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*Satir Around the Globe*

## The Mandala, a Model for Teaching and Therapy

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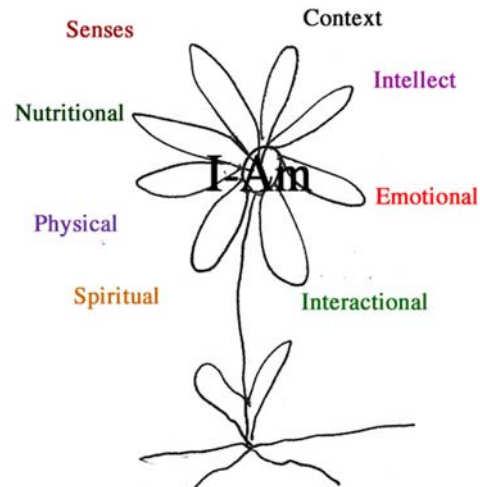
The focus of our presentation was to introduce a teaching metaphor that was used by Virginia Satir called the “Mandala.” She saw it as tool to enhance our understanding of each other and the concept of universals.

Carl Jung and Satir are among many who shared a liking of the concept of a Mandala. Satir looked at the world, and like many observers, she saw patterns and then named them in an attempt to get and give a shared understanding of the world. The more she moved about in the world the more she saw that humans are able to connect because we share at least eight dimensions of being. Satir observed artistic Mandalas as she traveled about the world. She often talked about a personal Mandala and would use that concept to teach people about themselves by introducing them to their personal Mandala. She helped people see these dimensions as personal resources.

The word “Mandala” is a Sanskrit word that when translated means a “Circle.” People who study the concept of a Mandala suggest that a circle is the first Mandala design. It has an inside and an outside. The inside represents the self and the outside represents that which is seen and unseen.

Both the “self” and the “outside” have the known and the unknown. There are many illustrations of the Mandala throughout the world and most are very beautiful.

We projected a copy of a drawing made by Satir to introduce the concept of a Mandala. The flower is rooted in the earth; it is of the earth, like you. It is connected to the sky and all that is above, like you. Like you, it was created by the act of reproduction and it was hidden as the seed grew, like you. One day the flower broke through and emerged in a new place, as did you. As we grow, each dimension of this flower develops and each dimension is connected to the center called the “self.” Each dimension affects the others because each is connected. It is a simple but very powerful model.



The dimensions we presented were: Context, Spiritual, Emotional, Intellectual, Sensual, Nutritional, Interactional and Physical. We gave an overview of each dimension and then we demonstrated how it could be used as a tool in therapy and as a teaching tool. We demonstrated how it could be used in group work as a way to explore personal resources. The following list offers various uses of the model in teaching and therapy.

1. Create your own Mandala collage. I have used this in all of my Marriage and Family courses to present the idea of diversity and universals. You will need magazines that can be torn apart and tape. The students are asked to create and present, in small groups, a Mandala that represents them around each dimension. This can be done in class or it can be a homework assignment. What did you become aware of about yourself as you presented your Mandala? What did you learn about differences and sameness? You may expand this and use it as part of the exploration of a family system. Design a Mandala for each member of the family. This is an interesting way to explore perceptions and expectations.
2. Use a work sheet listing each dimension. In a triad or dyad share an appreciation you have for two or three dimensions. What did you learn? How can you use it? As you looked at the inventory what part made you the most uncomfortable? What would need to be added to make it more comfortable? What is needed and how can it be obtained? How do old rules stop current events?
3. Using a work sheet write down one rule about each dimension. What was the function of the rule? Can it be changed to a guideline? What are the positive intentions for rules that families have around each dimension? Share with your group.
4. Group Mandala Parts Party. Have a person choose their parts from the program participants. Once this is done move the star to face each chosen and labeled part. Then the star is asked to acknowledge each part, for example, "You are my intellect." The star is then requested to give that part an appreciation like, "I appreciate your quickness." When a person gets to the part that causes them to hesitate or feel stuck, ask, "What do you know about this part? What other parts can you use to help?" We then explore how in the future, if they find themselves in a negative loop, how they can take a breath and use their resources.

5. Using the iceberg model. In your triad take a walk around the Mandala using the iceberg as your guide. Is there a behavior for each dimension? When there is vulnerability in a dimension what coping stance is used, if any? What are your perceptions of each dimension? What expectations? Are there yearnings in each dimension?
6. Using the Temperature Reading as a tool. Take a temperature reading of your personal Mandala. Satir said that we as human beings have a right to information about ourselves. The temperature reading includes appreciations, puzzles, complaints with recommendations, new information and hopes and wishes.
7. Mandala exercise for Sociology. In my Sociology class, I divide the class into groups of six or seven students. The task is for each group to identify as many groups as possible that are represented by someone in their group, such as gender, eye color, languages, locals etc. They are given ten to fifteen minutes to write down the groups. Each group chooses a spokesperson who then reads off the groups they have identified. I then introduce the Mandala as a way of understanding the various groups they have selected as represented by the dimensions of the Mandala. If there are no groups represented by some of the dimensions, we will generate the groups associated with the dimension such as context related groups. It is a good way for students to get introduced to groups as representing the parts of the self. It is also a great way to begin looking at diversity.

The workshop experience was wonderful. We had about 60 participants in this session.

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