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Instructor's Manual

for

**BLENDED FAMILY WITH
A TROUBLED BOY**

with

VIRGINIA SATIR

Manual by

Shirin Shoai, MA

kimpsikoloji.com



psychotherapy.net

The *Instructor's Manual* accompanies the video *Blended Family with a Troubled Boy* with Virginia Satir (Institutional/Instructor's Version) which is part of the *Virginia Satir Series*. Video available at www.psychotherapy.net.

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Shirin Shoai, MA

Blended Family with a Troubled Boy with Virginia Satir

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Instructor's Manual for

BLENDED FAMILY WITH A TROUBLED BOY WITH VIRGINIA SATIR

Table of Contents

Tips for Making the Best Use of the Video	4
Satir's Approach to Family Therapy	5
Discussion Questions	7
Role-Plays	10
Reaction Paper Guide for Classrooms and Training	12
Related Websites, Videos and Further Readings	13
Transcript	15
Video Credits	45
Earn Continuing Education Credits for Watching Videos	46
About the Contributors	47
More Psychotherapy.net Videos	48

Tips for Making the Best Use of the Video

1. USE THE TRANSCRIPTS

Make notes in the video **Transcript** for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during and after the video. **Streaming customers can make use of the “clips” function to choose excerpts for teaching purposes.**

2. FACILITATE DISCUSSION

Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions to the concepts presented. **The Discussion Questions** section provides ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

3. ENCOURAGE SHARING OF OPINIONS

Encourage viewers to voice their opinions. What are viewers’ impressions of what is presented in the interview?

4. CONDUCT A ROLE-PLAY

The **Role-Play** section guides you through exercises you can assign to your students in the classroom or training session.

5. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL

Assign readings from **Related Websites, Videos and Further Reading** prior to or after viewing.

6. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER

See suggestions in the **Reaction Paper** section.

Satir's Approach to Family Therapy*

Virginia Satir was a 20th-century psychotherapist who is often referred to as the pioneer of family therapy. She believed that people are capable of continued growth, change and new understanding. Her initial purpose was to improve relationships and communication within the family unit. Ultimately her work, which was internationally recognized, grew to be accepted as applicable to all human communication and growth—within a person, a family, a company or community. She remained a leading force for human growth and family therapy until her death in 1988.

Satir posited that a client's presenting issue was rarely the real problem and that superficial issues frequently served to mask deeper ones. She argued that mental health problems were often the product of negative family experiences and roles, and placed a strong emphasis on treating the entire family rather than pathologizing the individual. Satir's Transformational Systemic Therapy, also known as the Satir Growth Model, emphasizes engaging the inner self and analyzing a person's situation and choices.

From observing Satir's work, five therapeutic process elements have been identified that are essential for creating transformational change. These therapeutic elements are necessarily present throughout the entire therapy session, from the initial contact and rapport building through assessment and exploration, goal setting, the transformational change process, anchoring the changes, reviewing the session and assigning therapeutic homework for practicing and integrating the changes. The five essential elements are:

1. Experiential. The therapy must be experiential, which means that the client is experiencing the impact of a past event in the present. Often, body memory is accessed as one of the ways to help clients experience their past. It is only when clients are experiencing both the negative energy of the past event and the positive energy of their life force in the now that an energetic shift can take place.

2. Systemic. Therapy must work within the intrapsychic and interactive systems in which the client experiences his/her life. The intrapsychic system includes the emotions, perceptions, expectations, yearnings and

spiritual energy of the individual, all of which interact with each other in a systemic manner. The interactive systems include the relationships, both past and present, that the person has experienced in his/her life. The two systems interact with each other, and a change in one impacts the other.

3. Positively directional. In the Satir Growth Model, the therapist actively engages with the client to help reframe perceptions, generate possibilities, hear the positive message of universal yearnings, and connect the client to his/her positive life energy. The focus is on health and possibilities, appreciating resources and anticipating growth rather than on pathologizing or problem solving.

4. Change focused. As the focus of Satir therapy is on transformational change, the process questions asked throughout the entire therapy session are change related. Questions such as “What would have to change for you to forgive yourself?” give the client an opportunity to explore uncharted waters inside of their own intrapsychic system.

5. Self of the therapist. The congruence of the therapist is essential for clients to access their own spiritual life energy. When therapists are congruent, clients experience them as caring, accepting, hopeful, interested, genuine, authentic and actively engaged. Therapists’ use of their own creative life energy in the form of metaphor, humor, self-disclosure, sculpting, and many other creative interventions also comes from the connection that therapists have to their own spiritual Self when in a congruent state.

In this video, Satir conducts a session with a blended family of four that is struggling with the contentious relationship between 16-year-old Tim and his stepfather, Jerry. Through hands-on interventions and directive, facilitated discussion with the parents and children (separately and together), Satir uncovers hidden needs and fears among the family members, establishes a safe, nurturing environment that supports the family’s motivation to change, and addresses the issues of trust, choice, and resistance that can arise during the therapeutic process.

Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use some or all of these discussion questions, depending on what aspects of the video are most relevant to the audience.

INTRODUCTION

- 1. Family therapy:** Have you worked with a family as a therapist? How did your experience differ from individual therapy? What approach(es) did you use? How have the families you've worked with compare to the one Satir sees here? In what ways was your approach similar to or different from the one Satir uses in the video?
- 2. Blended families:** What special considerations, if any, do you think blended families need for successful family therapy? How might your work with a blended family differ from working with a conventional family? How would it be the same?

SESSION

- 3. Uncovering the desire:** Satir asks Jerry to consider what his offering Tim a car represents from an emotional standpoint. What impact did you notice this having on Jerry? On Tim? How might you incorporate this idea into your work with families (or individuals)?
- 4. Seeing the other's needs:** What did you think of Satir asking each family member if they know what makes the others happy? Which types of clients might this be a more effective intervention for? What are some other ways you can think of to support a family's sense of interconnectedness?
- 5. Self-disclosure:** What was your reaction to Satir telling Tim, "I know [other people telling me what to do] didn't go over very well for me as a kid"? What impact did this appear to have on the family? Where do you stand on therapist self-disclosure? How might you decide when to disclose or not?

- 6. Nonverbal communication:** Several times during the session, Satir points out family members' nonverbal gestures. Have you made similar observations with your own clients? If not, would you? Why or why not? What do you think are the benefits of such an approach? Potential pitfalls?
- 7. Props:** What do you think of Satir's use of a chair for Elaine to stand eye-level with Jerry? Have you used props to help illustrate a point or evoke a connection? What do you imagine each family member felt during this experiment? Might certain clients appreciate this more than others?
- 8. Directive approach:** What did you think of Satir feeding lines to Jerry and Elaine about their relationship? How do you think each child felt upon witnessing this? Would you feel comfortable directing family members speak to each other in this way? Why or why not?
- 9. Family constellations:** How did you feel about Satir's use of constellations in the session? Would you feel comfortable facilitating this? What purpose did Satir's repositioning the family appear to serve for the family members? What impact did this have on the session as a whole?

COMMENTARY (SATIR)

- 10. "Connecting through touching":** How do you feel about the use of touch in psychotherapy? Would you feel comfortable touching clients? If so, for which types of clients? How do you imagine different clients would feel? Do you believe it can have a place in individual therapy? Have you experienced this as a client?

