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Original Article

# Spirituality-Based Analysis of Satir Family Therapy

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## Abstract

Spirituality is used in family therapy as well as in individual therapy. Satir's family therapy, which is included under experiential family therapy, began integrating spirituality after the 1980s by using spirituality to enhance congruence, which is the therapeutic aim of Satir's model. While studies on the therapeutic use of spirituality in Turkey have only recently begun, studies on the use of spirituality in family therapy have yet to be encountered. Because spirituality strongly influences all family functions and individuals' mental health, studies need to be performed on this subject. The purpose of this study is to examine the literature on the spiritual orientation of Satir's family therapy. For this purpose, Satir's spiritual approach is first explained, then the relationship between spiritual orientation and Satir family therapy is emphasized. This is followed by an explanation of the orientation using the iceberg metaphor and the self-mandala, finishing with examples of techniques used in therapy that have spiritual content.

## Keywords

Spirituality • Spiritual counseling • Satir family therapy • Spiritually-oriented therapy

## Satir Aile Terapisi'nin Manevi Temelli İncelemesi

### Öz

Maneviyat, bireysel terapilerde kullanıldığı gibi aile terapilerinde de yer almaya başlamıştır. Yaşantısal Aile Terapisi içerisinde yer alan Satir Aile Terapisi de 1980'lerden sonra maneviyatı terapiye entegre etmeye başlamıştır. Bu entegrasyon, maneviyatın, terapidde Satir modelinin amacı olan 'uyum'u arttırmak için kullanılması ile gerçekleşmiştir. Ülkemizde maneviyatın terapidde kullanımı ile ilgili çalışmaların çok yakın bir zamanda başladığı görülürken maneviyatın aile terapisinde kullanımı ile ilgili çalışmalara ise hiç rastlanmamıştır. Maneviyat, ailelerin tüm fonksiyonlarını ve bireylerin zihinsel sağlığını güçlü bir biçimde etkilediğinden konuyla ilgili yapılacak çalışmalara ihtiyaç vardır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Satir Aile Terapisi'ndeki manevi yönelim hakkındaki literatürü incelemektir. Bu amaçla, öncelikle Satir'in maneviyat yaklaşımı anlatılmış, ardından manevi yönelim ve Satir Aile Terapisi arasındaki bağlantı üzerinde durulmuş ve bu yönelim 'buzdağı metaforu' ve 'benlik mandalası' üzerinden açıklanmış ve en sonunda terapidde kullanılan manevi içerikli teknikler de konuyla ilgili araştırma ve uygulama örnekleri ile beraber incelenmiştir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Maneviyat • Manevi danışmanlık • Satir aile terapisi • Manevi yönelimli terapi

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The basis of family therapies being considered as a family system dates back to the 1950s. The major family therapies are: psychoanalytical, structural, experiential, strategic, cognitive-behavioral, solution-focused, and narrative. Satir's family therapy, which has made important contributions, is included under experiential family therapy. With its theoretical basis in existentialism, the fundamental issues of experiential family therapy are family's self-realization tendencies, emotions, patterns of communication, self-esteem, and the here and now. These topics are addressed through techniques such as family portraits, family life chronology, communication stances, and family reconstruction (Gladding, 2002; Nystul, 1993).

The family unit is at the center of most religious systems. The great religions of the world, such as Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism, attach particular importance to family life. This is because spirituality strongly affects all family functions and individuals' mental health (Griffith & Rotter, 1999). Spirituality is an important activity for creating meaning wherein individuals are generally concerned with the purpose and value of human life, especially their own (Cook & Kelly, 1998). According to Worthington and Aten (2009), spirituality is divided into four parts. The first is religious spirituality, which is known as the feeling of sanctity and affinity defined by a particular religion. Second is the sense of loyalty to humanity, a humanistic spirituality characterized by its proximity to a broader group of people or the ability to care for these people. The third is natural spirituality, which is defined as the sense of amazement at one's beautiful natural scenery and the sense of being connected to nature. The fourth is cosmos spirituality, which manifests as a feeling associated with creation, just as when one thinks about the boundaries of the universe.

Family therapy has recently become spiritually oriented. Prior family therapists have resisted discussing spiritual experiences in their work in order to avoid any conflict with religious counseling and spirituality, which are neglected within the positivist social science paradigm (Bentheim, 2005). If the use of spirituality in family therapy is to be evaluated as a historical process, the first wave (1990-1994) discussed the need to integrate spirituality into family therapy; the second wave (1995-1999) discussed the harm this integration may cause during therapy; the third wave (since 2000) has formed debates on how this integration can work (Helmeke & Bischof, 2007).

As the debate on how to integrate spirituality into family therapy continues, the points spiritually oriented family therapists share are: the role that couples expect sexually from each other in marriage, how to forgive a partner who has made a mistake, how to deal with parenting, and who will provide care for elderly parents. Couples' religious beliefs in particular directly affect these issues, and conflicts arise if couples have different spiritual devotions or faiths. Therapists need to understand

the relativistic effect of their religious beliefs, as each couple who comes to therapy comes with a unique story. Family therapists can produce their own perceptive and behavioral alternatives when a couple enters a dialogue that resonates with their spirituality. When therapeutic methods are consistent with the couple's tradition of beliefs, the therapy environment becomes more familiar and acceptable to them, which yields more positive results (Duba & Watts, 2009).

The aim of Satir's family therapy, which works with families and individuals, is to enhance congruence in the human self and use spirituality as a means to enhance this congruence. According to Woods and Martin (1984), the spiritual orientation of Satir's family therapy, whose philosophical foundation consists of existentialism, gestalt, and humanism, seems closer to humanistic and cosmic spirituality than the spiritual genres described by (Worthington & Aten 2009; Satir, 1988).

