

*Satir Around the Globe*

## Application of the Satir Model to College Student Education in China

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Since its introduction to China, the Satir Model has been quickly favored among Chinese students and teachers. Recent years have seen its wide application in mental health education in Chinese universities. Its popularity comes from the close connection between its view of philosophy, view of the universe, view of humanity and Chinese culture. What it seeks is the theme of human beings: internal tranquillity, interpersonal harmony and a peaceful world. Virginia Satir believed that human beings are born with Life Energy, which can help us gain happiness through outward and inward ways to meet our yearnings and expectations. We can also achieve physical and mental harmony, as well as the congruence between us and our Life Energy. Therefore, the internal, interpersonal harmony, as well as the harmony between us and the nature, the world, and even the universe can be achieved. This harmony is also what Chinese culture advocates.

### I. The connection between the Satir Model and Chinese culture

There are many connections between the two. While Chinese culture features “Yin and Yang” “Humans are an integral part of the nature” “the golden mean” “cultivating one’s own moral character”, the Satir Model believes that human beings are all unique manifestations of the same Universal Life Force, and we can connect in a positive, accepting and loving way.

#### 1. The Satir Model and Taoism

Satir family therapy highlights awareness and acceptance, while traditional Chinese Taoism advocates “doing nothing” and “let it be.” The two theories all guide us to accept ourselves and live in the moment.

#### 2. The Satir Model and Confucianism

The Satir Model tells us that people are basically good. We all have the internal resources we need in order to cope successfully with whatever situations life provides, and we all have the ability to love and yearn. These ideas are congruent with Confucianism, whose core is “benevolence.” Confucianism also espouses that human nature at birth is good.”

### 3. The Satir Model and Buddhism

The Satir Model tells us that change is always possible. An experiential therapy is essential for a transformational change. And the therapy must work within the intrapsychic and interactive system in which the client experiences his emotions, perceptions, expectations, yearnings and spiritual energy. Meditation in traditional Chinese Buddhism is also an experiential process, which helps people to live in the moment and enjoy life. Participants can also experience his-change in this process, and thus becomes more responsible for their lives.

### 4. The Satir Model and Taiji

The Satir Model emphasizes that each level of the internal “iceberg” interacts with each other level. Each interaction possesses positive energy. This perspective, which finds solutions based on the current situation, seeking interactions instead of taking out all the deficiencies, is congruent with the idea of transformation in Chinese Taiji.

The Chinese Taiji is composed of four steps: opening, development, transition, and conclusion. From the perspective of therapy, opening means establishing a counselling relationship with the client; development means observing the client while exploring their iceberg; transition helps the client to be positive; and conclusion requires a summary of the client’s problems and resources. By following the four steps, the therapist can help with the client’s growth.

## II. Application of the Satir Model to the mental health education of Chinese University Students

The most important concept of the Satir Model is the Iceberg. It likens oneself to an iceberg floating in the water. The part above the water line represents behaviour, which is a response mode; while the part hidden below the water line is the feelings (a person’s emotions, including joy, anger, sadness, fear, etc.); feelings about feelings (referring to a person’s self-worth), perception (a person’s beliefs, assumptions, values, subjective reality, thoughts, etc.), expectations (of self, of others, and from others), yearnings (a person’s sense of belonging, creativity, freedom, love, etc.) and self (the core of a person’s life, soul, spirit, life energy). The iceberg construct reveals some of the hidden part so that we can understand better our inner feelings. Once we understand our inner feelings, we can change a certain internal level. As long as that level changes, it is likely to lead to changes in other levels, which will change the external behaviour. These changes can help with our growth and our mental development. In terms of the mental health education in universities, the major responsibility of the educator is to help students find their true feelings, expectations and so on by revealing their inner experience through their behaviors, so that students can recognize their true selves.

### 1. Help students develop a positive view of life

- a. Satir’s theory highlights a positive view of human nature, which is the goal of universities when cultivating their students. It helps students to maintain a good mental state, and to establish a positive outlook on life. Satir believed that human beings are all unique manifestations of the same Universal Life Force. Everyone possesses their unique strengths. But these strengths, as internal factors, are hidden. We must explore to find them. And we must learn to appreciate and care about ourselves and others.
- b. Activities in my university (pictures)



c. Month of the Satir Model

Over the past decade, we have carried out activities such as “psychological melodrama” “fun games” “psychological salon”, etc. during the month of Satir Model training.

d. Based on the Satir Model, we have also had a project that helps new students, a project that helps graduates, and a project of Satir Model promotion. We provide six kinds of mental health services to 7 thousand new students. And we offer guidance to 50 thousand students, helping them to build good character.

e. We conducted group counselling based on the Satir Model.

2. Introducing the Satir Model to classes

We have introduced Satir theories (such as Satir communication stances and conjoint family therapy) to mental health classes. By linking the theories and classes, we give the Satir Model full play and make our classes more flexible. Taking the class "Mental Health Education for University Students" as the core, we offer a dozen other classes, such as “Successful Interpersonal Communication” “Love & Growth of College Students” “Enhance Self-confidence” “Manage Your Emotions” “Planning Your University Life-University Student Leadership (group training)” “On-line Group Counselling” “Female Psychology” “Psychological Film,” etc. Through cases study, behavioral training and other forms of classes, we help students gain practical knowledge of mental health.