COMMENTARY (CORRALES)

- 11. "Possibility oriented":** Do you agree with Corrales that Satir's approach is less pathologizing than traditional psychotherapy? Why or why not? In your work with clients, where do you tend to lean on this spectrum? Do you think Satir's style misses any information that a different orientation might address?

- 12. Key moments:** What are some key moments in this session? What stands out about them for you? Describe Satir's role in those moments, as well as the family's shifting states. What do you think is the family's prognosis for this type of therapy?
- 13. Style:** What reactions did you have to Satir's overall style? Her use of props, working separately with the parents and the children, and hands-on, experiential interventions? How do you think the members of this family felt with her? Are you left with further questions about her approach to therapy?
- 14. Personal reaction:** How would you feel about having Satir as your therapist? Do you think she could build a solid therapeutic alliance with your family, children, or partner? Would she be effective with you? Why or why not?

Role Plays

After watching the video and reviewing “Satir’s Approach to Family Therapy” in this manual, choose one person to be the therapist and four others to be a family, and in front of the whole group, have them role-play 20 minutes of a therapy session with a blended family using Virginia Satir’s approach.

Clients may role-play Jerry, Elaine, Tim and Tammy from the video or a family client of their own, or they can completely make it up. The primary emphasis here is on giving the therapist an opportunity to practice using Satir’s approach to family therapy, affirming the family’s desire to change in a nurturing way, and on giving the clients an opportunity to see what it feels like to participate in this type of therapy.

Assessing the presenting problem

The therapist should begin by inviting the family members, including the children, to briefly discuss their reasons for coming to therapy. Reflect their words back to them and inquire about how they’ve coped with the problem so far, and ask them what, specifically, they would like to change.

Working across family members

This should comprise the bulk of the session. As the family members speak, help them feel understood, valued, and supported; with regard to the parents, remember Satir’s notion that the client is doing the best they can given how they learned to cope as children. Check in with each family member to get their perspective on what a different member says about them. You may also inquire into what each member believes might make another happy or satisfied. In the spirit of Satir, you might choose to draw on your creativity to facilitate an experiential, hands-on exercise that contextualizes the family’s situation and offers a way to resolve it collectively. The rest of the group can observe, acting as the advising team to the therapist. At any point during the session the therapist can time out to get feedback

from the observation team, and bring it back into the session with the client. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck.

After the role-play, have the group come together to discuss their experiences. What did participants learn about Satir's approach, in particular her theories of cross-connection and hands-on work? Invite the clients to talk about what it was like to role-play a blended family unit and how they felt about the approach. How did they feel in relation to the therapist? Did they understand the essence of Satir's approach? What worked and didn't work for them? Then, invite the therapists to talk about their experiences: How did it feel to facilitate the session? Did they have difficulty working with the approach? How confident are they that the clients felt heard and supported? What would they do differently if they did it again? Finally, open up a general discussion of what participants learned about addressing blended family issues using Satir's approach to family therapy.

An alternative is to do this role-play as a 10-minute session in smaller groups of three, with one therapist and two clients playing the parents. Assess the parents' degree of communication, and inquire into any gaps in the family dynamics that may impact their overall sense of connection. Consider asking what each client would like the family's life to look like, what their individual goals are, or what the problem is preventing them from doing in their life. Every 10 minutes, the participants rotate to create a new role-play. Follow up with a discussion on what participants learned about using Satir's approach.

Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

- **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.
- **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards. Respond to each question below.
- **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video—we want your ideas and reactions.

What to Write: Respond to the following questions in your reaction paper:

1. **Key points:** What important points did you learn about Satir's approach to family therapy? What stands out to you about how Satir works?
2. **What I found most helpful:** As a therapist, what was most beneficial to you about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?
3. **What does not make sense:** What principles/techniques/interventions did not make sense to you? Did anything push your buttons or bring about a sense of resistance in you, or just not fit with your own style of working?
4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you do differently from Satir when working with clients? Be specific about what different approaches, interventions and techniques you would apply
5. **Other questions/reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the session with Satir? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?

Related Websites, Videos and Further Reading

WEB RESOURCES

The Virginia Satir Global Network

<http://satirglobal.org>

Satir Institute of the Pacific

<http://www.satirpacific.org>

Satir Learning Centre of Ottawa

<http://satirottawa.ca/>

International Family Therapy Association

<http://www.ifta-familytherapy.org/>

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

A Family at the Point of Growth with Virginia Satir

Of Rocks and Flowers: Dealing with the Abuse of Children with Virginia Satir

The Essence of Change with Virginia Satir

A Step Along the Way: A Family with a Drug Problem with Virginia Satir

Satir Family Therapy with Jean McLendon, LCSW

Structural Family Therapy with Harry Aponte

The Legacy of Unresolved Loss: A Family Systems Approach with Monica McGoldrick

Bowenian Family Therapy with Philip Guerin

Adolescent Family Therapy with Janet Sasson Edgette

Experiential Therapy with Augustus Y. Napier

“I’d Hear Laughter”: Finding Solutions for the Family with Insoo Kim Berg

Salvador Minuchin on Family Therapy

Adlerian Family Therapy with James Bitter

Empowerment Family Therapy with Frank Pittman

Solution-Oriented Family Therapy with Bill O'Hanlon

Object-Relations Family Therapy with David Scharff & Jill Savege Scharff

Narrative Family Therapy with Stephen Madigan

Integrative Family Therapy with Kenneth V. Hardy

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Satir, V. (1983). *Conjoint Family Therapy*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior.

(1987). *Your Many Faces: The First Step to Being Loved*. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts.

(1987). *The Use of Self in Therapy*. New York: Haworth Press.

(1988). *The New Peoplemaking*. Mountain View, CA: Science and Behavior.

Satir, V. & M. Baldwin (1983). *Satir Step by Step: A Guide to Creating Change in Families*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior.

Satir, V., J. Banmen, J. Gerber & M. Gomori (1991). *The Satir Model*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior.

Complete Transcript

NARRATOR: Golden Triad Films is proud to present Virginia Satir interviewing a blended family with a troubled boy. Jerry, the stepfather, age 46, Elaine, the mother, age 34, Tim, the son, age 16, and Tammy, the daughter, age 12.

SATIR: Hello. I'm Virginia Satir. The family that I am about to see is a blended family, which means that this is a step-family. In this particular case, the stepfather is Jerry. He has been a stepfather to two children, Tim, now 15, and his sister who is 12.

The couple have been married for the last five years. The preceding year, Tim went to live with his natural father. It came about as a kind of a mutual decision in the family because Tim was having difficulties adjusting. And since he wanted to go with his father, the family agreed to allow that to happen.

He has since returned home. And he has been unable to mobilize himself to go to school, and he wears a kind of a perpetual pout, which seems to talk to the agony that he has. And for the family, what it means is that they feel stumped in what they can do for him.

This family has been seen for four sessions when Tim came back home, and nothing was better. Linda, the mother, called the agency for help. This family has been seen for four previous sessions. In my meeting them, which was just a few minutes ago, I felt very strongly that Tim saw himself as outside of the family and that his stepfather and his sister and his mother were in a camp by themselves with no room for him.

What I suspect in this family is that, as is so often true when a couple marries, as in this case, Linda married Jerry, she already having had two children, that she expected Jerry to take over as a father in this family without the preparation that was necessary.