Evaluations in the literature outside of Turkey have validated the use of spirituality in family therapy. Because Turkey has had no studies on the use of spirituality in family therapy yet, this study on the spiritual orientation of Satir's family therapy is expected to exemplify the use of spirituality in family therapy for practitioners and researchers in Turkey. For this purpose, Satir's spiritual approach is explained first, followed by emphasis on the relationship between spiritual orientation and Satir's family therapy, with this orientation being explained through the iceberg metaphor and the self-mandala. It finishes with the spiritual content techniques that have been used in therapies.

### **Satir's Spiritual Approach**

Virginia Satir (1916-1988) is one of the leading names in the family therapy movement (Haber, 2002). Born in Wisconsin in the US, Satir graduated from Chicago University with a master's degree in social studies in 1948. In 1951, she had her first family-therapy case. Her success with this case made her believe in the effectiveness of family therapy. In 1964, she published her first book, *Conjoint Family Therapy*. Satir, even in the years following her death, has seen this book stamped as a communicational approach to family therapy. The third edition of the book is still used in classical texts in the field of family therapy (Satir, 1988).

Satir began to integrate spirituality and therapy widely in family therapy after the 1980s. Satir wrote *People making* in 1972 and rewrote it as *The New People making* in 1988, shortly before her death, adding some chapters (i.e., "Human Spirituality" and "World Peace"). Believing man to be a life force coming from all living things, Satir put no name to this life force from which human existence is based, nor did she limit it to any religious tradition. Satir, using a universal spiritual approach, put forth the following arguments on spirituality in the *The New Peoplemaking*:



- i. We are all part of a universal tree that connects people at the roots.
- ii. Spirituality is our connection with the universe and a fundamental element of our existence; therefore it needs to be included in this therapeutic context.
- iii. The growth of plants and animals is the way life becomes energized, a manifestation of the soul manifesting itself.
- iv. The creation of life comes from a much greater force than itself. The challenge of becoming a more complete person is to be open and connected to its many names. This is often called God. A successful life depends on our relationship with this power.
- v. Crushing the soul, freezing the body and the mind.
- vi. The individual is a reflection of the ethical and moral ideals of one's spiritual character.
- vii. The essence of spirituality has us realize we are spiritual beings in human form. It shows how we practice our spiritual self and how we value life.
- viii. Thanks to our intuition, we are connected to universal consciousness. These intuitions can be developed with meditation, worship, relaxation techniques, awareness, high self-esteem, and respect for life. This is a spiritual approach (Satir, 1988).

According to Satir's understanding, physical dependence on spirituality is perfectly hidden in the human seed. When the sperm and egg are combined, the seed is completed and a human is created. Eggs and sperm are the reservoirs waiting to meet wonderfully when they are in their own right. Essentially, seeds and birth are a spiritual phenomenon. When the eggs and sperm are combined, a fantastic event takes place. Strong energy is released and a new person begins to move towards this world. This person is a unique, non-replicated, unprecedented person. It is very difficult to imagine how this tiny embryo can become a large, complex, and multilateral living being. Moreover, this tiny seed has all the internal systems that make a living, breathing human. Life force not only ensures that seeds develop, but also provides the energies required by each segment (Satir, 1988).

Satir believes that the human soul can be changed. The human spirit, which is basically non-malicious, breaks its connection with the power of life because of the repressions, alienations, and obstacles it faces. Transformation is described as the journey to find this connection again. This profound and constructive change affects all life and helps individuals become more open to themselves, to others, to the world, and to the spiritual dimension of life (Mook, 1997).

Satir emphasized that no one except those who listen to religion speaks of spirituality; even some of them see such spirituality as absolute purity or lack of

clarity. However, this issue is related to the universe, which is the basis of existence and, therefore, directly related to family therapy (Satir, 1988).

Satir, who pursued experimental spirituality in research on family therapy and counselors, has similarities and differences with Ken Wilber, the pioneer of intellectual psychology who integrated spirituality with therapy. While both agree on the divine conception of birth and the difficulties of being socially constrained, Satir thinks that with a more optimistic view, everyone can have a deeper spiritual connection with a positive path. Wilber presented the brilliant integral theory to connect both psychological and spiritual developmental stages in an evolutionary model of human development. However, this model visibly lacks a psychotherapeutic model for healthy relationships, such as group or family therapy, or family and group leadership in spiritual practices. Wilber advocates the necessity of establishing a connection with God (i.e., surrender) to completely extinguish the self. Satir, on the positive side, used a concept of self for herself and others, both universal and spiritual, as well as for humanity (Bentheim, 2009).

Satir's understanding of spirituality resembles Paul Tillich's view. The religious quest of the human is seen as a life based on increased harmony and flow among three fundamental relationships: the self, the other, and the soul (or divine being). The search for religion in Tillich's view is not only spiritual, nor is it only material and historical; it is personal, historical, and spiritual, just as is Satir's view of the quest of the human. Religiosity is a multi-dimensional search aimed at transforming the individual, interpersonal, and spiritual dimensions into interactive and interconnected unity. In Satir's model, harmony is a spiritual process of re-humanization by reconnecting with others, one's own roots and others', and the spiritual essence of nature (Lee, 2001).

