

# The Wisdom Box

September 17, 1999

Volume 2, Issue 2

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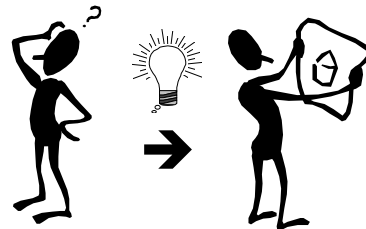
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## Message from the President

I am delighted that the planning which has taken place during the summer will bring Stephen Buckbee, Michael Dupont and Daniel Doyle to Vancouver to share with us their wisdom and experience in Satir's use of the mandala. The *Special Event* to be held in November will be an exciting learning and not to

**"Those of you who have met Stephen and other members of his triad... will, I hope, encourage others to come [to the Special Event] and to bring a friend."**



**"If you aren't involved in SIPN, I invite you to find a way to make your unique & valuable contribution."**

be missed. Those of you who have met Stephen and other members of his triad at Avanta meetings or training events will, I hope, encourage others to come and bring a

friend. This *Special Event* is an opportunity for the Institute to reach out beyond its membership to others who are interested in the mandala as a way of looking at the dimensions of becoming more fully human.

I would like to extend a welcome to those who are beginning the Level 1 training course in the Satir Model and to those who are coming back for the Level 2 training. The Institute is fortunate to have John and Kathlyne willing to commit so much of their time and energy to sharing their knowledge and promoting the

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## Special Event:



### **The Self Mandala**

with

**Stephen Buckbee, Michael Dupont, & Daniel Doyle**

on

**November 20 & 21, 1999**



Contact Wendy Lum for more information: 604.540.4415

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## The 1999 IFTA World Congress

By: Martin Bartel

Akron Ohio was the sit of the International Family Therapy Association's eleventh annual World Congress. According to the participant list over thirty countries were represented with four presenters from Canada for the five day congress. This years theme was *HOPE: Strengthening the ties between Family, Culture, and Generations*. Monday was set aside for the pre-congress presentations where our local Mary Manson presented some of her acclaimed research. Tuesday's theme on Violence was covered by a range of

family, society and international workshops. On Wednesday the workshops focused on inter-generational and aging issues. Thursday's theme on societal issues in family therapy covered many aspects including spirituality. Friday looked at medical aspects of psychotherapy with Saturday bringing it all together with a closing luncheon.

My contribution to this congress was a workshop titled: *Our Spirituality: Using Satir's Systemic Model*. With a very active group of participants, the positive energy flowed as we became

aware of our own life force using the work of Virginia Satir and the Iceberg. There was even an opportunity to bring about some healing to relational conflict which became apparent between two participants during the workshop. The response to this deepening awareness was embraced by the participants representing nine different countries, six different ethnic groups with over thirty individual responses.

### Ottawa 1999 By: Martin Bartel

It all began early Friday morning (and I tell you early), when I left my house in Agassiz to get to John and Kathlyne's and make it to the airport on time. John and I were on our way to Ottawa and we weren't quite sure what to expect. I had heard about last year's trip and was anticipating well... we'll see. A weekend with Dr. Janet Christie Seely and her Family Reconstruction participants...

We arrived in Ottawa late Friday afternoon to be picked up and taken to her home where the weekend workshop would take place. A wonderfully large house with ample room to sit fifty plus people in the living room or in the basement. With just under thirty participants and a high level of anticipation for John's continued training.

Saturday and Sunday looked full. John did his wonderful work of bringing together a learning experience for both those who had previously participated in his training, and for those who were there for the first time. The challenge of this kind of blended group did not seem to phase him. Janet did a portion on self-esteem using the family reconstruction model. Participating in this process provided an appreciation for the work that John has done with the Iceberg.

A short presentation and discussion of Spirituality was my direct contribution to the weekend which met with a variety of responses. Some participants were keenly aware of their own sense of spirituality while others deeply struggled with the issue.

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### Avanta: The Virginia Satir Network By: John Banmen

In 1977 Virginia Satir founded an organization to help her with her mission of helping people to become more fully human through various training programs. The organization has held annual meetings ever since. This year the meeting was from July 9th to July 13th near Seattle, Washington.