You will hear, probably, how Jerry, who also has fathered children, has some feelings about what fathering is all about. In addition to this, which is also common, very often the husband and the wife do not have ways of sharing with each other how they can bring their mutual knowledge together in such a way so that they can use it in a way that benefits the children.

So as this interview proceeds, I would like you to take a look at the kinds of expectations that were present which could not be fulfilled. People could not talk about them. And therefore people, and each member of the family, couldn't make sense out of what was going on. I myself could feel an empathy for Tim, but knowing also that he has probably made a conclusion that he would not be anything except blamed by people.

I'd like to make a special comment here. The part that you don't see on this film is the part where I met them. Each of these people, with the exception of Tim, accepted my handshake in a warm kind of way. Tim was reluctant. However, when I made a special point of saying, I haven't had a chance to shake your hand, he gave me a very firm, warm handshake. This said to me that Tim was available, he just couldn't say so.

I have a name for this kind of a family. When two families get together to make another family, that's a blended family. It's a name I give it to try to work things out.

Well, tell me, when you came here today, what did you hope would happen for you? Jerry, what did you hope would happen for you?

JERRY: Well, I hoped that someone would give us some more insight on what was going on. And Jan built you up very well, and I thought that it would be to our benefit to be able to talk to you.

SATIR: Okay. Now, you ask about some insight. That means to me that you have a puzzle of some sort that isn't very clear to you. And I wonder what that puzzle is for you, Jerry.

JERRY: Relative to?

SATIR: I don't know. You're telling me about your puzzle.

JERRY: Well, the insight I was talking about was the problems we're having with Tim.

SATIR: Could you-- could you tell me, as explicitly as possible, what it is that you see Tim doing or not doing that gives you a problem?

JERRY: Well, number one, not going to school or wanting an education. Number two, not wanting to work. And number three, I can't-- beyond my wildest dreams, I can't believe a boy wouldn't want

a car. And you know, he had the opportunity to have a car if he went to school, but he chose not to do that.

And the only other way he could have one is to work, and he chooses not to do that. And I don't care whether he goes to college or not. But I think it's very important to have a minimum education because there's not too much that you can even do with that today.

SATIR: Let me see if I understand what you're saying when you said you couldn't understand Tim not wanting a car. Would you think that if he wanted a car bad enough, that he would work or go to school?

JERRY: Yes.

SATIR: But since he isn't working or going to school, he must not want a car bad enough?

JERRY: Yes, contrary to what he says.

SATIR: I see. Well, the two might be related or not. But I think you were asking for something that you would like to have Tim have for his life somehow, that somehow you'd like to see him do something for his life that you feel he isn't doing. Is that right, too?

JERRY: Absolutely.

SATIR: What would you like to have him have in his life that you're afraid he's not going to get?

JERRY: Well, I'm not sure what makes him happy. But you have to have a minimum of comforts to make you happy, I think. And the route he's going right now, he's not going to be able to afford it. In fact, he's not even going to be able to support himself.

SATIR: I heard-- I picked up that you said you didn't know what made him happy. You've known Tim about six years?

JERRY: That's right.

SATIR: Or had you known him earlier? And what I hear you say is, I haven't learned yet or haven't found out about how Tim lives inside himself, what has meaning to him.

JERRY: That's correct, I haven't.

SATIR: Would you like to know that?

JERRY: I surely would.

SATIR: Okay. Tammy, when you came here today, honey, what had you hoped would happen for you?

TAMMY: Well, I think he should be going to school.

SATIR: You think he should?

TAMMY: Be going to school.

SATIR: Okay. Well, now when your Dad talked about it, what he really came to-- I'm sure that was a piece of it-- but he really would like to know what made Tim happy. Do you know what makes Tim happy?

TAMMY: No.

SATIR: You don't. Would you like to know?

TAMMY: Yeah.

SATIR: Do you know what makes Jerry happy, that makes him bubble inside and feel good about living?

TAMMY: No.

SATIR: Do you know what makes Elaine, your mother, feel good?

TAMMY: No.

SATIR: Okay. So maybe in this family, at least a little piece of it, might be that people don't know how to find out what makes people happy. I don't know. Is there anything else, now that you think about it, that you'd like to see different in the family? You, Tammy. I just feel so much sadness coming from you right now, and I don't know what that's about. Is that true, that you're feeling sad right now?

TAMMY: No.

SATIR: Then I was wrong. Well, let's see. If you could find some ways to find out how to find out what made Jerry happy, Elaine happy, or Tim happy, would you want to learn those ways?

TAMMY: Yes.

SATIR: Do you know what makes you happy?

TAMMY: Usually.

SATIR: Sorry?

TAMMY: Usually.

SATIR: All right. Could you say one of the things that you know for

sure that when it happens, you're really happy, bubbling inside me?
Oh, isn't it great to be alive?

TAMMY: When I get an A on a test.

SATIR: When what?

TAMMY: When I get an A on a test.

SATIR: I still didn't hear. When you get a?

TAMMY: A on a test.

SATIR: When you get an A on the test. Oh, there it is. I get the A on the test, and I feel, boy, I'm really okay. Uh huh. Would that make you happy?

JERRY: Sure would.

SATIR: Would that make you you happy, Tim?

TIM: What?

SATIR: To get an A on the test?

TIM: No.

SATIR: That's not where Tim would find his happiness. Well, when you came here today, Elaine, what did you hope would happen for you?

ELAINE: I hoped that, as a family, we might get some insights. Right now I don't want to turn down any possibility of any kind of help.

SATIR: For?

ELAINE: For all of us.

SATIR: Okay.

ELAINE: Tim especially.

SATIR: All right. Well, let's see, you said everybody, all of us. You didn't say everybody. You said all of us. What would you like to find out more or get more in your relationship with Jerry?

ELAINE: Maybe a better understanding of the best way to deal with the children. I come from a large family and--

SATIR: How large?

ELAINE: There's six of us.

SATIR: And where are you in the six?

ELAINE: I'm the fifth.

SATIR: Well, you're near to the baby end.

ELAINE: Mother worked quite a bit, and I started working when I was 14. So mother didn't really share a whole lot with me.

SATIR: Well, maybe it was like Tammy not knowing what would make you happy that you couldn't know what made her happy. Maybe not even what made her sad, only maybe what made her angry. I see that you didn't want to make her angry, I guess.

ELAINE: No.

SATIR: So you learned how, oftentimes, to say yes when you felt no?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: Yeah. Are you still doing that in this family? Tammy's shaking her head. You don't maybe know how many times your mother didn't say all the things she had in her mind. I don't know. But is that true here?

ELAINE: Probably.

SATIR: Okay. Would you like to change?

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Okay. Now, okay, now what about Tim, because we've talked about what you'd like to have different with Jerry and with Tammy. And what about Tim? Tim, I mean.

ELAINE: I would like for Tim to go back to school.

SATIR: Okay, okay.

ELAINE: I think it's important that he gets an education and prepare himself for life. He, at this point, thinks that he would just like to be out on his own.

SATIR: Uh huh, Do you know what that could feel like at 16, that feeling, I just love to be out on my own? Do you know what that feels like? Have you ever had that?

ELAINE: Yes, to a certain extent. I think the difference is that I was working. And I'm not sure that Tim, at this point, really knows really what he wants.