The basic spirituality-oriented approach deals with the relationship between a person and God. Satir's family therapy model is thought to be able to shed light on this spiritual orientation. Rather than engage in pathology, sickness, or pain, Satir focuses on healthy living and growth. In the final years of her life, Satir went one step further to address the spiritual dimension of therapeutic intervention and enabled spiritual leaders to discover more possibilities for integration. The therapy model can be perceived as a spiritual model servicing mental health when considering Satir's belief in life force and the mysterious existence of human life (Tam, 2006).

### **Satir Family Therapy and Spiritual Orientation**

Satir family therapy is based on existentialism, gestalt, and humanism. Key concepts in the therapy process come from: the acceptance of Carl Rogers and his sincerity, powerful here and now techniques that resemble Fritz Perls', and Satir's observational genius, and humane, peaceful approach (Woods & Martin, 1984).



The first encounter a therapist has with a family seeking help is very important in Satir family therapy. Satir described the therapist's first meeting with the family members as "souls meeting with souls". This explains the need to be defenseless in order to create a trusting environment, and the emergence of an energy source to use self-reliance (Hyde, 1988). The therapy process consists of five steps (Carlson et al., 1997):

- i. First, an environment of trust is established with the family. An evaluation process plan is developed to ensure the family's confidence. This is called "link building."
- ii. In the second stage, family members improve their awareness towards the experience. The therapist helps to develop a new awareness of family functions with specific questions or specific techniques. This is called confusion.
- iii. New insights are developed in family members to increase awareness of family dynamics.
- iv. In therapy sessions, new insights are developed toward different behaviors; these are expressed and explained.
- v. Finally, family members are encouraged to use new behaviors outside the therapeutic environment. This is called integration.

The therapy process finishes at the time when: a) self-esteem in each family member is high, not low; b) communication in the family is direct, clear, specific, and honest instead of vague or dishonest; c) family rules are flexible, humane, appropriate, and open to change, not rigid, nonnegotiable, or permanent; d) the family relates to other people and institutions outside of the family when and as they choose, openly and hopefully, not with fear, blame, or placations. At this point the therapeutic goals have been achieved (Mook, 1997).

Two important concepts in Satir's family therapy model are the iceberg metaphor and the self-mandala. As these explain the spiritual orientation of the human being, they are explained in detail below.

**The iceberg metaphor and its spiritual orientation.** The multi-layered metaphor of how human beings in Satir's model work contains the spiritual direction of the model. Spiritually oriented therapists may find this metaphor useful in discovering the meaning of spiritual experience. Satir uses an iceberg metaphor to capture many aspects of humanity. Satir tells that, like icebergs, individuals show only part of themselves, and that most experiences lie beneath the surface. To know one's true self, one must enter the sub-conscious and go through many hidden parts.

Satir's metaphor of the iceberg for the self is portrayed as a seven-stage sense of self that provides access to the spiritual world and includes the concepts of: self, yearnings, expectations, perceptions and beliefs, feelings, feelings about feelings, and communication stances (Satir, Banmen, Gerber, & Gomori, 1991).

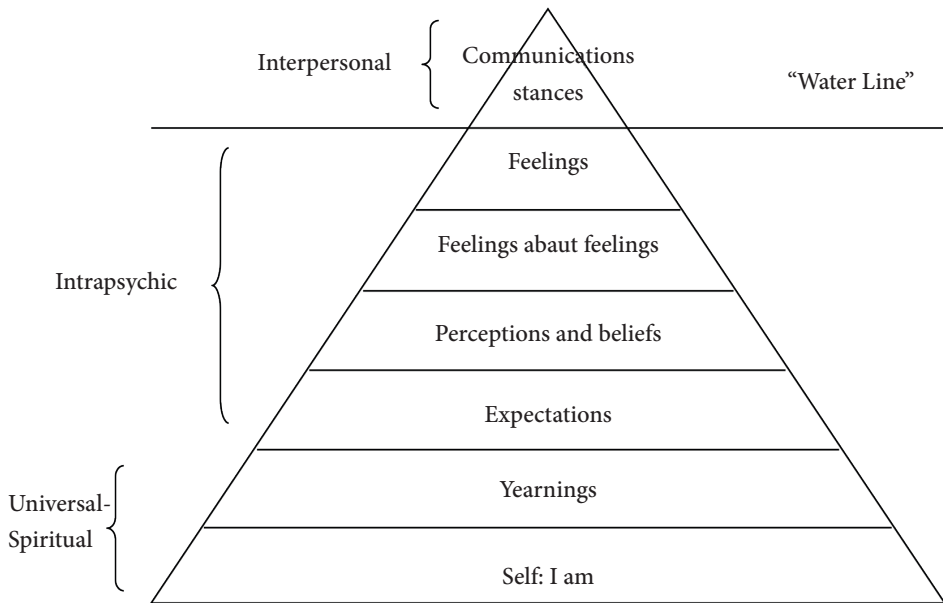


Figure 1. Iceberg: The three dimensions of Satir's model (Satir et al., 1991, as cited in Lee, 2002, p. 64).

The iceberg is Satir's main metaphor for showing the various layers that make up a human. In this metaphor, a person is seen as a multi-dimensional system. A system is defined as a set of actions, reactions, and interactions between a set of basic variables that develop an order and sequence to produce a result. In other words, a system is a set of interacting dimensions and variables that yields more than the sum of its parts; change to a part or dimension is associated with change in other dimensions. Behavior and communication represent only the tip of the iceberg's whole of the multi-layered personality. Satir's iceberg consists of three dimensions: interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal spirituality. Being a system, these dimensions are linked in that a change in one element relates to changes in other elements. Congruence is the harmonious interaction of these important dimensions within a person (Satir et al., 1991).

