Research Article

The Satir Systemic Coaching Model

Darya Haitoglou, Psychologist, Systemic Relationship Coach (UK), Director of Institute of Virginia Satir (UK)

Abstract

The Satir Model is practiced globally in the field of psychotherapy but has not been utilized to its full potential in the coaching and business world. Executive coaching, business coaching, and life coaching are growing professions and are estimated to be worth more than $12 billion combined in the United States alone.

Coaching, as a practice, is used to support clients in reaching the desired outcome and has been practiced in conjunction with Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). Since NLP bases its work on Virginia Satir as one of its primary models, incorporating more of the Satir Model into coaching may enhance the work of executive, corporate, business and life coaches. With the ENRICH model of coaching described in this paper, the author combines cognitive and somatic elements in an innovative approach to coaching.

This paper aims to bridge the existing gap and present a Satir Coaching Model as a system of practical tools for coaches and trainers in both business and life-coaching field.

Keywords

coaching, Satir Model, ENRICH model, experiential, somatic

What Is Coaching?

Although the coaching field is still in the process of being established as a recognized profession, there is a body of outcome research in coaching that points to significant positive effects on performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes, and goal-directed self-regulation of individuals in organizations (Theeboom, Beersma, & Vianen, 2013). Estimated that with more than 50,000 certified coaches worldwide (International Coach Federation, 2016), coaching has been largely applied in organizations and psychological practices in the last decade (Bennett, 2006; Lane & Corrie, 2014; Spence, 2007; Steel, 1997; Witmore, 1995).

"The International Coach Federation (ICF) is the leading global organization dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high standards, providing independent certification, and building a worldwide network of trained coaching professionals" (ICF, 2016, para. 2). "ICF defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential" ("ICF Definition of Coaching," para. 1).

Coaching Principles, Models, and Process

Coaching is a collaborative process. The main principle of coaching is that the client has the greater knowledge to create required insights, ideas, and skills needed for the desired change. Coach and client have clear roles and responsibilities. While a coach keeps the focus on clearly defined goals, facilitates the client's (coachee's) thinking, and delivers constructive feedback, a coachee generates ideas and options, takes action toward the goal, and reports progress (Figure 1).

Coaching is solution (action) oriented (Hart, Blattner, & Leipsic, 2001). In coaching, a client might start with a problem that they are experiencing, but the focus of discussion should be quickly moved towards the goal, and exploring solutions on how to achieve that goal (Hart et al., 2001; Williams, 2004).

