

THE CHANGE PROCESS IN FAMILY RECONSTRUCTION:
A LIVED EXPERIENCE

by

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents who have brought me to this world and teach me all the wisdom about life and change.

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I would like to thank my parents, who have left me a great heritage, and the mysteries in life that allow me to explore and gain from this life the things that have been locked up and sealed in our family system. My discovery has empowered me to heal myself from the wounds in life and to be able to become a healer myself.

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This dissertation explores the process of change in the application of the therapeutic tool, family reconstruction, in the Satir Model. This study touches on the organic aspect of change which is self-initiating, continuously unfolding, and also an uncharted area outside of the counseling setting long after the therapeutic intervention. New developments in the area of psychotherapy have allowed us to broaden the traditional perspectives on the Satir Model, which used to be called magical and charismatic. This dissertation reports in a subjective way on how a person changes his circuit of behavior and the factors that are critical and involved in the process of change, both internally and externally. This study also provides a map for transformation in terms of change in one's self-esteem to allow survival, to become

more congruent ways of coping and allowing more choices, and to allow healing to take place in one's fragmented self. The Satir Model stresses personal growth, both in the client and the therapist. This study extends the exploration to the level of supervision, where supervisor-supervisee and therapist-client are all involved in a process of growth in therapeutic relationship.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM FORMULATION

Introduction

Change is inevitable in life. Like it or not, we keep changing. There are stages we have to go through during the course of our lives. C. W. Brister (1997), a distinguished professor of Pastoral Ministry, has illustrated in his book, *Change Happens: Finding Your Way Through Life's Transitions*, how transitions and changes occur in life as a natural process. He made a remarkable observation on the subject of change: "Time travelers are on a faith journey. We are each mapmakers, trying to chart our course toward some 'promised land.' Our stories are filled with excitement and occasional failure, anticipation and disappointment, hope and anxious longing." (p. 2). His view on change is more universal. It is also filled with nuggets of wisdom from his religious conviction and experience as someone who cares for souls.

Brister also admitted that, "Some changes can be scary. So we need help going toe to toe with messy events. Some guides see only one way to get through passages—endings, questionings, and beginnings" (p. xi). He sees change as unavoidable when he opens his book with the following lines: "Life should come labeled: 'Subject to change without notice,' since we live constantly between the now

and the not yet” (p. 1). Most of the time change happens to be a slow, evolutionary process.

We call changes transitions or stages of life. They set in quietly as we pass through life’s journey. Normal as they seem, we often experience confusion as we go from the known to the future and unknowns. When we are in need, we call for help. We assume that we want to move forward, but often times we are stuck in making the choice of what we want.

In times of stress and stuckness we usually ask for help. The intervention we call for may be professional or paraprofessional. Our concerns usually rest more in factors like trust, genuineness, and care than professional trainings or qualifications. Bachelor and Horvath (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 2004) have researched the subject of therapeutic relationship and its characteristic features and outcome effects and they discovered many findings point toward the conclusion that “relationship produces change” (p. 139).

Freud was probably the first to comment on the relation between therapist and client as he introduced transference and countertransference. According to Bachelor and Horvath (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 2004) in their article, *The Therapeutic Relationship*, there are three important aspects in a therapeutic relationship, namely:

(a) transference, that is, the client's unconscious identification of the therapist's unconscious linking of the client with significant figures or unresolved conflicts from his or her past; (b) counter-transference, the therapist's unconscious linking of the client with significant figures or unresolved conflicts from his or her past; and (c) the client's friendly and positively linking of the therapist with benevolent and kind personas from the past. (p. 133)

The change process in psychotherapy is about resolving blocks to growth, health, and love. Defensive patterns, both individual and relational, almost always involve some form of developmental arrest. The adaptations we have relied on in the past were safety nets, but are often found to be blockages and hindrance in growth and change in the reality of now.

Many researchers have explored how early experience shapes a person's future. John Bowlby (1988) was a forerunner in research on how early experience with a caregiver affects one's future development. He called the patterns of life that develop from the influence of early experience with caregivers, *the working models or representational models*. It is suggested that different impacts of the working model remain in one's life, in terms of interpersonal relationship, self-esteem, marriage, and intimacy, or even coping ability in old age. One's working model eventually forms

neural circuits to shape one's behavior and reaction in everyday living throughout a person's entire life. The working model also affects one's coping, when one's defenses are engaged subconsciously.