The program started with a welcome opening banquet. We heard from the President, the Treasurer, the Secretary and the Executive Director. The membership also filled three positions on the Board. The good news was that Avanta is doing well financially and emotionally. The healing that was so obvious last year has turned into some very positive activities.

The most successful activities that Avanta has facilitated are the many programs at home and abroad. Programs were funded for the Czech Republic, Honduras, El Salvador, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Slovak, and Russia where Avanta members had offered their services free. The programs focused either on helping the misfortunate or training of local professionals.

Avanta also supported research and resource development. Funds were also provided to two Satir Institutes for bursaries to attend the Satir Systemic (brief) Therapy Training Program.

Much of the annual meeting was spent in a workshop setting. A full day was devoted to Diversity/Racism and Other Isms. Also, much time was spent connecting and

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# Tears in Therapy

By: John Banmen

On Sept. 2, I gave a short talk to the clinical members of the Satir Institute on how to deal with tears in therapy. Here are a few ideas from the talk.

Crying is a non-verbal language system. Crying is a healthy and necessary human process that is an integral part of our existence. It is signaling that something significant is taking place inside of us that is often hidden from view. The language of tears has cultural, gender, family and intersectional rules that need to be understood.

Crying is the beginning, not the end point of deep communication. It is the recovery from tears, not the act of crying itself that is most therapeutic.

There are numerous types of tears. Tears in response to physical injuries, tears at ceremonial functions like weddings and funerals, tears of joy and rapture, tears during vicarious experiences like movies or television are some examples.

In therapy, the experience of tears often include loss, grief, rejection, fear, worthlessness, helplessness, sadness, anger, frustration, disappointment, unmet expectations, and hopelessness. As well tears can be part of release and relief, such as resolution of past conflict, relief of present circumstances and release of painful memories. Tears have many meanings.

There is a considerable difference between women and men in regards to tears. Often there is a tendency to make too much of gender differences though. We are more alike than different.

Finding meaning to what crying says involves decoding what is being expressed both explicitly and implicitly.

Tears often speak for a half-dozen or more internal parts of the client.

Here are some of the the suggestions I shared with the attendees of the talk:

1. Be respectful and accepting, especially when clients cry.
2. Don't give advice.
3. Give clients permission to cry.
4. Attend fully to the client with your eyes, facial expression, body posture, verbal response.
5. Bring clients' genuine feelings into their greater awareness, experientially.
6. Assist the clients to identify the various feelings associated with the tears. Note that there are usually many different feelings associated with ones' different parts:
  - ◆ Clients don't exactly know how they feel
  - ◆ Your perception might not be accurate, don't tell them how they feel.
  - ◆ Avoid single feeling responses: explore the complex combinations of body sensations, perceptions, feelings, yearnings. All of these are often blended into a confused picture and experience.
7. Help your client translate the language into messages that are clearly understood; these could be feelings, perceptions, expectations and/or yearnings.
8. Help clients assume greater responsibility for what their tears are communicating.
9. Take into consideration the client's gender, culture, family background and what is normative for the person.
10. Hear the client's language of tears as part of them crying out to be accepted, validated, acknowledged and possibly understood.

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## Program Happenings

### **Satir's Systemic Brief Therapy - Level 1**

Dr. John Banmen R. Psych. & Kathlyne Maki-Banmen, MA

A ten-day training program:

Sept. 25 & 26, Oct. 30 & 31, Nov. 27 & 28, 1999

Jan. 15 & 16, Feb. 12 & 13, 2000

**FULL**



### **Satir's Systemic Brief Therapy - Advanced**

(prerequisite: completion of Level 1)

Dr. John Banmen R. Psych. & Kathlyne Maki-Banmen MA

A ten-day training program:

Oct. 2 & 3, Nov. 13 & 14, 1999

Jan. 22 & 23, Feb. 19 & 20, March 18 & 19, 2000

**FULL**



### **Satir's Systemic Brief Therapy - Advanced**

(prerequisite: completion of Level 1)

Dr. John Banmen R. Psych. & Kathlyne Maki-Banmen, MA

A ten-day training program:

Beginning February 2000 - now registering

### **Resolving and Appreciating the Past: Sculpting Using the Satir Model**

Kathlyne Maki-Banmen, MA

A six-day training program:

Beginning April 2000 - now registering

Registration now being accepted for programs.

