's child-
hood. (1972, p. 299) As long as there are infants and childrearing,
there will be families in the future. (1972, p. 300) Throughout the
years, there have been changing attitudes towards family matters. Divorce
means more of a social necessity rather than a personal downfall. Contra-
ception, the pill, premarital sex, open talk about sex, greater freedom
to abort, family planning, notion of going into second careers, increased
women working, changes in education, extended life span have all had a
place in changing things and these changes stimulate more changes. (1972,
p. 303) As long as these changes continue and people have a hard time of

adjusting and coping, family therapy will always be needed and continue

in all social services. Until people learn to cope and communicate better,

drug dependence will continue and the family therapy role in drug rehabili-

tation will become of increasing importance.

TABLE A

THERAPIST'S INTERVENTION

Family Calibrated Communication Cycle	Family Feedback Communication Cycle
Incongruency	Congruency
Mistaking part of message from whole (complex equivalence)	Appreciation of all of message (conflicting or not feedback)
Assuming understanding of message without checking (mind reading)	Graceful checking out
Rigid Fixed Generalization	Flexible, up-dated generalization check against sensory experience
Outcomes	Outcomes
Behavior which is untimely, inappropriate, chaotic	Behavior which is timely, appropriate, inventive for context
Closed System	Open System

SOURCE: V. Satir and R. Grinder, Changing With Families, Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1976, p. 118.

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