**Interpersonal dimension.** The five communication stances that describe Satir's interpersonal dimension are the most familiar aspect of her model. Satir assumes that the three components of self, other, and context must be represented in order for compatible communication. The four stances of blame, placation, super reasonable, and irrelevant represent an imbalance of self, other, and context in communication.



These communication attitudes are also known as survival stances that children learn in their family systems for gaining love and acceptance. Blame protects one's self-worth at the expense of the other. Placation involves connecting one's self to the other. Super reasonable communication gives no attention to the self or other; it only notices that bindings exist. Irrelevant communication relinquishes the self and other from context. Consistent communication (or straight communication) reflects a match between verbal and non-verbal messages (a congruence of words, emotion, and meaning). Congruence is a conscious-level preference based on the acceptance of self, other, and context (Satir, 1988; Satir et al., 1991).

***Intrapsychic dimension.*** This dimension is an array comprised of internal events and communication behaviors. According to Satir, these inner events include feelings, feelings about feelings, perceptions and beliefs, and expectations. Satir's model is a complementary model that transforms multiple internal variables, such as the perceptions and beliefs, feelings, feelings about feelings, and expectations that impede a person's flow of life energy, and removes these obstacles. Perceptions, feelings, and unmet expectations from the past turn into an awareness that is experientially processed, and new choices are made. When a new perception, feeling, or expectation is added, a new pattern of dominance emerges that allows for greater compromise (Satir et al., 1991). For example, a father who feels reasonable towards his son's excessively high expectations may feel warmer and closer to him. This affects their communication and the son's behavior. Thus, a change in expectations can change feelings and perceptions in the intrapsychic dimension, thus causing a change in the interpersonal dimension (Lee, 2002).

***Universal-spiritual dimension.*** The last two layers of the iceberg (yearnings and what Satir calls the self) constitute the person's universal-spiritual dimension. Yearnings include aspirations that need to be valued and approved. They are universal for humans and reflect basic human needs and desires. To agree with one's aspirations is to acknowledge and approve one's humanity. According to Satir, universality for humans is at the same time a dynamic spiritual connection that she calls the universal life force. When Satir's ideas on spirituality increased in the 1980s, she described congruence as one's own life energy, spirituality, or harmony with God (Banmen & Banmen, 1991; Satir et al., 1991).

***Congruence.*** Congruence is a phenomenon that the three dimensions described above can either facilitate or inhibit. In other words, the interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual dimensions interact. In order to move a system to a higher degree of rest, Satir's therapeutic interventions aim at deep structural change in the sub-dimensions, rather than just changing the surface behaviors of these three dimensions. This involves changing expectations, perceptions, feelings, and acceptance of one's



desires, and reconnecting one's life force or energy. The intent of Satir's model is to integrate elements from the interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual dimensions into a harmonious relationship. In the model, spirituality is used as a means to enhance congruence. The developmental stages of the adaptive structure progressed as follows (Satir et al., 1991):

1. In the 1950s, congruence was about raising awareness and acceptance of emotions and non-reactionary behavior.
2. In the 1960s, congruence was regarded as the integrity, inner-centeredness, and self-acceptance corresponding to high self-esteem.
3. In the 1980s, Satir began to speak more openly of the third level of harmony associated with the field of spirituality and universality in connection with the universal life force' that promotes and creates development in humans and other living things.

Therapists study congruence through personal experience. For example, Wong and Ng (2008) used mixed methods to study the phenomenological world of Satir-oriented Chinese therapists in Singapore in terms of their adaptation experiences. The therapists investigated their own inner-life world of experience, how this harmony is used in psychotherapy, and how therapists can heal it. As a result, a significant relationship was found to exist for general congruence with interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual congruence.

Lee's (2002) study on the use of the iceberg metaphor to measure compliance has been well-noted by practitioners and researchers. Lee developed the Congruence Scale based on the construct of harmonization, which is the aimed-for therapeutic change in Satir's model. Harmonization conceptualizes interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual in three human dimensions: connection, awareness, and openness. Twenty-three of the scale's items cover universal spirituality, some of which are reverse-scored. Examples of these items include the following: My spirituality is connected to the spirit of God or the universe (Item 7). I have a relationship with God (Item 27). I am grateful to be a part of the mystery of the Spirit of Life/Spirit/God (Item 35). I have a positive image of God (Item 43). I am a unique manifestation of God (Item 54).

Ko and Kim (2010) found the Congruence Scale as developed by Lee (2002) who had based it on Satir's development model to be inadequate; they rearranged and improved it. Accordingly, the final form of the scale measures congruence and consists of three dimensions (interpersonal, intrapsychic, and spiritual).



**The self-mandala and its dimensions.** Satir also used a mandala of eight parts covering health to represent the self. These dimensions are not independent of each other; on the contrary, they interact with each other. The segments that correspond to dimensions are explained in terms of the substance and context of Satir's views (see Figure 2; Satir, 1988, 2008).