SATIR: Could be, could be. What I'm getting from what you're saying is, again, if you knew something about what Tim would want, I think you'd try to help him get it. Would you?

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Yeah. Well, Tim, when you came here today, what did you want for you?

TIM: I didn't want them.

SATIR: You didn't want to come.

TIM: No.

SATIR: But you got here.

ELAINE: I had to.

SATIR: Well, okay. Somebody would be angry if you didn't come?

TIM: Yeah.

SATIR: Who would be angry?

TIM: Them, all of them.

SATIR: And if somebody in the family gets angry at you, what happens for you?

TIM: I won't be able to go anywhere.

SATIR: Sorry?

TIM: I won't be able to go anywhere.

SATIR: Okay. So if you can learn how to do what people in the family ask you to do, you'll get some privileges. Is that kind of how it goes?

TIM: I guess.

SATIR: Yeah. How does that feel to you to feel that the only way you'll get something is if you do what other people tell you to do? It never went over very well with me when I was a kid. How does that feel for you? Well, maybe these are too hard things to talk about.

So at this point, Tim, am I to understand that you'd like to work it out in some way so that you could be more a part of this family and have more things to say about what happens to you? From the way you looked at your shoulder, I have a hunch that you feel it wouldn't matter what you wanted. That it wouldn't be any help or it wouldn't be

any use. It wouldn't matter. That's kind of the feeling I got.

Is that anything you know anything about, Jerry, the feeling that if I ask for something, it wouldn't matter anyway?

JERRY: Well, I think one of the problems is that probably he's had too much.

SATIR: Too much what?

JERRY: Of everything, whatever he wanted at the time, whether it be his mother or his grandparents. Up until he went to live with his father, he had everything he wanted that I knew of.

SATIR: Could you help me out about, at least from your point of view, Jerry, what did you think would be helpful for Tim if he went to live with his father?

JERRY: Well, if it had turned out like Tim thought and I thought it might be, you know, I can't see-- my son came to live with us when he was 17, okay? And I'm not sure that a son doesn't need a father worse at that age than he does a mother. I don't know, but I think that he could probably relate to a father better.

SATIR: So you thought that maybe you could be helping Tim if he lived with his father a little bit, to support that idea, huh?

JERRY: Well, I don't know whether it was that or whether I just would be happy to see Tim go.

SATIR: So was there already some ways in which you and Tim weren't seeing eye to eye by that time?

JERRY: Well, I don't think Tim and I have ever seen eye to eye.

SATIR: So it would be new if you ever did, huh?

JERRY: Yes.

SATIR: Do you have, at this moment, any kind of clues at all-- what stops you, or between you and Tim, of being able to see eye to eye, except your height at this moment? Because he would kind of get to you just about your navel.

JERRY: What prevents it?

SATIR: Uh huh. What do you think prevents it, as you look back, you know, with grown-up eyes?

JERRY: Well, Tim's a taker, and unfortunately, I'm a giver. And there's never any giving on his side that I've even seen.

SATIR: So you kind of feel like you put out your gifts, and you're not going to get anything in return. Is that it?

JERRY: Well, you know, not just gifts.

SATIR: Well, whatever they are, psychological or attention or whatever.

JERRY: Okay. Yes.

SATIR: Did you know this was happening when you and Jerry were thinking about how you could team up in a relationship? Because you must have had some hopes about what could happen between Jerry and Tim.

ELAINE: I had hoped that Jerry would be a very positive influence on Tim.

He was very strong.

SATIR: In your experience, were you afraid that Tim didn't have a strong enough influence from a man? Is that what you worried about?

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Because, let's see, when you came together, he was only ten, just a very young man. Excuse me. But already you were worried about that?

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Did you know what it was that Elaine was hoping for you coming in to father Jerry-- Tim, I mean?

JERRY: Well, I thought so at the time. I am not sure anymore. But if I can give you a real short scenario--

SATIR: Sure. Yeah, please.

JERRY: --as I see it. Elaine got married very young. All right? She had Tim very young. And she had a very domineering grandmother-- or mother-in-law, who said, jump, and everybody jumped.

SATIR: That's Betty's mother.

JERRY: That's right.

SATIR: Uh huh.

JERRY: And from things that Elaine's told me and the family's told me that she had no support from Betty as far as discipline's concerned. All right? So here I see this little 17-year-old girl back then that just has been overwhelmed by a mother-in-law and a lack of support from her husband.

And I thought-- and she turned it over to me, and she will admit to you she turned it over to me, the discipline and the children. And I thought that's what she wanted, because they had not had any before. And I think it worked on Tammy.

SATIR: Okay. So are you saying now that you feel like maybe Elaine didn't mean that, that is, she didn't mean you should take it so seriously?

JERRY: I think that she-- I don't want to use the words "abdicate her responsibility," but she did not participate. And it was left to me, and she may have had feelings, but she didn't express them.

SATIR: Okay.

JERRY: And I don't do windows or read minds.

SATIR: So you felt you were kind of off in left field.

JERRY: Yes.

SATIR: Okay. Is that a new idea to you, at this moment, hearing Jerry say this?

ELAINE: No.

SATIR: When you hear him now, just as you heard him just now, what went on inside of you?

ELAINE: It's basically true the way-- early in our marriage, it was kind of a relief to me to say, here are these two kids, and you kind of take over the responsibility as far as the discipline for a while. But on the other hand, I wanted it to be one, big, happy family.

SATIR: Would somebody bring that chair over here for me? Not any of you, but somebody over there, bring that chair over here. I want to look at something. You know, I often encounter this. Somebody, let's see, would you get up on that chair for me?

ELAINE: Stand up?

SATIR: Stand up, yeah. I'll hold you.

JERRY: Watch the cord.

SATIR: We got enough of it here. Okay. Now, Jerry, would you stand up? Okay, okay, all right. Let's see. Now, just stand up here. Okay. I think you're all right now. I want you to look at Jerry, because it must be a long time that you've been looking up at him. Okay.

And now I know you're a little taller than he is. I want you to look at him right now from up here and just tell me, at this moment, Elaine, just what you're feeling right now toward this beautiful man in front of you.

ELAINE: I love him.

SATIR: Okay. All right. Now that's something, I could feel it from up here. But looking at him right up here like this right now, what are you aware of feeling?

ELAINE: Warm.

SATIR: Warm. Okay. Would you take a little bit of a risk and ask-- or tell me first what you think that Jerry's feeling as he's looking at you up here, because he hardly ever sees people at his height, I know.

ELAINE: I think he's feeling the same.

SATIR: Ask him, would check with him?

ELAINE: How are you feeling?

JERRY: I feel the same.

SATIR: Now, we have a short time together, and I want to put out a hunch, okay? I heard Jerry say, I did everything I knew to help you. And I did it in such a way, I think, that a boy I wanted to make friends with, I didn't succeed in making friends with. Is that true?

JERRY: Yes, it is.

SATIR: Okay. And I feel bad about it at this point. How do you feel hearing that from him?

ELAINE: A little irked.

SATIR: Okay. Now, I want you to do two things at this moment. I want you to be aware that you, like Tim, and like Tammy, and me, and

Jerry, at the moment you do something, it's the best we know how to do, or we would do something different. Okay? What I'm hearing is that when you met Jerry, you needed so much, and you hoped for so much. It turns out that there's more of a different kind.

