



freshwaysforward

Complementing NLP Practice with the Satir Model

In November of last year I was fortunate enough to attend the Level 1 Satir Transformational Systemic Therapy programme held in Wellington by Anne Morrison. As you may have read last month, the programme offers experiential training in Virginia Satir's model of family therapy. Most readers are likely to be familiar with Satir, a world renowned family therapist and one of those studied by Richard Bandler and John Grinder during the development of NLP.

I have found it exciting and rewarding incorporating the Satir Model into my practice. I'm finding it a terrific complement to the wondrous toolbox that is NLP, and my clients are reaping the benefits.

The Satir Model

Virginia Satir worked with individuals and families for over 30 years, constantly developing methods and tools for enabling people to connect with, and love, themselves and others. I believe her legacy is a holistic model for human transformation that is instinctive, practical and incredibly accessible.

The Satir Model training is structured in three levels, each building on the other to develop the therapists' congruence, and understanding and utility of the model. A myriad of tools are included, some introduced at Level 1, and then others in more depth at subsequent levels. If you've read any of Satir's books, such as Satir Model: Family Therapy and Beyond, you may know that the tools include:

- Family of Origin Map
- Personal Iceberg Metaphor
- Stages of Change
- Impacts of Family Rules
- Changing Unmet Expectations

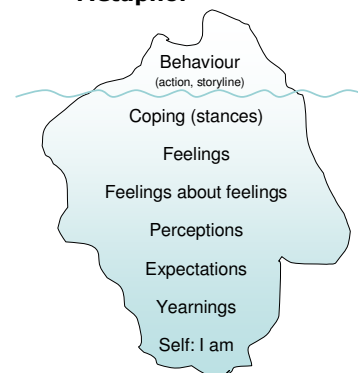
These tools are all covered at Level 1 and I have found the Iceberg model particularly useful (pictured). Put simply, it is a model for understanding the levels of self, not dissimilar to Robert Dilts' logical levels. The concept is familiar; an iceberg where what is above the water line is what is seen - in this case behaviours - and beneath that can be a plethora of feelings, perceptions and expectations influencing behaviours, and which in turn, interact with our deepest yearnings. Virginia Satir said that as we experience our yearnings being met, life energy is created, which in turn nurtures our life force, or Self.

Within the Iceberg Metaphor are also Coping Stances; how we respond under stress:

1. Placating
2. Blaming
3. Super Reasonable
4. Irrelevant
5. Congruent

No prizes for guessing which one we ultimately want to be responding with! In working through this model, we are constantly moving towards experiencing more and more congruence.

The Personal Iceberg Metaphor



Working with an NLP Coaching Client

On my return from Wellington I met with a client, we'll call him Sean. He had been coming to see me for a few weeks. He was very unhappy due to a number of issues around his relationship with his partner. He'd made progress and was feeling more resourceful, but he hadn't easily gotten out of 'story' and intellectualising. He also did not easily connect with his own wants and needs. During this appointment I introduced Sean to the Iceberg Metaphor. We began by considering some of the behaviours he had been demonstrating, and what feelings he was experiencing in those moments. We explored how he felt about those feelings. There was a lot of guilt, and he took a few minutes to consider how he wanted to transform this into something more resourceful.

I also helped him understand his coping stance by demonstrating each of them for him. Also, based on previous sessions, I had a hunch it would help him to understand the coping stances of his parents, and the subsequent impacts on him. He began to see what an expert 'placater' he was; putting others first and often forgetting about himself. All this took about fifteen minutes.

I then began asking him about his expectations and yearnings and his physiology really started to change, almost like a light went on inside (Virginia Satir would probably say that that is exactly what happened!). For the first time in weeks he began to talk about what was important to *him*, what he really wanted. He was suddenly connecting with his Self. We spent a few more minutes consolidating all his realisations and newfound resources. I then guided him through anchoring them into his body, which he then anchored to his finger tips also. It was an extraordinary shift; he'd gone from victim, to empowered individual in less than an hour.

When we met again two weeks later Sean was talking about his situation in a whole new way. He was automatically thinking about himself first. The current situation with his partner looked and felt different to him; he was starting to see what he needed from the relationship and understand what his values were.

I now introduce the Iceberg model to most of my clients and teach them how to use it. I suggest they use it when they're in a stressed state, almost like an emotional temperature gauge. In doing this, they can usually identify with one part of the iceberg and then start to unravel other parts of it from there. I also suggest they use it when they find themselves feeling really relaxed and at peace, to help them more fully understand how they're connecting with Self. Anne Morrison mentioned how easily children use this model – they intuitively understand what's beneath the water line (that is, "all those things going on inside us we don't often see or talk about").

For me, the Satir Model has provided a framework to working with clients that allows for holistic transformation. It has taught me how to truly connect with clients, and it is helping my clients truly connect with themselves. As I travelled home from the training I remember thinking to myself, Virginia Satir really knew what being *human* was all about.