- Coaching is different from management in that a manager sets expectations for their reportee to achieve, followed by an assessment of *good* or *bad* performance—in that way, *leading* the process.
- Coaching is different from training, consulting and mentorship in that a trainer/consultant/mentor (*expert*) shares knowledge and suggests ways to achieve the desired outcome (Figure 2).
- Coaching is different from counseling and therapy in that it doesn't delve into the past issues or problems, but focuses on the future solutions and ways towards the desired outcome (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Coach and coachee responsibilities. Adapted from "Principles of Coaching," by Team FME, 2013, p. 9. Copyright 2013 by Team FME; used with permission
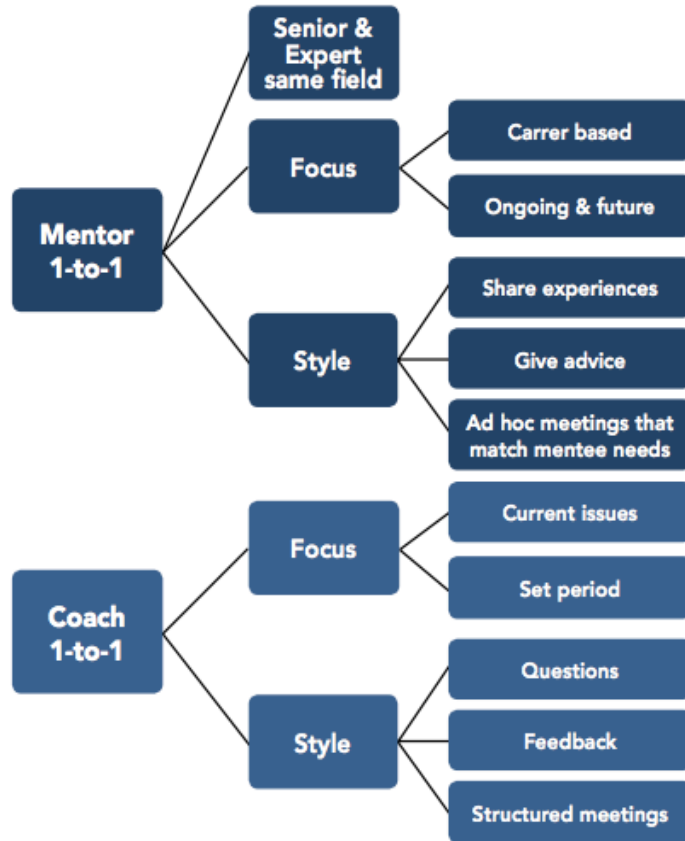
Figure 2. Differences between Coaching and Mentorship. Adapted from "Principles of Coaching," by Team FME, 2013, p. 13. Copyright 2013 by Team FME; used with permission.
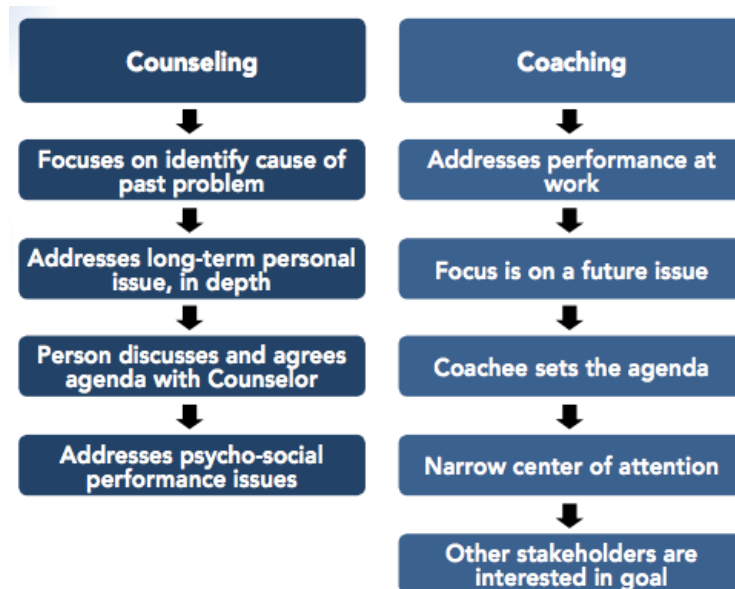

Figure 3. Difference between Coaching and Counselling. Adapted from "Principles of Coaching," by Team FME, 2013, p. 15. Copyright 2013 by Team FME; used with permission.

There are different categories of coaching: executive coaching, business coaching, corporate coaching, and life-coaching.

- Executive coaching is centered around the work of executives of a company. This service is provided to Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and presidents of organizations on how to up-level their impact and unblock any challenges, personally or professionally.

- Business coaching is associated with growing of business profit, turnover and assisting in people management.

- Corporate coaching is oriented towards middle management in corporations and can include team coaching.

- Life-coaching can be extended beyond corporate environment and can include individual or group coaching centered around goals to increase self-confidence, bringing more positivity and enhancing relationships.

Coaching is governed by a principle of adopting a structural (or semi-structural) approach to a coaching conversation. That includes three parts: Purpose, Perspectives, and Process (Lane & Corrie, 2006).

- Purpose. Establishing what the client wants long-term, mid-term, short-term and why (yearnings, desired outcomes, goals).

- Perspectives. Understanding how coach and client can bring their two worlds together by looking at the same things from different angles and exploring different experiences.