But I'd just like you to give yourself a forgiving message at this moment, okay, but you don't have to berate yourself. But right now, as you look at Jerry, as you feel yourself, can you think of telling him what you would like for him at this moment in relation to how he could be with Tim?

ELAINE: Well, I would like them to be friends.

SATIR: Just look at him and tell it to him. You can turn your body just a little. I'll see to it that you don't fall over.

ELAINE: I would like you to be friends.

JERRY: And so would I.

SATIR: All right. Could you and would you be willing to remove from Jerry, at this point, the fact that he-- I'd like you to look at Jerry and see if you really feel that you have here a solid teammate.

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Okay. A few minutes ago, Elaine, you were saying to me, I would like Jerry to do differently, in some respects, with Tim. Do you remember that?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: All right. Now, look at him now and just tell him what it would be. You can turn a little bit more. I won't let you fall. Tell him how would you like him to be different in relation to Tim.

ELAINE: Well, I think he made one step--

SATIR: Why don't you say it directly to him right here. He's right here.

ELAINE: You made one step this week when you took Tim golfing, and I appreciated that.

SATIR: Okay.

ELAINE: And I would like--

SATIR: Did you tell that to Tim?

ELAINE: That I appreciated it?

SATIR: Yes.

ELAINE: No.

SATIR: Could you tell it to him now?

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Because he may not know what in this family people appreciate, what they don't appreciate. Could you come down and tell him? Here. We'll move your chair up. And watch the wires. Just come close to him. Because Tim needed to go with him in order to be appreciated. So could you tell him how you appreciate that?

ELAINE: I appreciated that you all went golfing together.

SATIR: Now, how does it feel for you to say that to Tim?

ELAINE: It was fine.

SATIR: Okay. How did you feel about Tim's response to you?

ELAINE: It hurt.

SATIR: Okay. What did you notice? What did you do that made you feel hurt?

ELAINE: He pulled away--

SATIR: Okay.

ELAINE: --when I touched him.

SATIR: I saw you move toward his knee. And well, what did you make of that? I heard the feeling about it, and I saw him pull his leg away. What did you make of that?

ELAINE: That he doesn't really want to be around me.

SATIR: Okay. He doesn't want you to be around him?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: Okay. Let's use that as a first working hypothesis. Could it be that Tim, at this moment, doesn't know whether to trust what's going on? Do you think that could be? And he moves back because he doesn't know if he can trust, not that he doesn't want you around?

ELAINE: Maybe.

SATIR: Let's think of that as another possibility. Can we make

another possibility, that Tim also would like to participate in a choice of whether somebody would touch him or not? Is that another possibility?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: Now, if you start thinking about those possibilities, then what happens to your feeling of feeling hurt by Tim?

ELAINE: That maybe it was understandable.

SATIR: Okay. Could you look at Tim now? Look at him completely, just like I am. And what do you feel as you look at him?

ELAINE: That he has such potential.

SATIR: Okay, all right. He has such potential. Okay. Now, would you just, at this moment, leave the potential up here, because I believe he has. What is it, at this moment, as you think about that potential, that makes you feel bad?

ELAINE: That he's wasting it.

SATIR: Okay. I have to tell you a little story. It's not quite the same, but it's similar. I had a woman come in to see me once a long time ago with an eight-year-old boy. And she was very disturbed because at eight years of age, he was still eating with his fingers. And I said, well, why are you worried about that? Well, she says, when he gets to be 21 and he goes to a state dinner, he won't know how to handle himself. I said, you can't mean it. You can't mean it.

Well, turned out very nice. He became a psychologist later, and it didn't matter what he did with his fingers. Anyway. Now, could you just look at Tim as he is right now and think of Tim as he is, as somebody who needs some help along the road? And before we give help to people we have to know what kind they need. Okay?

And one of the funny things is that sometimes we offer help we think other people need, but it may not be what they need. Has that ever happened to you? Somebody like your mother-in-law, your former mother-in-law? I know what you need, Elaine. Yeah? Did you ever have that experience?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: Well, what did you feel like when your mother-in-law knew

what you needed?

ELAINE: Do you know what you're talking about?

SATIR: Okay. Can you imagine Tim feeling that way sometimes? I don't know what she's talking about. How could she be asking that of me? And when that thought comes to you and you look at Tim, what are you aware of feeling?

ELAINE: That he's probably very confused.

SATIR: Okay. Tammy, what's happening for you right now?

TAMMY: Me? What do you mean?

SATIR: Well, you're here between Tim-- your mother's between you and Tim. And you're hearing what's going on with your mother and me, and she's talking about Tim. What's happening for you?

TAMMY: Nothing.

SATIR: Yes. While she's busy with Tim, she's not busy with you. How does that feel?

ELAINE: I'm used to it.

SATIR: You're used to it. Okay. Okay. Would you move just a little closer? Just to here, just a little closer like that. Yeah. You're busy with Tim now, okay? And what are you aware of about what's going on with Tammy?

ELAINE: I'm not right now.

SATIR: Okay. What do you think is going on with her?

ELAINE: Do you mean what do I think she's doing there?

SATIR: What is going with her?

ELAINE: Probably feeling a little left out.

SATIR: Okay. You know anything about that feeling?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: Okay. Now, if you're sitting here looking at Tim and thinking Tammy's feeling left out, what kind of a feeling is that for you?

ELAINE: Well, I'm not doing-- I'm not helping.

SATIR: You're not helping. Start to give yourself a downer message?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: I think that's been going on a long time for you, hasn't it? You got to be everywhere at once. And I want to show you something that I've seen. Will you get up? I've seen you feel-- would you get up here at this moment? We'll go back on the chair later. I see you-- this may not be--

JERRY: Excuse me.

SATIR: --Jerry, but I think it's you. Would you take her hand?

JERRY: Hm mm.

SATIR: Tim, would you come up here and take the other hand, please? Take this hand over here, over here. And go on this side and pull with one of those. Stretch over on your side. Pull out. You pull out. You pull-- You can't go too far. Just pull on that hand. Pull.

Is that something you've ever felt in this family? Okay. Now, when you felt this, what did you want to do?

ELAINE: Hide.

SATIR: Hide. Okay Now-- it's okay. Keep it like that. Now, I want you to look over here, my husband, my son. Okay? Okay. And what I was hearing before that you were doing is you were trying to bring your husband and your son together. Okay? Okay, at this moment.

And I want you to look at him-- we'll try this on for size. Would you just say to him, right now, Jerry, I want to turn all my attention to Tim. See if you can say-- see what happens in your body right now. And say, I want to turn all my attention to Tim now.

ELAINE: I want to turn all my attention to Tim now.

SATIR: Okay. And then take your hand. Now, tell me how you felt saying that, making this choice at this moment.

ELAINE: Kind of cut off.

SATIR: Hm?

ELAINE: Cut off.

SATIR: Cut off. Okay. And let's hold that feeling for a moment, Okay? What do you think Jerry felt?

ELAINE: Left out.

SATIR: Left out. Okay. So if you were to give some time to Tim at a

time when you felt that you were supposed to be with Jerry, then you would feel you would be cut off from him. And probably what he would do-- just turn around-- go away and say, I'm not going to have anything more to do with you?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: All right. And that's a very important thing to find out if that's really true or not. Would you ask him if that's really true?

ELAINE: Is that really true?