**The psychological features of Chinese college students**

1. Low self-esteem (Seeking high marks in exams, they define their self-esteem based on marks and test rankings.)
2. High expectations (To them, things are either true or false.)
3. Too many ideas, too few actions (They don't know what they really want.)
4. Emotionally repressive
5. Bad interpersonal communication
6. Bad self-control
7. Study, without an aim.

#### **Features of classes based on Satir Model**

1. classes with various interactions
2. heuristic class contents
3. teach what our students need
4. apply Satir teaching methods to our classes.

#### **Class themes**

Theme 1: enhance the ability of self-awareness

Theme 2: enhance the ability of managing one's own emotions

Theme 3: enhance the ability of interpersonal communication

Theme 4: enhance the ability of study

#### **Techniques used in our classes**

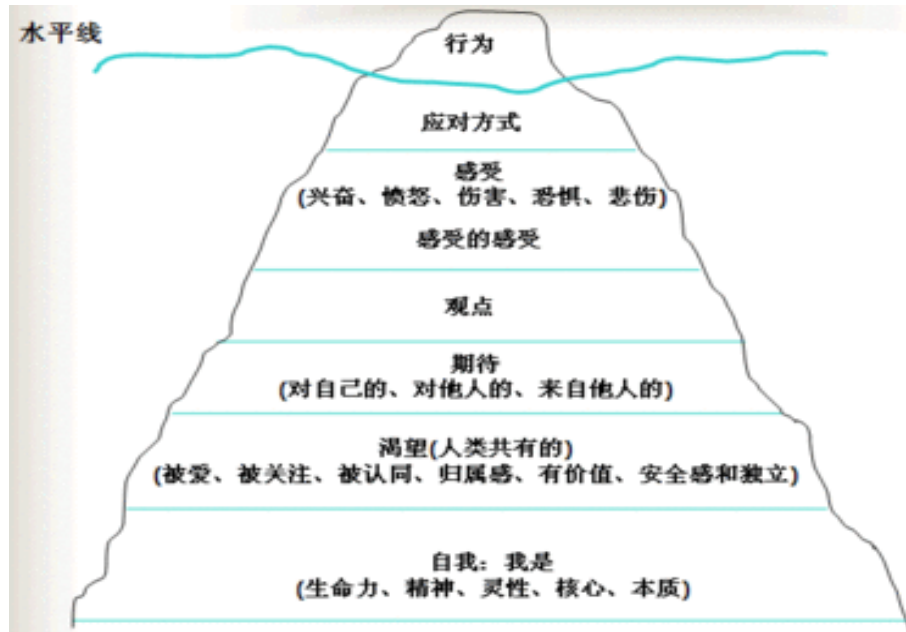
self-mandala, family sculpting, meditation, iceberg, wheel of influence, temperature reading, triads, and communication stances

### **III. Application of the Satir Model to counselling in universities**

1. Individual counselling: half of the counsellors in my university mainly use the Satir Model in their work.
2. Applying the Satir Model to family therapy. In the case of a depressed student, we will invite their parents to attend the therapy. They should learn to express mutual appreciation with direct communication.

### **IV. Application of the Satir Model to crisis intervention in universities**

College student suicide is one of the social concerns among people. Suicide causes a loss of life, a deep grief for a family and a great damage to a country. Among the studies of suicide, its "contagion" has been given great attention. Many studies have found that suicide cases increase because of suicide reports in the media. In China, suicide is a prominent mental problem among college students. Preventing students from committing suicide is an important part of university mental health work. Universities are where knowledge is taught to students. It is also the place where counselling services should be provided. On this basis, the presence of suicide "contagion" reminds us that after a suicide case, universities should have measures to prevent the "contagion" so as to avoid serial suicides.



#### Analysis of the “iceberg” of students in crisis:

Behaviour: escape

Feelings: frustration, shame, anger, out of control, grief

Awareness: suicide is a solution for it can stop my thinking and misery.

#### Expectations:

Resources that we can seek to solve individual crisis: family, school, hospital.

Focus is on solving individual crisis:

1. We need to focus on the frustration, depression and other difficult emotions of the person who intends to commit suicide.
2. We need to help him/her find energy and resources that can support him/her.
3. We need to link him/her to his/her yearnings, such as acceptance, belonging, love, or any other intimate relations.
4. We need to enhance his/her self-esteem and self-worth.
5. We need to give them hope.

#### Emphasis of group crisis intervention

1. We should explore the changes of the “iceberg” of the group after the crisis happens. For example, the changes of feelings, behaviours, expectations and yearnings.
2. We should look for everyone’s positive resources and beliefs.
3. We should help the group members to stay close with each other, so that they can overcome difficulties together.
4. We need to give them hope.
5. We need to help them learn to love themselves.

#### V. Conclusion.

To sum up, the Satir Model is easily accepted and favored by Chinese family and students because its view of philosophy, view of the universe, and view of humanity are all closely connected to Chinese traditional culture. Thus, the model can be adapted to individual and

family therapy. Furthermore, it helps to promote Chinese students' mental qualities and shape healthy personalities. In the coming future, the Satir Model will be widely applied in China.