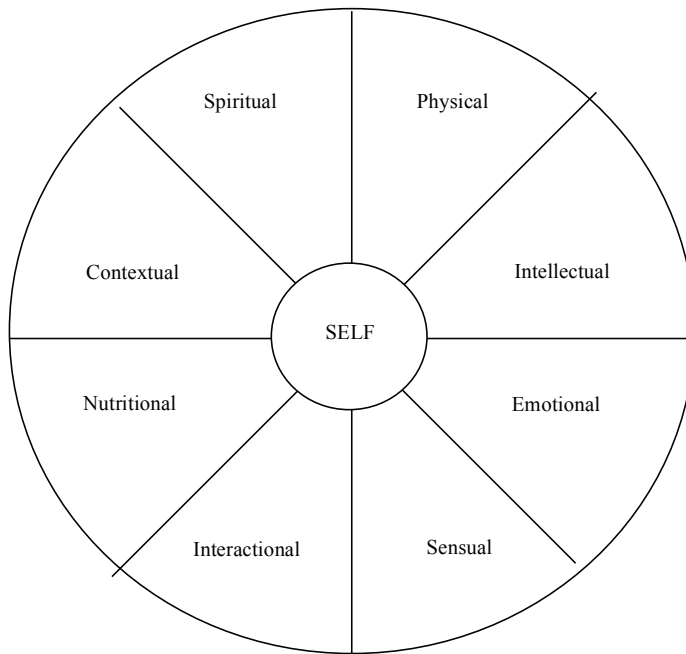


Figure 2. The self-mandala (Satir, 2008, as cited in Pidocke, 2010, p. 139).

***Spiritual.*** This dimension includes the person's relationship with the meaning of life, spirit, spirituality, and life force. In accordance with Satir's spiritual approach, no one has ever created life. Parents do not create life. They only activate life by introducing sperm to the egg, which is a life carrier. What everyone has to face is the existence of a life force that emanates from all living things, and no one plays an active role in creation. This power's name is beyond knowing; it is the foundation of existence. Inevitably, problems arise when conflict, absence, or disorder occur in the individual's spiritual dimension.

***Physical.*** This dimension is about the body. The body is a miracle. Who can imagine something like a body and then make it? The idea of loving, appreciating, understanding, and communicating with one's body is just a beginning. Hating, ignoring, or upsetting the body's form can cause different expressions of disturbances and disorders to occur that affect the body, emotions, thoughts, and actions.

**Intellectual.** The left brain covers ideas and events. Our intellect is mostly left brain-based logic center. Its main roles are to make conclusions, produce rules, and accept beliefs scientifically. This is a great tool for handling factual data. When the intellect accepts virtue as an equal partner, it can create all kinds of excitement, discovery, and curiosity for the proprietor. The right brain has always been in the background of science, medicine, and technology. The power of the right brain is deceptive only in the arts. In general, women's left brain functions have been rejected, as if the left brain is unique to men. This has led to many discomforts in male-female relationships.

**Emotional.** The right brain contains feelings and intuitions. The right brain is where one monitors emotions and expresses feelings. Emotions are a means by which life events are experienced; they give life color, texture, and tone. In order to be accepted, people ignore, deny, and distort their feelings in this area. This in turn disturbs people's perceptions and prevents creativity and competence. Emotions are energy. If they are not accepted as is, they take another form. When emotions are rejected, not only does the energy disappear, but disorders also occur such as physical illness, mental confusion, and nervousness.

**Sensory.** Senses include the concepts of hearing (ears), seeing (eyes), smelling (nose), tasting (mouth), and touching (skin); sensations; feeling; and motion. Bodies have great sensory channels. Some people's channels do not work very well because of sense-organ disorders. Sensory channels become dulled by being advised at an early age to "Don't look!", "Don't touch!", and "Don't listen!" As a result, our sensory tools only partially function. In this case, situations and people are not perceived as they are in reality. Instead, sense organs acknowledge how something should be, was, or should have been. This obviously leads to imbalances.

**Interactional.** This dimension covers self-communication and communication between the self and others. Every human is born from two people. This perhaps explains the innate need to establish contact with others. Babies have no way of surviving alone and depend on others for survival. Moreover, they need more than just physical care. Everyone has needs, such as being looked after, loved, and respected by others. This creates an enormous burden on ties with others. Disturbances, imbalances, and conflicts with others, especially with family members, have devastating effects on individuals.

**Nutritional.** This dimension covers the liquids and solids that provide sustenance. The things a body consumes have an effect, and doctors have always recommended special diets for the sick. Special foods or drinks can help a sick body heal. Good nutrition can affect not only the body but also the mind and emotions. Normal and healthy people can be seen to pay better attention to their nutrition.



**Contextual.** This dimension includes colors, sounds, light, air, heat, shapes, movements, space, and time. Because each individual always exists within a context, the light, color, sound, movement, temperature, shape, space, and time of that context have an effect. Contexts that are very cold, hot, boring, fast, crowded, isolated, late, early, quiet, or noisy affect the individual. For example, people now have more hearing weaknesses than before because of being faced with more noise. Also, while some colors promote congruence, others can cause incongruence. Angles and shapes of buildings also have an effect.

**Self in the Spiritual Dimension/Universal Realm.** According to Satir, whether one agrees or not, all people are connected to each other as life manifestations. Humans are represented by the universal existence of sperm and egg and are supported by cosmic spirituality. Similarly, all nations are in contact. The relationships among the nations take the form of a gigantic network through daily fluctuations and the constant energy of five billion souls. The quality of this energy affects the health of the planet, just as the quality of blood and oxygen affects a person's health (Satir, 1988). Satir's views on the spiritual dimension and self-relating are as follows:

As I have been evolving, I have had experiences that tell me that there exists something that could be called the life-force or universal mind. I know that there are many dimensions in this force that are powerful formers of human behavior. It seems to me a little like the presence of electricity. It was always there, yet it waited for someone to identify it, then learn ways to use it for beneficial purposes. This probably could be referred to as psychic power, something all of us have experienced as atmosphere. There are already some ideas that each body is like an individual electrical generating unit. Our energy creator, and the amount and use of its own electrical power, is controlled mainly by belief and feelings of self-worth. I know that when I am in a state of low self-esteem my energy is low and frequently misdirected—mostly against myself. For me, these experiences provide a very fruitful direction in which to go (Satir, 2008, p. 57).