JERRY: No.

SATIR: I want you to look at him now. Look at those eyes, look at the shoulders, look at what goes on here. Do you believe him?

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Okay. Now turn your full attention to Tim at this moment in time and tell him-- tell him that you're here.

ELAINE: I'm here.

SATIR: Okay. Okay. Now, what did it feel like for you to make this decision at this point, because there were times when that decision needs to be made? What did it feel like that for you?

ELAINE: It felt good.

SATIR: Okay. I want you to look at him now and to know there are times when Tim and his relationship to you is a decision you make at that time, and you don't lose Jerry. Okay? All right. Now, just hold that a minute. Take it back again. Pull again. Now this time, you're saying to Tim, Tim, no, not now. I want to be with Jerry.

ELAINE: No, not now. I want to be with Jerry.

SATIR: Okay. Now, how do you think that Tim felt?

ELAINE: Probably relieved that I wasn't going to be around.

SATIR: That could be one thing. You looked at his face, and you began to be a little more relaxed. That was one of the things. And how do you feel about his reaction?

ELAINE: Maybe he doesn't need me.

SATIR: Maybe he doesn't need you. Oh, my, you make these long, great big conclusions. At this moment in time-- at this moment in

time, you made a decision to go over here, and Jerry and Tim accepted it. Did you see him accept that? He let go. His hand just let your hand go. Did you feel that?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: Okay. Did you also know that when you made the decision to go over here, let Jerry be over here and Tim be over here, did Jerry accept that? All right. Now I want you to go stand on that chair again. Tim, would you come here for me a minute? I want you to look at these two men. This is a growing man, almost there. Two more years, and he can do all things everybody else can do.

Look at this one, look at this one. Did you know that, for you, they don't have to get in the way of each other because you have something with each one of them? And not only that, but this one also knows it. And I think this one feels it but has never been sure. What does that feel like to you?

ELAINE: Relief.

SATIR: I didn't hear.

ELAINE: Relief.

SATIR: Relief. Okay. Just stay right here right now. And where, Tammy, do you fit into this one?

TAMMY: Right in the middle.

SATIR: Come. It's all right, we'll fix those things up. Even if they make funnies, we'll do it. Because when Tim-- okay, we're pretty good on that one. Here's Tim and your mother. This is Jerry and your mother. Now, where do you fit in?

TAMMY: I don't know.

SATIR: Okay. Now, let's see what happens. Right at this moment, if you say where it is you would want to be just now, where would you want to be? With Tim, your brother? With Elaine, your mother? With Jerry? By the way, what do you call Jerry? Stepfather? Jerry? What?

TAMMY: Daddy.

SATIR: Daddy. Okay. Where do you want to be right now?

TAMMY: With Mom and Jerry probably.

SATIR: Hm?

TAMMY: Probably with Mom and Daddy.

SATIR: All right. Now, how would you be with mommy and daddy?
How would you do that?

TAMMY: I don't know.

SATIR: Well, let's look around and see just floor space where you'd go.
Where could you go and still be between them?

TAMMY: Right there.

SATIR: Why don't you try it and see what happens. Okay. Now, it could be when you do this, and you could think, oy gevalt, I lost everything over there. You could think that. How do you feel being over here right now?

TAMMY: Relaxed.

SATIR: Pardon me?

TAMMY: Relaxed.

SATIR: Relaxed. Okay. Now, how did that fit for you, Jerry?

JERRY: I, too, am relaxed.

SATIR: Now, has there ever been anything like this? But how is it for you, Elaine?

ELAINE: Uh, I feel Tim's left out.

SATIR: Now, isn't it funny? See? That was the worry you had. If I can't be with everybody, I've got to leave somebody out. But you know what? You can't go to the toilet that way.

So one of the worries in the family for you is that if I can't do everything at once, somebody's going to feel left out, and then I'm to blame. Is that how it goes? Okay. Are you ready to go on beyond that now and to know that they're-- I will show you these funny things that happen.

Do you notice you've only got two hands? You notice that? Okay. Sorry. All right. If Tammy's got one and Jerry's got the other, then there's no hands for Tim. Well, he could do it. He could put his hand up here, or he could put it up here, or he could take a hold of a leg, or something of that sort. But you've only got two hands. Okay.

And do you think Tim knows that? Maybe he knows some things you don't know, that in a family when you get beyond three, there's no way everybody, at a moment in time, can be all together. It's in our hearts where they're all together, but not like this. Okay. A minute ago, look what we had. We had this over here. Put it on the other hand. That's better. And then we had this, didn't we? Only we did it another way. Now look who's outside. She could be outside. And if you move back a little bit, put your hand over here with Tim's, that one, and over here. Here, take it this way. Okay? All right? And here, again, we can pull Tim between the two of you. We can pull you between Tim and Jerry. But she's left out. Poor thing. What does all this mean to you right now?

ELAINE: That I guess what I wanted isn't really--

SATIR: What?

ELAINE: --realistic.

SATIR: What isn't it realistic?

ELAINE: That I want everybody happy all at once in one group.

SATIR: But this has nothing to do with anybody being happy.

ELAINE: Well, together.

SATIR: Together all at once?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: You realize you can even have three together all at once, but anyway. So let's, at this moment-- let's, at this moment-- come over here, hon. Hm mm. I want you now to just stay here with me for a minute. I want you just now to think in terms of, what, at this moment, this very moment, which one of these people you would like to have a contact with at this very moment.

ELAINE: I can't say all?

SATIR: Well, how can you say all? You know, you sweep them off their feet. How could you-- just now think about one, where you just select one at this moment. Because that's all you can have at a moment in time fully. Which one?

ELAINE: I think Tim.

SATIR: All right. So then you go to him, and he's your whole world right here. Okay. Now, at this moment in time, would you ask Tammy how she feels about you being fully connected with Tim? He's your whole world at this time.

ELAINE: How do you feel about that?

TAMMY: Sort of left out.

SATIR: Hm?

TAMMY: Sort of left out.

SATIR: Sort of left out. Gosh, oh, gee. All right. Well, let's hold that for a minute because I want you to see if you really are left out. Now, find out from Jerry about how he feels.

ELAINE: How do you feel?

JERRY: I don't feel left out.

SATIR: It's important that you believe him. Do you believe him?

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Okay. All right. Do you believe him, that he doesn't feel left out because you and your mother have something with each other?

TIM: I don't know.

SATIR: How would you find out? Because this hasn't been easy to figure out in this family, I don't think. Who do you want to be with at this particular moment?

TIM: Well, if Mom's with Tim, I guess Jer.

SATIR: All right. What's that?

TAMMY: Mom's with Tim, so I guess Jer.

SATIR: Oh, Okay. So at least you got somebody here, okay? Now, let's suppose, even though your mother is with Tim at this moment, you look around and you say, where do I want to be at this moment? Where might you want to be?

TAMMY: Well, with Mom and Daddy probably.

SATIR: Well, no, you pick out one because otherwise-- we're not fish, you see. Fish, you got eye systems on each side of their head. And we can't even really look at anybody unless we've only got one. Who

would it be for now?

TAMMY: I don't know.

SATIR: Hm?

TAMMY: I don't know.

SATIR: Oh, come on, pick one.

TAMMY: Daddy, I guess.

SATIR: Who?

TAMMY: Daddy.