- Process. How coaches go about achieving outcomes, e.g., session duration, timing, number of sessions, commitments, resources, requirements, contract, feedback, reports, remuneration).

Another principle that governs coaching is the multi-level communication process presented by different types of models, such as nested-level models, U-shape models, quadrant models, and combined models.

The Satir Model in Coaching

The Satir Model is widely recognized in the field of psychotherapy (Loeschen, 1998; McLendon, 1996, 2000, 2001; Cross, E. Y., Katz, J. H., Miller, F. A., & Seashore, E. W 1994; Banmen & Satir, 2009) but has been limited in coaching application due to the lack of appropriate framework and awareness in the coaching field.

The Satir Model has partial application in both business environments and life coaching. Such components of the model as Seven P's (Pain, Pleasure, Problems, Plans, Performance, Power, Possibility), Seven A's (Awareness, Acceptance, Authorship, Articulation, Application, Activism, Altruism), and Self-Esteem Toolbox (detective hat, courage stick, golden key, wisdom box, wishing wand, yes-no medallion) are explored within the Satir Growth Model in Organizational Dynamics (McLendon, 2005).

In coaching, challenges associated with limited beliefs and negative emotions regarding coping behaviors of people around them are explored by coachees using the Iceberg Model (Banmen & Satir, 2009), which provides a useful tool to resolve conflicts and move towards the feeling of *flow*. The state of flow is the natural, relaxed state for creativity and congruency (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Haitoglou, 2016b).

The Satir Growth Model in business and corporate coaching has been applied by human resources professionals in assisting the corporate dynamics of change in small and large organizations (Haitoglou, 2016c).

The Satir Systemic Coaching Model

Systemic coaching is coaching with systems in mind (Whittington, 2016). It takes into consideration different systems in which a client operates, such as the family of origin as the most critical system. During systemic modalities, a space-time constellation can take place bringing in elements that affect the current system, for example, elements from other teams, associations, networks, previous work environments, etc. For the first time, the Satir Systemic Coaching Model (SSCM) is presented to consist of the cognitive coaching conversations using the ENRICH combined model and somatic work using five Stance-Dances (Haitglou, 2016d). This work stems from the Satir Model and the ENRICH coaching model.

Cognitive Part: ENRICH Coaching Model

The ENRICH Coaching Model (Explore, Nourish, Respond, Imagine, Communicate, Hug) was created by Haitoglou based on the Satir Model principles and applied in coaching conversations in business, corporate, and life coaching (Haitoglou, 20016a). The following components have been proposed to be part of the ENRICH model, where each letter stands for a separate concept.

(E)xplore (vs. Routine)

Exploration is key to human enrichment. Exploring the situation helps a client to start a coaching conversation. Identifying what type of an outcome a client wants is essential at this stage. Becoming aware and making an inventory of what has worked in the past and what didn't may be the first step. Satir used her non-judgmental skill of curiosity to assist her clients in their exploration to help with change.

- From a coaching standpoint, behavioral examples of this stage can be consistent eye contact, leaning forward, as well as the use of such phrases as:
- Tell me what you know about this situation?
- What does it mean to you when X mentioned Z?
- Let's look into this, shall we?
- Let's change the position and ask X from their perspective what's going on here.
- I'm curious about what it all means to you.
- What could you report from this perspective as you look at the situation?

A list of questions that can help a client explore their situation might be:

- What would you like to explore today?
- What is one thing that you would like to consider in our conversation today?
- What else could be happening that is important to mention?
- What would you like to focus on in this situation?
- What if we asked X, what would they say about this?
- What other options do you have?
- What have you done so far to resolve it?
- What would be the best option here?
- What else would be possible?
- What would be a good use of our time in this session?
- What outcome would you like from our interaction today?
- Why is it important to you?

(N)ourish (vs. Deplete)

Before coaching relationships are created, a coach needs to learn to nourish themselves and fill up their emotional bucket with positive emotions and healthy thoughts (Rath, 2004). Then, it's essential to validate and sustain the client by creating a safe and welcoming space as well as a neutral and non-judgmental position of a coach (Loeschen, 2005; Haitoglou, 2016d).