For information, please call Wendy Lum at 604.540.4415

# Experiencing Satir Systemic (Brief) Therapy Training

By: Lorrie Brubacher

I confess I flew to Vancouver with a twinge of ambivalence about going to the Satir Systemic (Brief) Therapy Training. By the end of the week, having immersed myself in personal and professional learning for nearly 14 hours per day, I was celebrating the Life Force energy which was continuing to flow and nourish this open systems model.

I now appreciated that Virginia wouldn't want me to be a "Satirist" but rather that I continue to work with the two components that John describes as central to Satir's Systemic (Brief) Therapy: first that it is experiential and secondly, transformational. It is *systemic*, both intrapsychically and relationally, *brief* in that it is both deep and short, and it is *therapy* in that it leads to change.

The highlights of my learning from the seven day training could perhaps be described under four headings: Brief Therapy; Congruence with the Self; Unmet Expectations; and Family Therapy Field.

### **Brief Therapy**

John presented the *Iceberg* metaphor to us in a unique way. Rather than beginning at the top with coping strategies, he began at the bottom with the Life Force. I experienced this shift in presentation to be quite revolutionary. It heightened my awareness of how all of therapy is about releasing the blocks that keep the Life Force from flowing freely, with its innate healing capacity. It becomes brief therapy by virtue of the

therapist knowing where to tap in the *iceberg* as metaphor for one's internal experience. By assessing where in the iceberg a client's life energy is stuck we can lead the person through the experiential, transformational process that has the capacity to release the life energy. When it is released, the healing energy takes over! (The spiritual nature of therapy is profoundly inescapable!)

The iceberg is not a technique to use, it is a metaphor for the internal experience. A therapist can use the iceberg metaphor as part of his/her internal frame of reference when exploring clients' dilemmas and goals for change. The therapist also metaphorically moves through the levels of the iceberg when anchoring

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## Message from the President continued...

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Satir Model through these and other courses.

Other members continue to contribute to building the institute with work on the Board, finance, membership, newsletter, planning events, research, participating in special interest groups, video days etc. There is an increasing number of people who are interested in the development and application of the Satir Model and participating in the Institute. If you are not actively involved, then I would invite you to find a way to make your unique and valuable contribution.

*Michael T. Callaghan*  
President



## Ottawa 1999 continued...

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The most fascinating aspect of the weekend is how the Satir Model has progressed in the last decade with the work which is happening here on the West Coast with John. It is defiantly exciting to be part of this progressive work.

*Martin Bartel*  
Director

## Tears in Therapy continued...

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Here are a set of sample questions which you might consider when working with your clients:

- ◆ If tears could talk, what would they be saying?
- ◆ How are you tears trying to be helpful?
- ◆ Is crying a private or public message at this moment?
- ◆ What does this particular incident remind you of?
- ◆ How are these tears connected with other things in your life?
- ◆ What are the various parts of you trying to say?
- ◆ What are you saying to yourself? To others?
- ◆ What is going on for you right now?
- ◆ What would you like to see happen?

A lively discussion followed the talk. The members of the group suggested numerous topic of interest that might be considered for future meetings with the Satir Institute Clinical Members. I have proposed four such evenings a year.

I hope to see you there next time.

*John Banmen*  
Director of Training

Avanta: The Virginia Satir Network continued..

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reconnecting with members.

My favourite workshop was Dr. Joe Dillon’s presentation of *Satir As A Theory*. He presented a convincing argument that the Satir Model was founded on a strong theoretical base.

Every year Avanta honours one Avanta member for the contribution and leadership the person has made and shown in regards to the purpose and mission of Virginia Satir’s work. This year it was Margarita Suarez, the Executive Director.