### **Satir's Family Therapy Techniques and Their Spiritual Orientations**

The techniques used in Satir's family therapy are family life chronology, family reconstruction, family maps, family choreography, family sculpture, family portrait, wheel of influence, multiple families counseling, intuitive and spontaneous movement, touch, intense emotional environment creation, play therapy, art therapy, metaphor, pantomime, role playing, contact attitudes, "I" language, humor, meditation, awareness studies (imagination, breathing exercises, relaxation techniques), the iceberg metaphor, and the self-mandala (Gladding, 2002; Nazli, 2011; Nichols, 2013; Satir, 1988). The techniques of meditation, awareness studies, the iceberg metaphor, and the self-mandala use spirituality as a means of therapy to increase family and individual congruence (Satir, 1988). Below is a description of these spiritual techniques and examples of practice and research in which these techniques are used.

**Meditation.** Satir used metaphors to allow people to follow a different perspective in their inner lives and external preferences; this has also caused change. By meditating at the beginning of training workshops conducted with families and individuals, Satir has thus enabled therapists to easily access their own internal resources. Here is an example of a meditation kit for improving self-esteem as used by Satir in therapy:

The next thing in the kit is a wisdom box. The wisdom box is part of your heritage; it's part of what you came into the world with. For me, I have located it going into my navel two inches and going up toward my heart. Halfway between I find the wisdom box. This wisdom box is in contact with all the wisdom of the universe, all the wisdom of the past, and all that resides within you. It is that part which you sense sometimes giving direction, sometimes called the small still voice. It is that part deep inside that knows and tries to give directions. Like a thought or a feeling, you will not find it on the surgery table. You won't find the wisdom box there, but I don't question the presence of a wisdom box. It is that part of us, when we are cleared of all our defenses and all our fears, in which we can hear the stirrings of our growth and our wisdom. Perhaps our greatest job in life is to remove all that stands between ourselves and our wisdom, and then to recognize that all human beings have a wisdom box. It needs only to be tapped (Nesbitt, 2010, p. 160).

**Awareness studies (imagination, breathing exercises, relaxation techniques).** According to Satir (1988), one can categorize behaviors according to moral and ethical ideals, and unconditionally to our souls. This subject is one of the most important issues of the era. Satir's spirituality is in following the life-force itself in all living things. Here is a focus on Satir's practice in therapies aimed at deepening the spiritual world. This basic exercise of relaxation, breathing, and imagination involves visualizing the energy vertically descending from the sky to meet an energy rising from the earth and then radiating this energy horizontally to all people:

Sit in a chair so your feet can touch. Close your eyes and concentrate on your breath. Now silently go inside and give yourself a message of appreciation that might sound something like this: "I appreciate me." This is to give your spirit strength from your actions. Next, visualize yourself affirming your connection with your creator. Now go deeper inside and locate the place where you keep the treasure known by your name. As you approach this sacred place, notice your resources: your ability to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell; to feel and to think; to move and to speak and to choose... Remember that you have a connection with energy from the heavens, which brings you your intuition, imagination, and inspiration; and the energy from other human beings who are ready to be with you and have you with them. Remind yourself to be free to look at and listen to everything, but to choose only that which fits you. Then you can clearly say yes to those things that fit you and no to the things that don't. You will then be able to do positive things for yourself and others instead of negative things such as fighting. Now again, give yourself permission to breathe (Satir, 1988, p. 339).

Satir believes that humans have a link to achieve universal intelligence and wisdom through, meditation, prayer, relaxation, awareness, self-esteem, and respect for life. There are successful examples of research in the field of meditation and awareness studies.



Dawson (2008), a pediatric therapist for mothers of children who had died from serious illness, conducted a survey to gather a spiritual resource that provides hope and healing for these parents. The research used the pre-test/posttest method. Preliminary observations were collected by visiting the children's hospital. Parents said in the pre-test that they had low spirituality and that it had been the worst time of their lives. The results showed the source of hope and healing to be a successful intervention in alleviating the losses that parents had experienced when their child was severely ill. The presence of God brings hope and comfort to mourning parents. Hope and healing are developed through prayers, poems, and meditations. This resource respects different beliefs and acts through the parents' own religious belief system. The hospital where the research was conducted has religious traditions that represent Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism. The psychological basis of hope and healing is founded on Satir's views on spirituality as a life force, Bowlby's attachment theory, and Bowen's family system theory (Dawson, 2008).

Ruhl's (2013) qualitative study of the experiences of patients in family groups using spiritual content techniques such as meditation and awareness studies revealed ideas to better understand patients' recovery experiences and raise awareness of self, others, and relationships with the world. These healing experiences are physical, emotional, and connective experiences, as well as changes in the perception and understanding of relationships and self-improvement. In these themes, clinicians are considered to learn about the essence of psychological distress and the effect of the family system on the individual.

**Iceberg metaphor.** The iceberg metaphor, an important concept of Satir's model, is a technique often used in therapy. In this technique, the advisor's own iceberg metaphors are examined, descriptions made, and imbalances that prevent adaptation detected and eliminated. The iceberg metaphor consists of three dimensions: interpersonal, intrapsychic, and universal-spiritual. The layers in the metaphor, which make up the layers of a person, interact. If a disturbance occurs in a person's universal-spiritual dimension in relation to God/life force, it manifests itself negatively in the other layers. Finally, the visible communication attitudes on the iceberg are also affected by this disturbance and turn into blame, placation, super-reasonability, or irrelevance. This is an individual's self-defense against their own incongruence (Satir et al., 1991).