Nourishment can be done via healthy practices. Once a coach is nourished and enters a coaching conversation, their role is to validate and nourish the client to help them raise their self-esteem using such phrases as:

- It's terrific that you are aware of this.
- Look how his eyes are all bright and beautiful.
- You have a peaceful look on your face.
- You are unique.
- You are the star in this situation.
- How impressive that you have made it up to here, etc.

Statements such as these can be used to evoke a sense of high self-esteem and raise it. Encouraging comments can assist the client in their change process (Loeschen, 1998; 2005). In coaching, similar interventions are effective. Appreciating the client for their being, doing, and persevering nourishes them by validating their core Self.

Some questions that help nourish the client rather than deplete them are:

- What do you love doing?
- What makes you look forward to an event?
- What motivates you?
- What is one thing that you can't live without?
- What are your top 3 values in life?
- What can you do for as long as you live?
- What makes you feel special?
- What makes you feel great?
- What activities make your heart 'sing'?
- What legacy would you like to leave after you?
- What thoughts make you feel whole?
- What characteristics do you value the most?
- How do you look after yourself?

(R)espond (vs. React)

In responding, one moves away from reacting (negative, impulsive behavior) and moves toward responding (mindful, conscious behavior) to events in life. When stressful situations arise, the body can become 'polluted' with a hormone called cortisol. Cortisol is produced by the adrenal glands in response to stress, and it can suppress the immune system. When the immune system is suppressed, we become more vulnerable to colds, flu, and other illnesses. We may also be subject to adrenal gland fatigue due to chronic cortisol release (Edwards, 2011).

Responding allows us to navigate through life using our prefrontal cortex, reducing the impact of stress. The pre-frontal cortex is considered the most crucial part of the social brain, as it is linked to social and emotional intelligence (Siegel, 2010). It governs cognitive processing and is mainly responsible for better decision-making.

Reframing can be used as a responding tool vs. reacting (Loeschen, 2005). For example:

- "You call yourself stubborn. In what areas of your life do you think your tenaciousness has helped you?" (Loeschen, 2005, p. 56).
- "I'm hearing that the two of you both know a lot about getting your needs met" (p. 56) (Both partners had been accusing each other of being selfish).
- "I see the members of this family knowing a great deal about standing firm" (p. 56) (Reframing a power struggle).

A list of questions that can help a client to respond rather than react in a coaching conversation might be:

- What could be a healthy response to this situation?
- What would you like to do with this?
- How would you like to respond to this?
- If you were in a resourceful state, how would you like to respond?
- What would change your reaction into a healthy response?
- What would make this situation move forward?
- What resources do you need to feel better?
- What do you need to respond congruently?
- What needs are satisfied with such a reaction?
- What could you do to slow down your reactive response to give yourself some time?

(I)magine (vs. Will-power)

Imagination is more powerful than will. It can create a desired outcome effortlessly and consistently. When one imagines things in the future or remembers things from the past, they activate the same parts of their brain to produce similar physiology as if they were experiencing this in the present moment (Siegel, 2010). Exercising positive imagination, compassion, and mindful meditation can enhance the creation of new neuro-pathways to help enrich coaching relationships (Brann, 2014; Brown, 2012; Hall, 2013). A list of questions that help develop this modality in coaching are:

- If anything were possible, what would you do?
- Imagine you meet them tomorrow, what would you say?
- What would be the best outcome of this situation for yourself?
- Let's create your desired outcome. Where shall we start?
- If you were he, what would you do*?
- If you had a magic wand, what would you do?
- If you had all the resources you need, what would you start doing?
- If you could create the future, what would you change now?
- If you had X, what would change in your life?

(C)ommunicate (vs. Assume)

Communication is key in coaching. Equipping clients with communication tools is one of the significant benefits of coaching. In the global world in which we live, interacting with people from different backgrounds and personal preferences, communication is key to success.