Psychotherapy is a way to open old files in which one perceives threats and the need for self-protection, when one feels that one's sense of safety is hampered. In the process of treatment, it is inevitable that the therapist will touch on a person's working model, where he or she is taken back to a vulnerable childlike state. The person may feel the need to defend him or herself, to run for shelter, to freeze, or be overwhelmed by fear. Proper intervention may allow a person to see realistically where that person is. There may be a lot of growing up to do in psychotherapy as we examine each person's working model.

A large amount of research has produced evidence indicating that a stable, contingent, caring, enriched social and physical environment will maximize development and create secure attachment in important relationships. Psychotherapy is a somewhat pseudo situation, which will provide the widest range of supportive responses to the varying yearnings and needs of each human for affirmation, affiliation, social position, boundaries, and to create meaning. This process of working with the attachment to foster growth and healing in psychotherapy is like re-parenting.

When someone is confronted in critical situations, that person is forced to make decision about him or herself. Gregory Johanson (Johanson & Kurtz, 1991) mentioned in his book, *Grace Unfolding*, which he sees when emergencies happens, critical issues emerge. He is talking about real issues in life where one usually uses different kinds of coping to manage, but when one is confronted by an emergency that person reacts spontaneously from information he or she stores in his or her core. In therapeutic situations, one is brought back in history and allowed to experiment and try out new strategies and is supported in these emergent situations. In this process, we can bring material from what the person has adopted in the unconscious to the place where he or she is conscious and be able to make new decisions.

Over the years, a lot has been said about what works and what doesn't in the field of psychotherapy. Family reconstruction is said to be a powerful tool because it can empower the client involved to make new choices for the future. It is one of the original designs of therapeutic tools in the Satir Model (Satir et al., 1991). Satir introduced this in her book, *The Satir Model*, as: "one way to see our path with new eyes thus making the present and the future a new place to be." (p. 205). The path is referring to the life path that she saw could be corrected or relived through a collaborative effort of the star (the client) and the guide (the therapist) in family reconstruction. Breakthroughs are introduced for individuals to move the frozen

energy, to free it, and to be able to see new possibilities in the future. Stars in the process work with guides to re-experience the past through deeper understanding of the patterns learned from their original families. As the stars move through their past, they retell their stories. Much of the data provided is through the deliberation of the stars. It would be quite appropriate to assume that the stars are also playing active roles in assessing a large quantity of material in their pasts. How they retrieve the material also depends largely on the relationship between them and the guides, which rests deeply in the root of their attachment styles developed in their early days.

Virginia Satir (Satir et al., 1991), the founder, originator of the Satir Model, called her work *change therapy* and shared some special insights on the process of change in her early writing. In her book, *The Satir Model*, she saw change as an internal shift that in turn brings about something to the external. She also presented it as a metaphor of the evolution of a butterfly, which takes several stages to complete.

The following are the six stages she believed will take place as change settles in:

1. The need of change must emerge within a person's system.
2. A foreign agent (therapist) needs to participate.
3. Individuals or system will move into a chaotic stage because the old equilibrium is disturbed.

4. New learnings are integrated. Individuals or system/s will experience new perceptions and feelings.
5. More practice will be needed to consolidate the learning.
6. A new “self” will be experienced and practiced. (p. 213)

In Kegan’s (1982) terms, the stages are an issue of subject-object differentiation, in which the client moves back and forth to gain an objective view of what used to be subjective; so that he or she can disidentify with some past memory. Johanson (n.d.) further explains Kegan’s process in his paper, *Psychotherapy, Science & Spirit:*

Nonlinear System, Hakomi Therapy, and the Tao:

Three stages in which the structure of a client present order parameter is first affirmed so that he can hold on to it. Then material is introduced that contradicts or reveals the inadequacy of the present organization, leading it into a transient unstable space that encourages letting go or loosening up of parameter structures. Thirdly, the therapist maintains contact and continuity for the reintegration of the attractor state. (p. 23)

In the change process, the therapist plays an important role in providing the context for these to happen.

This dissertation describes how the intervention of family reconstruction will introduce the process of change. The discussion of my own journey in this dissertation will demonstrate how the process takes place with the parallel process of the therapist.