The forty plus members had an enjoyable time at the Dumas Centre with an auction. Both silent and noisy/competitive, humourous auctions were a lot of fun and generated some income for Avanta. Contributions for the auctions had been made from numerous countries and, therefore, provided a variety of objects.

Finally, Avanta is alive and moving ahead with its mission. Avanta, the Virginia Satir Network is an international educational organization whose individual members are committed to supporting, connecting, and empowering people and organizations to achieve their full potential.

The Satir Institute of the Pacific Northwest is an affiliate of the Avanta Network. We provide much of the local activities with a similar mission Avanta has. Membership is open to our members.

Suicide Prevention Task Force

The Satir Institute of the Pacific Northwest is establishing a task force on suicide prevention. It will be under the co-chairmanship of John Banmen and Jim Smith.

The first meeting is scheduled for September 23, 1999, at 7 p.m.

If you are interested in attending the first meeting and, possibly becoming a member of the task force, please call Kathlyne Maki-Banmen at 604.591.9269.



Experiencing Satir’s Systemic (Brief) Therapy Training continued...

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transformational shifts. The iceberg is a metaphor for the differing levels of experience that a therapist continually moves through with a client. Similarly, John clarified how he “uses the stances,” not as labels to teach the clients, but rather as an assessment tool for the therapist to work with.

Those of us who trained with John in Winnipeg in 1997 will remember how he taught us about entering the client’s world “where they are at home”: the placater in their feelings, the blamer in expectations, the super-reasonable in perceptions, and with the irrelevant, to recognize that they are not at home and to find some way to help them become grounded. Some ways may be through body work, through nonverbal methods such as art, through the use of humour, or other safe ways to bring them back to the moment. “Where the client lives is not necessarily where you do the healing,” said John Banmen.

We explore with a client not the content of their story, but the *impact* (feelings, perceptions, expectations, yearnings and experience of Self) that the story, the event, or the trauma continues to have for them. Hence we are free to work with them toward what Banmen calls the four metagoals of therapy: self-esteem, congruence, choice making and responsibility. These goals are achieved as we help clients make shifts in the impact, so that a trauma, for example, is “moved into the memory box.” Behavioural changes also follow from transformations in the impact.

**Congruence with the Self:**

During the training experience I was affirmed and challenged in my

goals to be increasingly congruent personally and professionally. My understanding of the concept of congruence has broadened theoretically and experientially. I used to think congruence essentially meant matching one’s external communication with one’s inside experience (feelings, thoughts, wants etc.). Now I recognize congruence is harmony between all one’s internal parts, so that the flow of Life Energy is not blocked. Hence, congruence is more than a congruence with myself. It is congruence with the Universal Life Energy. (Sounds reminiscent of Buddhism, or the 16th century Christian mystical teaching of aligning one’s will with the Divine Will.)

**Unmet Expectations:**

One issue that I continue to grapple with on a daily basis is a deeper understanding and increased effectiveness in working with unmet expectations. A premise of the Satir Model’s change theory is that there is an innate drive in us that is moving toward something whole. The stuff that most frequently gets in the way of that drive toward growth is an unmet or unfulfilled expectation, i.e. we hold onto something that we would like, but haven’t received.

Very often we are “living in the feeling” of an unmet expectation. We live in a feeling of anger, a feeling of hurt, a feeling of disappointment, or a feeling of sadness and depression. Working with these expectations is where healing can take place. The process of working with unmet expectations involves recognizing choice and owning responsibility. Having recognized the unmet expectation and the cost of holding onto it, the person

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## Experiencing Satir's Systemic (Brief) Therapy Training continued...

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has a choice: 1) to continue to hold onto the expectation and reduce the cost, the *impact*, of doing so; 2) to let go and grieve the loss and change that comes with accepting that s/he will no longer look for something that is clearly not available there; 3) or to find alternative ways to met the yearning (need) that the expectation represents. This final alternative is like going shopping in another store for this need/yearning and also discovering internally how to meet this need by connecting with the Self.