Learning to communicate effectively is paramount in establishing fruitful relationships in life. Practicing simple strategies to develop clear, concise, loving, and caring communication will allow for a love-rich connection. These skills can help eliminate judgment and would improve peace within and between a coach and a client as well as reduce general tension at work.

The following communication tools can be used for coaching:

- Temperature reading (Appreciations, New Information, Puzzles, Worries, Concerns and Recommendations, Hopes and Wishes) (see Satir, et al., 1991, pp. 309−316)
- Self-Esteem Toolbox (Detective Hat, Golden Key, Yes/No Medallion, Courage Stick, Wishing Wand, Wisdom Box, Heart) (pp. 293−298)
- 5 Freedoms (See, Hear, Think, Feel, Act) (pp. 306−307)
- Parts' Party (Integration of inner-conflicting parts) (Satir et al., 1991)
- Family Mapping (to be used for assessing the landscape before moving forward) (Satir, 1988)
- Sculpting somatic externalization of inner processes and feelings (Satir and Baldwin, 1983)
- Iceberg Model (Coping Behavior, Feelings, Feelings about feelings, Beliefs, Perceptions, Expectations, Yearnings, Self) (Satir et al., 1991).

(H)ug and humor (vs. Withdraw)

Hugging is a powerful tool that is underutilized in coaching conversations. There are many benefits of hugging, especially together with cognitive exploration and social support (Cohen et al., 1997). According to Satir, we need four hugs a day for survival, eight hugs a day for maintenance, and 12 hugs a day for growth (Loeschen, 1998). Hugging has substantial health benefits and helps combat stress. It assists in supporting the immune system and provides a useful tool for a client to manage their welfare during and beyond coaching (Cohen, 2015). In coaching, like in therapy, hugging should be done with the permission of the client.

Laughter can be a potent tool for lowering stress. It can dissipate tension, aggression, depression, pain, and even such complex feelings as jealousy (Adams & McGuire, 1986; Berk, 2001; Fry, 1977, 1994; Martin, 2002).

Somatic Process of Sculpting

The somatic part of the SSCM contains the elements of sculpting. Sculpting is a therapeutic technique used in psychodrama to create a visual representation of a system (Satir et al., 1991). Sculpting offers a client an opportunity to externalize feelings, perceptions, expectations, and longings that are embedded in the system's communications. Observing one's self within the context of the broader system creates awareness and provides a foundation for exploration, choice, and practice (McLendon, 2005).

Somatic Part: Five Stance-Dances

Stance-Dance is an integrative movement practice that is a somatic part of the proposed SSCM (Haitoglou, 2016e).

Principles and Theoretical Underpinnings of Stance-Dance

The somatic part of the SSCM is based on some principles. The first one is that movement has two directions: contracting and expanding (Haitoglou, 2016e). With Stance-Dance, we move towards expanding to change physiology. Changing physiology, we can change neurology (Wilson & Peper, 2004). By applying the movement component, a client moves towards feeling better and getting to the outcome they aim to achieve.

Another principle of Stance-Dance is that non-verbal communication is involuntary. We always communicate with our body. (Ekman, 1997). Also, the phenomenological experience is underpinned by mirror-neurons. Mirror-neurons seem to influence systems that are close to each other. In proximity with another person, mirror-neurons are claimed to 'reflect' the emotional state of another (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). Then, information is stored in the body and can be transformed (Collins & Jegalian, 1999). This physical dimension brings possibilities to change systemically for the better without cognitively becoming aware of the process. Perception of behavioral models influences embodied experience. In the same way, changing visual perception of relationship changes our reality.

Space and time are mental constructs. By being 'here and now,' we increase chances of 'healing' the past and making effective choices in future (McGreevey, 2011). Projected visualization of past-experienced relationship models opens a possibility to look at them from a distance. This process raises awareness of what is in the here and now, and this is healing on its own.