Statement of the Problem

I have collected impressions and description about the technique of family reconstruction from various sources. These include references to change, process, transformation, growth, future directional, and self-originated. According to Gomorie (2008), there are some pointers on how these elements will play a role in the process of family reconstruction:

1. Making connections
2. Unblocking energy
3. Releasing suppressed feelings
4. Updating past experiences into the present
5. Transforming negative elements
6. Discovering the unknown
7. Bringing the automatic or unconscious to the surface
8. Raising consciousness
9. Facilitating follow-up and integration of changes
10. Increasing the capacity for making future changes

The clearly identified components of change and detailed discussion of them will provide a good road map for new learners. Evidently, Gomorie is trying to address some practical aspects of the process from a therapist's perspective so that Virginia's magic will become teachable and reproducible (Gomorie, M. & Adaskin, E., 2008, pp. 77–79). But what happens internally and intra-psychically may not be very clearly defined and easily identified.

Virginia Satir died in 1989. Her technique of family reconstruction was first introduced in 1981; I imagine there is room for further development. Through her demonstration tapes, her technique was termed *magical* and *charismatic*, which I think has done her some disservice because the description gives the idea that her technique is unexplainable. For many years, as I watched her demonstration, I felt that she was using ideas that were ahead of her time. With this dissertation, I would like to describe some of the concepts and ideas in today's terms and to unravel and un-wrap the gift of her wisdom about change. Besides, the employment of heuristic research will allow us to see in the first person how the process of change comes about in a self-initiated, directional way, both consciously and subconsciously.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to bring forth all the elements involved in a change process using family reconstruction as a point of intervention and to denote

the unfolding of the therapeutic process inside and outside of the counseling room.

The problem formulated for this study is the process of change and how it evolves in a natural fashion or is influenced by various factors in the environment. The key concepts that will be presented to assist in this process include: (a) the importance of the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and the client; (b) the importance of the attachment style causing the attunement between the helper and the helpee; (c) the tools helpful in making subconscious material conscious; (d) the importance of reaching core issues in a way that adds to awareness; (e) the importance of working through defenses with the employment of metaphors; (f) important spiritual aspects about change that instill hope as the motivator of change. All these concepts will be addressed at length in this dissertation.

I will use different narration to demonstrate how changes happen in terms of self-concepts, level of awareness, and self-differentiation through meaningful images and pictures.

The body of this dissertation will tell two stories about a supervisor and a counselor-trainee, how their relationship evolved from a teacher-student to mother-daughter and then to peer counselors, as both go through a change process of personal growth using family reconstruction as an initial intervention.

Importance of the Study

This dissertation's contribution is to unravel the complexity of the technique of family reconstruction and its application in the subject of growth and change. This study will allow us to look more closely at the change process that happens in many layers of one's self. The narration method allows both the client and the therapist to travel through time and space together in a process. It also helps readers to understand and externalize the many parts that are involved intra-psychically in one's behavior or decision making, allowing us to see how Virginia Satir work in family reconstruction using parts to denote the complexity of our self-system.

Virginia Satir worked skillfully with many layers of human processes. Her approach was regarded as experiential, and she advocated using what the therapist saw fit at the moment. I hope this dissertation will explore and explain the seemingly magical touch of the Satir Model in terms of the layers of congruence in the process of change with in-depth exploration into areas like one's self-esteem, the state of consciousness, the power of narration with relation to attachment, and the self-healing power in being mindful.

This is a heuristic study stemming from my quest to find out how the technique works, both in the client and in the therapist. As I first studied this technique in 1999, I was overwhelmed by the impact of the process as I went through

it myself, and as a guide I experienced its impact on my clients. I have employed the technique in a personal growth class for over ten years and continue to marvel at the impact of it on my students and clients. The technique seems to have a life of its own; all the people around, including the audience, the star, or even the guide, are subjected to some sort of impact to bring about a point of realization or resolution. I witness how some of the clients continue on their life journeys, but still relate to how the process evolves and unfolds, and how they continue to discover more of their values and internal qualities. As I put their changes within a framework of theoretical perspectives and ideologies, I begin to see a broader picture of a therapeutic process.

The research data are collected in the form of interviews, diary, self-reflection, and self-reports. The way one stories one's life experience will be analyzed and organized into systems of understanding.

Background of the Study

In my personal growth classes I use the technique of family reconstruction to facilitate self-understanding and change. Over the years I have witnessed some profound changes in and after these classes.