John demonstrated several times how healing comes, when the person is ready, in juxtaposing the pain with an experience of seeing or feeling something new. After acknowledging the pain - having an awareness and reaching the point of acceptance and ownership for holding that pain - the person is invited to appreciate something else.

The process of identifying a positive juxtaposition to the pain of the wound of the unmet expectation, makes it possible for the person to meet a basic human need or yearning. For example, the person who carries the pain of being verbally attacked, misunderstood and not taken seriously my juxtapose their willingness and courage in the present moment to be taking responsibility for continuing to resent and fear this sort of attack.

When they *experience* their own courage in the face of this fear, they can experience a positive appreciation of themselves at the same time as this fear and pain. Experiencing this positive appreciation of themselves can make it possible to meet the deep yearning (need) to be loved and accepted and taken seriously. The person is then in a position to experience their personal power and to heal this unmet need in the present, instead of attempting to go to the past to try and meet it, or to try and meet it with individuals in the present who remind them of those in the past who have let them down.

Healing this need in the present may involve getting this need met in current relationships that are able to do so, and ultimately to meet this need intrapsychically as well (loving, accepting and taking themselves seriously).

John made a significant distinction in the difference between wants and needs: yearnings are the basic human needs to be loved, accepted, validated etc. These are not simply wants, they are universal human needs. (How often I find it difficult for people to accept that longing for these things is a necessary part of being human!) The problem comes, however, when these needs become person or place specific: they become wants or expectations that a person believes must be met only in some specific way. Owning responsibility for seeking fulfillment of these needs from a person or place where they are not available opens the door for making change.

### **Family Therapy Field:**

I am faced with the reality that in the broader field of family therapy, the Satir Model is frequently overlooked or minimized. At a recent professional development event in Winnipeg, the presenter gave an excellent historical overview of the models of family therapy. Satir was quickly brushed over as someone who believed in giving lots of hugs. I recognize that this attitude is not unique. A new family therapy textbook (Goldenberg & Goldenberg,) suggests

that Satir did lose credibility in the Family Therapy Field when she broke with Minuchin, promoting love as the basic ingredient for therapy. This same book suggests that there is an incompatibility between experiential therapies, such as the Satir and the constructivist approaches such as Narrative Therapy.

I would propose that this is a limited and outdated view that sees experiential therapies as exclusively promoting emotional experience over rational thought. Banmen's model of Satir's Systemic (Brief) Therapy integrates the emotional, rational, physical and spiritual in such a way that the experiential nature of therapy is not working with emotion at the exclusion or negation of any other parts. I believe this model deserves a higher profile and I intend to explore efforts to raise it!

The experience of the week long training has deepened my ability to work experientially, moving between the different levels of clients' internal experience and anchoring shifts at the different levels as well. Participating as a guide and peer I discovered new levels or competence and experiential self-esteem. Participating as a peer and client, with my set of unmet expectations, I discovered transformational shifts.

My deepest thanks and love goes to John and Kathylyne and all the participants from Canada, U.S., Taiwan and Singapore! I have made deep connections with new colleagues and friends and my effectiveness as a therapist, congruence as a person, and connection with the Life Force have been enhanced. Thank-you also to the Paul and Maria Gomori Scholarship Fund and to Avanta!

### References:

Goldenberg, I. & Goldenberg, H., (2000). *Family therapy: an overview*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

## Satir and Burnout

Deborah M. Fish would like to thank everyone who kindly assisted her by completing a questionnaire for her self-directed study earlier this year. She obtained distinctions for her work on *Integrating psychology and spirituality in therapeutic practice*.

For her master's degree, Deborah is now developing the area further by researching a psycho-spiritual approach to burnout, in particular *Satir and Burnout*. She would welcome any thoughts or comments you might have on the topic. She is also seeking individuals who have had a personal experience of burnout, and preferably who are familiar with the Satir Model, in order to visit them for an interview during Jan. or Feb. 2000.

If you can help in any way, please contact Deborah in Vancouver at 604.737.7563 or by email at: deb\_m\_fish@hotmail.com. Deborah is away traveling during Nov. & Dec., so any voicemail messages will be returned when she is back in Vancouver.