The five stress and flow Stance-Dances below originated from the Satir work as well as the work of Gomori (Satir et al., 1991) and Loeschen (2005), yoga practice and Siberian dance (Haitoglou, 2016e).

The Stance-Dances

Stance-Dance 1. Blamer: Peaceful warrior

Stress. In the blaming stance (Satir et al., 1991), a person takes a position of blaming someone or something else without taking responsibility for self. The underlying need is to be protected, safe, and respected. Physically, this stance would be represented by a person pointing a finger with a stretched arm leaning forward on one front leg. The front leg is in the front, and the back leg is slightly bent. One hand is on the waist. The feeling in this position is unbalanced, and the position puts a strain on the shoulders (Figure 4).

Figure 4. The blaming stance. Adapted from The Satir Model: Family Therapy and Beyond by V. Satir, J. Banmen, J. Gerber, & M. Gomori, 1991. Copyright 2016 D. Haitoglou.

Flow. Peaceful Warrior is an antidote to the Blaming Stance. It is a position that is driven by the need for protection and safety, similar to 'Blamer' but more congruent. Physically, the stretched arm goes up above the head, with a palm open, the tip of fingers facing up. A person looking up from this stance can quickly shift to being more resourceful and peaceful albeit strong and energetic (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Peaceful warrior stance. Copyright Darya Haitoglou 2016.

Stance-Dance 2. Placator: Power tree

Figure 6. Placating stance (adapted from Satir et al., 1991). Copyright Darya Haitoglou 2016.

Stress. A Placating stance (Satir et al., 1991) is a stance in which a person takes a position of a victim and takes full responsibility onto themselves. The underlying need is for love and care as well as strength and stability. Physically, this stance would be represented by a person kneeling on one knee and looking up while making a begging sign with their hands as though asking for forgiveness. Upper body and head are slightly bent on one side, and palms are open facing up. This position is not comfortable and places a strain on one side of the body, which is bent (Figure 6).

Flow. Power Tree is a position that helps create balance and brings stability and strength to the body. Physically, it would be represented by standing up from a placating stance and raising both arms straight above the head. Feet are a shoulder's width apart. Head is looking straight with a slight smile. For an advanced position, one can bend one leg and put a foot on the inner thigh of the other leg (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Power tree stance. Copyright Darya Haitoglou 2016

Stance-Dance 3. Super-reasonable: Humble monk

Figure 8. The super-reasonable stance (Adapted from Satir et al., 1991) Copyright Darya Haitoglou 2016.

Stress. Super-reasonable stance or *computer* (Satir et al., 1991) stance occurs when a person hides real emotions behind logic and facts. A person in the computer stance prefers to use a monolog or a critique when under stress. The underlying need is to be heard, understood, respected for their wisdom. Physically, that is represented by crossed arms and a *serious* look on the face (Figure 8).

Flow. Humble Monk is when the body becomes straight, and palms touch on the heart's level in a 'Namaste' sign. Head: facing straight with a smile (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Humble monk stance. Copyright Darya Haitoglou 2016.

Stance-Dance 4. Distractor: Core harmonizer

Stress. Distracting stance or *irrelevant* (Satir et al., 1991) is a position people take when they do not want to face a harsh reality and prefer to deviate to a different topic. A distractor brings humor or skips difficult subjects, even adds chaos, to avoid conflict and create emotional stability and harmony. Physically, that would be represented by a person moving his/her arms in front of other people's faces to distract their attention. The position would consist of a slightly bent leg on one side and with the person looking from down up (Figure 10).

Flow. Core Harmonizer is a stable and harmonious position that helps a person feel courage and peace with a tough reality around them. Physically, arms relax, palms open up, body strengthens and finds its core (similar to a Tai Chi neutral position) with slightly bent knees and straight spine (Figure 11).

Figure 10. The distractor stance (Adapted from Satir et al., 1991). Copyright Darya Haitoglou 2016.