A student, D., was selected as the subject of the study. She was selected because she stayed on to study different programs in theology and counseling in our school for 7 years. Her history, the chronological sequence of incidence in her life are

recorded and studied. The personal account of her story, her script of life are analyzed and compared.

As a teacher, counselor, and supervisor, I follow closely with my own process, to understand and to improve my awareness for my professional growth. I discover a parallel process when I mentor or am deeply involved in a therapeutic relationship. I use this study to discover and substantiate evidence about this process.

Scope of the Study

This study provides a framework to look at the process of transformation and the interactive, dynamic nature of the therapeutic relationship. I also hope to provide a detailed account of the innate pursuit for growth by both the client and the therapist.

This dissertation attempts to provide a roadmap into the process of change, both in and after therapy, to those who want to incorporate experiential learning and to facilitate change, both for their own personal growth and for their practices as professional counselors.

Limitations of the Study

This study is based on heuristic research, which focuses more on the non-quantifiable results based on the analysis of the narration of experiences, the experience of the change process, and the evolution of metaphors and images. In the

words of Moustakes (1993) the heuristic process, “is a way of knowing, intuition, or knowledge represents an invitation for further elucidation” (p. 10).

The limitations of this study resolve around the lack of quantifiable results, based on the process of change. The subjective experiences of the subject D. and me, as her supervisor, are expressed in the narrative results of our work. Comparative approaches to healing have not been examined. The follow-up results of this study would be restricted to feedback received from subject D., her written reports, and her self-reflections.

Dreams and metaphors are used as they represent how the process works at the subconscious level. It is suggested that more research would be warranted to ascertain the effectiveness of the concepts involved and how they might be generalized to a general population.

Definitions

The following definitions are intended to help the reader understand the meaning as used in this dissertation:

Family Reconstruction: “Family Reconstruction is an intervention developed by Satir for reintegrating people into the history and psychological matrix of their own family of origin. One of the major Satir vehicle of change, it provides a way of seeing ourselves and our parents with new eyes, and thus seeing the present and the

future in a new perspective. This includes giving ourselves greater possibilities and more freedom, and being responsible.” (Satir et al., 1991, p.205).

Congruence: “It is a level of being and a way of communicating with ourselves and others. High self-esteem and congruence are two of the main indicators of more fully functioning human beings.” (Satir et al., 1991, p.65)

Five freedoms: Satir’s “Five freedoms” express the opportunities and possibilities of using our resources positively and our choices creatively.

Mindfulness: “It is a non ordinary state of consciousness. It is an open, vulnerable state and requires a relationship in which safety and rapport have already been established.” (Kurtz ,1990, p.85)

Metaphor: Metaphors are tools or agents in the task of observing, classification, and reporting human experience. The emotive and intuitive character of metaphors provides room for imagination and development for a client to go into the future.

Enmeshed relationship: This refers to the kind of relationship in which a boundary is not clear. Members in the family may get overly involved with other members, causing confusion, conflict, and stress in the family.

Self-Differentiation Process: This is a process in family therapy technique to set boundaries between members of the family, both externally and internally (Schwartz, 1995, p.116).

Parts Party: “The Parts Party is a process that identifies, transforms, and integrates our inner resources.” (Satir et al.,1991, p.175).

Stance: “It is a way we communicate with our families and others to develop a sense of our worth.”(Satir et al.,1991, p.31).

Irrelevant: This is a survival stance that people adopt to cope with high stress. “When people are irrelevant, they move continually as an attempt to distract people’s attention from the issues under discussion. They keep changing their ideas and want to do myriad activities simultaneously.” (Satir et al.,1991, p.49).

Placate: This is a survival stance that people use when they feel threatened for their own survival. “When we placate, we disregard our own feelings of worth, hand our power to someone else, and say yes to everything.” “Placating denies our own respect and gives people the message that we are not important.” (Satir et al.,1991, p.36).