SATIR: Daddy, all right. So there you are. But I suggest you get on a chair again. Don't do that anymore.

TAMMY: Chair?

SATIR: Get on a chair where you can see him. Get over here on the chair.

JERRY: Get on this chair.

SATIR: There. That's right. There we are. All right. Now, how was that for you that, at this moment in time, Tammy said, I want to be with Daddy right now?

ELAINE: It was fine.

SATIR: All right. Tell her that it's fine.

ELAINE: It's fine.

SATIR: You believe that?

TAMMY: Hm mm.

SATIR: Okay. So now you believe it. So now you can turn your attention here if you want to do that. How do you feel Jerry's feeling?

ELAINE: Okay.

SATIR: You believe that?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: Absolutely? Cross your heart and hope to die?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: You know how when we were kids we used to do that?

ELAINE: Yes.

SATIR: Okay. Now, is it also possible in this family for people to have a place to themselves that doesn't have to be with anybody else at a moment in time? That Tim can have something for him that nobody else shares in a moment in time? You can have something that nobody else shares. Tammy can have something, and Jerry can have something that nobody else shares. Their own private place. Is that a possibility?

ELAINE: Yes. I don't think it has been in the past, but I--

SATIR: Okay. I would like you to look at Tim at the moment. And in your mind, would you allow him, and also take it for yourself, that there's a piece of him and a piece of you that is your own private space? You don't know what that is. I don't think Tim knows it about you. Those things have gotten all caught up in who's the good guy. Ah, how are you feeling right now?

ELAINE: Better.

SATIR: Better. Now, how are you feeling right now?

JERRY: Fine.

SATIR: How are you feeling, Tammy?

TAMMY: Better.

SATIR: Good. All right. So you're going to be going around doing some work with Jan, right?

ELAINE: Hm mm.

SATIR: Okay. And in the meantime, I recommend this very strongly, because what I heard you say is that in the interest of trying to help each other, you've lost each other a bit.

JERRY: Yes.

SATIR: And Tim got to be in charge of his fate without meaning to. And I'd just like you to be in touch with that. I am beginning to feel very warm and connected with all of you, and I would like to give you hug. Is that all right with you?

JERRY: Oh, me too?

SATIR: What do you mean, me too? You think it's only for one?

JERRY: Well, I had hoped.

SATIR: Okay. Now, when you caught another stunt like that with Elaine, tell her.

JERRY: All right.

SATIR: Are you ready?

TAMMY: Yeah.

SATIR: Ah, yes, good. You can let your body go and really enjoy it. Thank you. Now, I would like to hug you too, Tim. Are you ready for it?

TIM: I guess.

SATIR: I appreciate that.

SATIR: In a general statement about when stepparents get together is that the stepparent is always new and steps into a situation which is an already developed kind of system, so to speak. So that Jerry becomes, as far as Tim is concerned, an extra, well, invader actually. And so he comes on with authority blessed by his mother in which it doesn't fit.

Now, this came out very clearly in the interview. It's out of the need, of course, of the woman who already felt some concerns about how Tim was going, even at the age of ten. And I am, of course, quite aware that there is still some unfinished business between her and her former husband, and I don't know that that yet has been clarified. And I believe that Tim may be somewhat in the middle of that. We didn't get a chance to get to that.

Now, as to the rules in this family, it was clear that one, people could not feel it was okay to have individual space. Two, that people had to operate as though no one could be left out, but one has to not be in the middle of every action. So not being in the middle of every action for each one of them meant that they were left out.

So as we went through all of that, and then came to the nub of the thing-- the dreams and hopes of Linda and Jerry at the time of their marriage were getting less and less fulfilled. And I believe that there is a relationship between what was happening and the trust and the hope and the dreams between those two and what was happening to Tim.

I see great hope for this family, and I see they're very available for learning. And at the same time, I believe that one working with this

family can also give them a great deal, that they will take it easily, as you noticed in terms of this family.

And that's another comment I'd like to make in working with families generally. As soon as I see that people are available to taking in new things, just about the nature of how things are, I give them as much as I can. A large part of my therapy is a teaching part, and you saw a lot of that on this particular interview as well. I felt quite satisfied at the end of this and felt that they had made new connections, that Jerry and Linda would behave differently toward one another.

One more comment I want to make and that is the use of connecting through touching. I do this when I see that there is a foundation of caring and loving but that there are things that are separating it. And the touching is like a reminder that there is something there even though these other things are going on.

It also does another thing and that is that the literal experience of touch reawakens a sense of vitality in people concerned. And I speak of this because many people connect touch only with sex or aggression, and I think that our basic kinds of vital messages are really passed only through touch. Thank you.

CORRALES: Hello. My name is Ramon Corrales, and I was one of the fortunate ones who had the privilege of knowing Virginia Satir personally and also participated in a project to put her work on video. And here we are twenty years later revisiting her work because we'd like to share with you some further insights about her genius.

You've probably got a number of your own insights, and I'll share with you how I understand Virginia Satir. And hopefully, you can put that within your own understanding of life, of relationship, of systemic dynamics.

Let me first describe to you how I understand Virginia's work from three perspectives. One, what I consider to be her general theoretical assumptions. And then I'll relate her work to the models and techniques that family therapists often talk about and often use.

And finally, I will share with you what I consider to be Virginia's unique personal creativity. And we'll invite you, at that point, to reflect on your own personal creativity because it may or may not be

the same as Virginia's.

First of all, the general theoretical landmarks, as you saw her work with Jerry and Tim and Elaine and Tammy, I want you to know that Virginia's particular assumption is that life is a seamless whole, and she operates very concretely, very experientially. So sometimes Virginia's work is sort of put under the rubric of experiential, also communication.

One of the things I began to appreciate about Virginia, as I got to know her better and looked at her work, is that she was at her best when she was engaged in action with a family. And then she could talk about it in specific reference to specific situations. After this interview, she could talk to you for hours about Jerry and Elaine and what was going on, and even go past to look at their families of origin.

But it was very difficult for Virginia, it was almost like counter to her own individual genius, to talk about research theory apart from humanity or human beings or systems. And you begin to see her work really emerge as she engages the family, so experiential, very, very experiential.

Secondly, within the theoretical assumptions, her work is tremendously integrative. She makes no distinction between individual and systemic dynamics. She is as comfortable talking about feelings and self-esteem as dealing with communications, structural pieces, systemic patterns.

And there isn't a self versus system element in her own thinking. And so if you're looking for, well, what's this versus that? You won't get that from Virginia. She is engaged in the whole fabric of individual systemic dynamics.

The other thing that's integrative is there's no distinction on her part, in action at least, between subjective and objective. Feelings, thoughts, decisions, on the one hand, are internal pieces in our lives. Behavior, interaction are external, observable pieces. One is not more important than the other.

There's no cognitive versus affective versus behavioral. There's no individual behavior versus systemic dynamics. It simply does not compute in Virginia's own thinking. And if you're trying to do that

and trying to understand her work in those terms, you'll be very frustrated. Her's is a seamless whole and she includes herself in that interactive dynamic using her own feelings. Very much into the intuitive and concrete approach to engaging people.

She's also very developmental and very solution-focused. Let me explain that. Notice in this interview, one of her areas of beginning is always, what would you want to have happen? It isn't, what's wrong with this family? It isn't, what's missing in this family? It isn't, what are the systemic dynamics that are flawed that then explain Tim's reluctance?