Figure 11. Core harmonizer stance. Copyright Darya Haitoglou 2016.

Stance-Dance 5. Withdrawer: World hugger

Stress. Withdrawer is a stance in which a person moves away from discussing a difficult situation and stops talking, 'shuts down' from external reality (Loeschen, 2005). The underlying need in this stance is for trust, openness, and touch, the very things a person moves away from, which is counter-intuitive. Physically, this stance is represented by folded arms and turning away from the other person (Figure 12).

Flow. World Hugger is an antidote to the withdrawing stance. Instead of moving away, the 'World Hugger' steps in and opens their arms as though they want to hug the whole world. It is a resourceful stance considered to be connected to a "hug hormone," oxytocin (Haitoglou, 2016d, p. 63) (Figure 13).
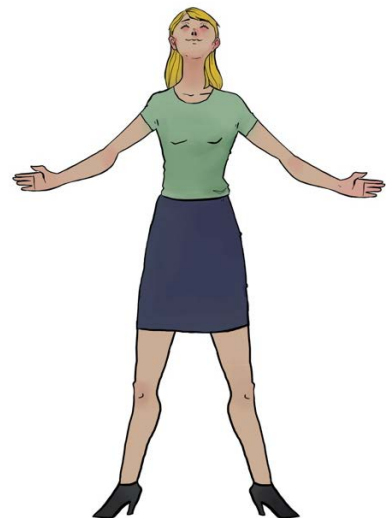

Figure 12. Withdrawing stance (Adapted from Loeschen, 2005). Copyright Darya Haitoglou 2016.

Figure 13. World-hugging stance. Copyright Darya Haitoglou, 2016.

Systemic Coaching Application

During an explorative stage of the ENRICH coaching model, a coach may introduce five somatic *stress* Stances as a framework. The coach might then ask their clients to show with their body how comfortable, on a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is very comfortable and 10 is very uncomfortable), they feel in a context of a situation they are working. By introducing the *flow* part of the Stance-Dance, clients are then questioned about whether they noticed a somatic shift and again asked to rate it on a scale of 0 to 10. The coach can then reflect this difference in ratings with the client in a coaching conversation.

The same process may be introduced to raise awareness of the feelings and needs of others, with whom a client may be having issues or difficulties in communicating. This somatic practice can also be used as a reflection and a supervision tool to be mindful of coach's feelings while working with a client or a situation that a coach might have experienced in the past that still brings some judgment with it.

Combining both cognitive and somatic parts, the SSCM presents an innovative approach to coaching. It helps direct a client to a more systemic and holistic place to get to their desired outcome.

SSCM has been applied in corporate, executive and business coaching and has shown potential to develop into a widely recognized model by therapists and coaching practitioners around the world.

Conclusion

In its early years of application, SSCM has become a useful framework for working with clients in the coaching field. Satir's legacy has given more potential to change lives of people around the world, across the coaching industry and beyond. It has already shown a beneficial effect on its users and more research is required to test the SSCM model and further develop the cognitive and somatic application of its parts in business and corporate coaching around the world.

SSCM enhances the coaching process by providing a practical and unique ENRICH and Stance-Dance framework for effective transformative work as a bridge between cognitive and somatic processes. It has possible applications for both therapeutic and coaching practice for executive, business and life coaches across cultures and ages. It provides valuable and straightforward tools for an enriching journey in a corporate world and beyond.

Darya Haitoglou holds a First Class Honors Bachelor's in Economics, Bachelor's in Psychology, Masters' with Distinction in International Relations and holds a Masters' of Philosophy from the University of Cambridge. Darya is a certified trainers' trainer in NLP and professional certified coach (PCC) from the International Coaching Federation (ICF).

Working across different countries and speaking four languages, as well as being a mother of two, she is valued for her skills in helping leaders build successful and meaningful businesses through focusing on their personal growth. She is an author, psychologist and a founder of Enrich Global as well as Institute of Virginia Satir in the UK.

www.daryahaitglou.com

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