When therapists have strong spiritual beliefs, they really understand the iceberg metaphor, which facilitates their spiritual moments with patients. In this situation, spiritual beliefs do not need to change; one's spiritual nature can support the healing process (Lum, 2008). Many applications and studies show examples of the iceberg metaphor providing healing.

Bentheim (2005) investigated the effect of spiritual pairing on adaptation to distinguish the therapeutic value of pairing in a number of religious contexts within the framework of Satir's model. This study examined the relationships of 14 adult participants (seven couples) who identified themselves with Catholicism, Judaism, the United Church of Christ, the Christian Science Church, and North American Tibetan Buddhism. The couples participated in unstructured interviews, which were then analyzed in terms of each couple's common narrative. At the end of analysis, interpretations were made contextually using Satir's Model, in particular the iceberg metaphor. These interpretations include: a) for each couple, the "I" and "the other" experienced great contextual difficulties in terms of being; b) this distinguished couples' common universal aspirations, and c) contextual differences for the self, other, and we. Feedback from the study showed that six couples underwent transformations and significant changes in their lives as a couple, and three pairs made significant changes in terms of religion. Satir's model was expanded to distinguish the universal aspirations in the study from the effect of being a couple in various contexts, in particular the double-mandala diagram.

Breen's (1996) study attempted to understand the mourning process in the family system using Satir's model. According to the study in terms of the iceberg metaphor, when a family member dies, the family system enters into chaos; during the chaos the family may resort to incongruent communication styles to cope with the loss. The distance of this chaotic period from the harmony the families had experienced is part of the mourning process. As a result, family therapists were observed to be able to work in ways that are appropriate for families experiencing chaos; they can advise families on how to integrate into a new adjustment process.

Carlock (2008) investigated heterosexuality and homophobia, the effects of being gay/lesbian on the development of subjectivity, and how to treat internalized homophobia, showing how the concepts and processes of Satir's model can be used to transform self-perception. Carlock presented a three-way treatment process that uses the iceberg metaphor:

1. Raise awareness of individuals' positive and negative core beliefs and values on gays and lesbians. Raise awareness about how gays and lesbians have personally dealt with this situation.
2. Process the positive and negative experiences about being gay or lesbian. Provide support for both internal and interpersonal resources.
3. Examine negative experiences about being gay or lesbian. Transform improper outcomes from these experiences.

Carlock's (2008) study has numerous short descriptions showing treatment concepts, as well as texts discussing how certain tools in Satir's model (iceberg,



family map, life chronology, sculpture, etc.) come together. Satir's model presents processes that can help homosexuals undertake an important role in building a healthy homosexual identity. Satir therapists provide homosexuals with the ability to look at themselves and ease their burden from cultural prejudices by alleviating their pain from internalized homophobia.

Daum and Wiebe (2003) examined the change and self-dimensions of university freshman students' control beliefs. Daum and Wiebe presented Satir's counseling theory on the iceberg metaphor as a comprehensive model for students' research and practices. Daum and Wiebe applied the Personal Meaning Profile, Academic Locus of Control, and Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ) to 116 participants. According to the results, students' definition of self can be influenced over time by religious and academic aspects because students' sense of religion and love is greater than the academic aspect of their lives.

Li and Vivian's (2013) study analyzed the possible negative effects in Chinese culture of being self-defeating, having high self-esteem, and mismatches when expressing feelings. Satir's model was then shown to help counselors be rid of their injured self by means of using the iceberg metaphor throughout the consultation process. This study contains an analysis of 20 consultation-session experiences in Beijing. With its therapeutic approach to power regulation and change, Satir's model has made Chinese consultants gain self-respect, take greater personal responsibility, make better choices, and enhance personal adaptability.

Lum, Smith, and Ferris (2002) conducted a study on the use of Satir's model to prevent youth suicide. Youth suicide is a very important social issue for families, therapists, and aid professionals. Their study effectively used the iceberg metaphor and presented a genuine story of the genetic component, discussing Satir's theoretical therapeutic model applied to the surviving members. Satir's model has innumerable uses for interventions such as encouraging the desire to live, ensuring that youths who try to commit suicide are dealt with humanely and hopefully and include more positivity in their lives. According to Satir, while having concentrated on communication attitudes in the past, the model now provides in-depth understanding of one's inner world using successful attitudes.

Srikosai (2008) addressed the concern about the desire and accompanying despair and depression that were affecting a patient's alcohol re-use in a study on an alcohol-dependent and depressed patient's treatment using Satir's model. Although the patient was a very productive writer, the patient felt alone coping with problems related to low self-esteem and alcohol consumption. Using the iceberg metaphor technique from Satir's model, the study aimed to identify the patient's internal experiences, understand coping attitudes, and adapt them to survival. It also aimed to develop a



family map and development graph, as well as increase life energy, positive thinking, and positive outcomes. As a result, the patient's inner world transformed. The patient became more capable of self-acceptance and felt more peace and tranquility, eventually becoming alcohol-free.