She may go into the barriers that prevent people from growing, but her mode is always upwards. It's always possibility-oriented. She reframes, as we'll see in a while here, in a way that puts us squarely on a solution-focused, developmental, what's next, what's possible, what is emerging in the system, not what was wrong in the past. That's another way to truly appreciate her work.

And as you watched her engaging Elaine, even when she's going back to the family of origin, it's always in the context of, what does it mean now? And what could it mean for developing some aspect in Elaine's motherhood, wifeness, personhood?

Finally, let me just say that if you watch more in between the lines, you will notice that Virginia has a very profound spiritual, purposive base, meaning oriented, large perspective, and is not too hung up on particular behavioral flaws or symptoms. It's growth-oriented from meaning so that life takes on a very large perspective in her own approach.

So with that as sort of the backdrop, let's take a look at this particular interview. Notice she asks you what you think, feel, want. She looks at solutions, what have you done? And as you look at Virginia, actually it's very, very difficult to box her in any model. Is she just communication? Is she just experiential? Is she structural, strategic, family of origin? And you'll see that it's none of the below, and yet all of the above. It's larger than any of those categories.

As she's engaging Tim, feeling out his own individual dynamic within the system, she's looking at the whole thing. She'll do whatever it

takes. You'll notice some very structurally-oriented work, two people talking to each other about each other while she's detriangling a third. She will ask very profound questions sometimes in a very strategic way. She will look at parts within a person.

I remember a question that she asked in a training videotape. And by the way, if you want to hear more about my own take about Virginia's genius, we do have a videotape called Virginia Satir Revisited, and that's another part of our series. But in another videotape, she asks a very particular question. It goes like this.

Is there a part of you that disagrees with the part of you that's resisting change? Is there a part of you that disagrees with the part of you that's resisting change? Notice the question. The assumption is there's a part of you that's resisting change. That's okay. But is there a part of you that's opposing that? Presupposed in that is you're neither of the two parts, and I'm engaging you, the meta-self, to see how you might bring those parts together.

And I'm using that simply as a way to let you know that Virginia is looking at all parts of this particular family. She is not very alarmed by the fact that Jerry, and Tim in particular, are sort of incongruent. They're at odds. They have a conflict that is not just episodic, but it's systemic. Not alarmed by that. But she's watching to see where Elaine fits in that, and Elaine is squarely in the middle.

So at some point through a series of interactive, slowly generating-- enough rapport so that she can get Tim to pull on Elaine's hand when Jerry is pulling on another and begins to dramatize what she sees in this whole. But she does it not to point pathology out but to point where they are and where the possibilities are.

And in a very engaging way, Virginia is really so comfortable with family dynamics, so comfortable with symptoms as strategic points for growth, as leverage for the individual in the system to move. She's not alarmed by any of that.

And I think because of those techniques, reframing parts, detriangling, structural, strategic communication, experiential, the family picks up on that energy of safety, which is one of her main goals is to create enough safety in her relationship with these families

for her then to move in and begin to help them evolve just to the next level.

So those are some things that you might relate to what you know about family therapy. Now, the last piece I want to share with you that I find tremendously exciting is personal creativity. Let me describe to you what I consider Virginia's main creative styles.

One is intuitive. And by the way, I don't mean by that charismatic, because charismatic is often a way to denigrate and discount a person and say, well, that's just charisma. That's not theory-based. It's not research-based. No. We all have intuitive talent. The question simply is, are you more on the side that stabilizes change, or are you more on the side of taking risks with intuitive leaps? That is one of Virginia's main talents.

It's like the Michael Jordan of therapy. You move in. And incidentally, Carl Whitaker was tremendously an intuitive genius. Now, where Whitaker and Satir differ-- they're both intuitive-- Satir is also very hands-on, concrete, where she uses touch, space, movement to bring her intuition to bare-- as a way of teaching families, demonstrating to them what is going on.

And one of the techniques I didn't mention in the second part is the whole question of psychodrama, parts party, family reconstruction in a very dramatic sense. Virginia brings a lot of drama and a lot of space, movement. And so touch is a very important part to her.

Now, in her own theory and assumption, she believed that touch helped everyone. What she may not have been very aware of is she needed touch more than the clients, because that's the way she would get in touch with her own dramatic, spatial creativity. Tremendous about non-verbal facility and non-verbal sensitivity.

Two other pieces of her creative genius that are often misunderstood by the academic community, which is very research and theory-oriented. Her genius was to simplify. Look at the forest, forget the details of the trees. Forget specific information, but only top-line information that allowed her to move rapidly.

So if you're looking for research, if you're looking for data, if you're looking for proof, evidence for what she does or why she does it, you

will be moving in the wrong arena if you want to understand Satir.

Now, don't mistake me. I'm not saying that's true for everyone. Those of you who have a sort of instinctive facility for information or theory, by all means, gather genogram information, gather history, because it may take you to your own instinctive genius. But that is not Virginia Satir's style.

The other and last piece that I want to say about her genius is she's tremendously adaptive. There is no preset plan in her methodology. The methodology is one where there is a kind of method to the madness because it's not preconceived. It emerges in her intuitive mode, and you can see the pattern only later.

So after her work, then we can go back and say, oh, you must have sensed the triangle between, say, Elaine and Tim against Jerry, and sometimes Elaine and Jerry versus Tim, and sometimes the faction between or among, say, Jerry, Elaine, and Tammy with Tim being out. That'll emerge later.

Unlike a Minuchin, who will approach a family with pretty much of a plan, a structural view, and within that plan, he will intuitively do things-- correct. That's not Virginia's style.

And I would hope that at this day and age, as we begin to really open up the windows of learning styles as well as doing styles, what I call the creative styles, that we're able to truly get rid of one last kind of bias. And we call it creative bias or instinctive bias, the bias that says, the way I do it naturally is the way.

That's a prejudice. And in this particular interview, I think we are invited to look at Virginia simply in her own creative genius and to take her in her own terms. And when we do that, we get the courage to then do it in our own terms.

Video Credits

Special thanks to Virginia Satir for sharing her expertise.

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About the Contributors

VIDEO PARTICIPANTS

Virginia Satir (1916–1988) was an American author and psychotherapist, known especially for her approach to family therapy and her work with family reconstruction. She is widely regarded as the “Mother of Family Therapy.” She is also known for creating the Virginia Satir Change Process Model, a psychological model developed through clinical studies. Her most well-known books are *Conjoint Family Therapy* (1964), *Peoplemaking* (1972), and *The New Peoplemaking* (1988).

Ramon G. Corrales, PhD, is a renowned author, self/leadership development expert, corporate consultant, and life/executive coach. Dr. Corrales received his doctorate degree in sociology from the University of Minnesota, with specialization in family sociology and organizational dynamics. He devoted the first part of his career to family therapy and family business. More recently, he has developed his own method for coaching and leadership team building. Dr. Corrales has devoted his career to the pursuit of several main passions: self-mastery, leadership mastery, relationship mastery, and spiritual mastery.

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Happiness

Healthcare/Medical

Infertility

Intellectualizing

Law & Ethics

Parenting

Personality Disorders

Practice Management

PTSD

Relationships

Sexuality

Therapeutic Issues

Divorce

Domestic Violence

Eating Disorders

Suicidality

Trauma

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