Sinkosai, Thapinta, Kittilattanapaiboon, and Piyavhatkul (2014) measured the drinking behaviors, habits, and self-esteem of 39 alcoholic women in Thanyarak Chiangmai Hospital in Thailand using the Alcohol Self Efficacy Measure of alcohol consumption, intensive alcohol consumption, and no alcohol consumption. The study had 18 participants in the experimental group and 21 in the control group. According to the results, the program for preventing alcohol addiction increased participants' self-esteem, self-sufficiency, and life satisfaction; they passed more days alcohol free, and the days spent drinking decreased compared to the control group. Statistically significant lower alcohol levels were found in the experimental group compared to the control group. The alcohol prevention program based on Satir's model improved the psychological health and prevented the recurrence of alcoholic episodes among these women.

**Self-mandala.** Another important concept in Satir's model is the self mandala and has also been frequently used in therapies. In this technique, the client's own self-mandala is created. This can be a verbal activity or a role play. The aim is to have the client become aware of the parts that make up the self and see what they can do to improve these dimensions. The self-mandala consists of eight dimensions that are thought to represent self. These dimensions are spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, sensual, interactional, nutritional, and contextual. Any imbalance seen in these dimensions impairs the self. For example, when there is conflict, a gap or impairment in the individual's spiritual dimension negatively affects self-perception, resulting in problems (Satir, 1988, 2008).

Satir says the therapist has certain specific responsibilities in therapy. One of these involves the therapist's belief system. Satir observed therapists' beliefs to be of interest to the spiritual dimension of treatment (Nestlerode, 1989). A therapist who allows clients to reflect their belief systems in a therapeutic setting can also use the spiritual dimension of self-censorship effectively. Therapists have been shown to use the self-mandala to accelerate the therapeutic treatment. Examples of practices and research exist that show healing can be achieved through self-engagement.

Caston's (2009) study on family caregivers investigated the self-supervisory skills of caregivers trained under Satir's model using the self-latch with 30 people in the experimental group and 30 in the control group. According to the study's first hypothesis, the experimental group will have higher self-esteem than the control group. According to the second hypothesis, the experimental group will have lower



burnout levels than the control group. As a result, the experimental group's family-career burnout levels were observed to decrease significantly after the training.

Yang's (2000) study on Chinese women looked at how 24 Taiwanese women experienced the educational program based on Satir's model and what they learned about themselves and the group process. The study was designed as an action research with participants presenting their diaries and providing verbal feedback in each session of the group process to adjust the program's development. Several key themes were identified by analyzing the diaries of the participants and researchers, the audio tapes of group activities, and the transcripts of the post-group interviews. The first theme comes from the reasons for self-growth being group interactions and personal commitment levels. The second key theme is that how one accepts being vulnerable in their original family can provide a turning point to create an impulse towards self-growth. In the third theme of the self-growth process, awareness and thinking were found to be critical factors. As a result, this internal transformation has changed participants' ways of thinking.

### Conclusion

After the 1980s, Satir's family therapy, which had begun integrating spirituality into family therapy with interest in humanistic and cosmic spirituality, used spirituality as a tool to enhance its aim of congruence. This context described the spiritual direction of self, especially through the iceberg metaphor and self-mandala. Psychological problems arise when a person lacks balance in their spiritual orientation. Satir's family therapy tackles these problems with a number of basic techniques: the techniques of spiritual content used in therapy, imagination, awareness studies consisting of breathing exercises and relaxation techniques, meditation, the iceberg metaphor, and the self-mandala. The goal of therapy is to provide harmony among the parts that form the self (Satir, 1988; 2001; 2008; Satir, et al., 1991).

Satir's family therapy has been applied to couples and families in addition to individuals, and has succeeded on many specific issues. While no studies are found in Turkey on the spiritual orientation of Satir's family therapy, numerous studies are found in the literature outside of Turkey. These studies contain the subjects of therapy sessions using spiritual-content therapeutic techniques on spiritual perceptions, homophobia, addictions, depression, suicide, mourning, and self-esteem in couples, family, and individual therapies (Bentheim, 2005; Breen, 1996; Carlock, 2008; Caston, 2009; Daum & Wiebe, 2003; Dawson, 2008; Li & Vivian, 2013; Lum et al., 2002; Ruhl, 2013; Srikosai, 2008; Srikosai, et al., 2014; Yang, 2000).

Spiritual beliefs are well-known to be related to mental and psychological health and play an important role in diagnosis, treatment, and general clinical efficacy.

Accordingly, spiritual diversity in couple and family therapies can accelerate the process of healing. Thickens (2012) investigated practices involving spiritual diversity in couples and family therapy training and found it to be ethically necessary to integrate a spiritually diverse curriculum into all couples and family therapy training programs.

Satir's family therapy can be examined in terms of its spiritual diversity. Experimentally, Satir's methods can be tested using larger and more varied samples using stronger methodology. To investigate all aspects of Satir's family therapy requires deeper examination. For example, according to the results from Wretman's (2016) study, which was based on Satir's basic therapeutic methods for working with families and used empirical evidence to support the use of these methods, Satir's model needs to be further improved and systematized for clinicians. Thus, Satir's family therapy can be more recognized in all aspects, and spiritually oriented therapy can be used more effectively.

When family therapy methods successfully make it easier for couples to reflect their belief systems, the therapy environment becomes more sincere and acceptable for couples, and thus more successful outcomes occur (Duba & Watts, 2009). With this thought in mind, the spiritual orientation of Satir's family therapy can be effectively used as a therapy in Turkey by practitioners in consideration of clients' different needs; the effectiveness of spiritually-oriented therapy can be examined by researchers in different ways. This study is estimated to be a first for practitioners and researchers in Turkey to explore the spiritual aspect of Satir's family therapy, which uses spirituality to enhance congruence and displays interest in humanistic and cosmic spirituality.

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