Wholeness: Refers to the process in Parts Party, which helps us to gain a holistic perspective about the different parts in us. By gaining a sense of unity about our parts, we can begin to behave differently, in an unfragmented manner.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Family Reconstruction as a Change Vehicle in the Satir Model

In a recent publication, *Satir: Transformational Systemic Therapy*, Gloria Taylor (2008) described the technique of family reconstruction as Satir's intent to facilitate complex and natural changes on many different levels of being. Taylor goes beyond the original model and sees different levels of being involved in a person's change process through the intervention of the technique of family reconstruction. She sees transformation in many forms, depending on the level of self-being involved in the process. Some people allow their movement to go beyond their coping strategies with which they are basically in a survival mode. Others may have more acceptance and understanding of their environments, allowing them to move to a new level. In Taylor's description, the move may happen "from coping strategies to congruence, from triangulation to one-on-one contact, from self-judgment to affirmation and possibly acceptance, from resentment to compassion, from criticism to curiosity, from hostility to honesty, from analysis of others to self-discovery, and from diagnosis to

ownership” (Taylor, 2008,p.137). From Taylor’s description of this technique, it uses a positive perspective and promises remarkable, positive results.

In Satir’s view, family reconstruction works on all levels of congruence, which include: first level of congruence on accepting our feelings, second level of congruence on being in harmony with our Self, and the third level of congruence on being in harmony with our Selves and our life energy, spirituality, or God (Satir et al., 1991).

The *self* plays a vital part in psychotherapy. Satir (Baldwin & Satir, 1987) advocated that the importance of a healthy self is the key to bringing about the best of therapeutic results. She compared the use of self as “a musical instrument...How it is made, how it is cared for, its fine tuning and the ability, experience, sensitivity and creativity of the player will determine how the music will sound” (Baldwin & Satir, 1987, p. 23). She also adapted a spiritual dimension in her view about selfhood:

People already have what they need to grow and the therapist’s task is to enable patient to utilize their own resources. If I believe that human beings are sacred, then when I look at their behavior, I will attempt to help them live up to their own sacredness. (p. 24)

She saw the potential of becoming and recovering in both the therapist and the client to be congruent and whole. In her other version of family reconstruction; Parts Party,

she described the process as one, “that identifies, transforms, and integrates our inner resources” (p. 175), where the resources are represented as different parts of the self-system.

Both Gregory Bateson (1979) and Arthur Koestler (1967) hold a systemic view on people and their environment, they regard people as living organisms organized in systems that are made up of parts. Koestler stated that the fundamental unit of life is called Holon, or sub-wholes and parts (1967, p.48). When it comes to dealing with people, we are, in fact, dealing with Holon’s and sub-systems within a whole system. Bateson’s other prepositions about a system is that it is organic and is able to communicate within the whole. The system will self-organize, self-direct, and self-correct in its communication within the system. Seemingly, family reconstruction is enabling one part of the mind to speak to another, allowing this system to move instantaneously in a self-correcting, self-directing way.

I studied the technique of family reconstruction in 1999 and have experienced both being the star and acting as the guide. When I have used this technique on personal growth classes to help students relive and reorganize their pasts and reorient themselves, I have often been amazed by its impact on people in and after the process. As the process progresses, I often witness remarkable changes among my students and clients who have participated in family reconstruction, whether directly

or indirectly. In a stretch of over ten years' time, I have seen growth and profound changes in people who have experienced the process as they enjoy greater harmony and peace within and among their communities. They have gone through a process of self-organization and self-directing and self-correction. I am fascinated by the seemingly magical touch of the technique and would like to explore more what happens in the subjective perspective in the change process.

Another prominent Satir trainer, John Banmen has tried to describe the technique of family reconstruction in a systematic way. He translates the complexity of the vehicle into the following goals and steps in the client's system:

1. The client will make connection with his life history.
2. The client will have a chance to experience and release his stored up feelings.
3. It is a chance to renew a person's life history; the client will see his life experience with a new perspective.
4. The client will develop an equal and peer relationship with his parents.
5. The client will have the opportunity to discover the unknown, change the unconscious to the conscious.
6. The client will become more aware of his automatic and coping style, his will also get assistance to accept and change his destructive coping style.

7. The client will be invited to accept his past, and to resolve his unfulfilled expectation.
8. The client will release the negative energy and transform it into positive and creative energy.
9. The client will become more aware, and accept his resources from his original family.
10. The client will be able to disentangle himself from his original family.
11. The client will develop a new sense of mission to be more congruent, whole and complete. (Gomorie, M. & Banmen, J., 2005)

The steps described here are in fact exhibiting the organic and self-directing nature in Holon and how it self-corrects and moves towards the direction of healing. Banmen has described the process beyond the original model developed in Satir's early days. Within these clearly laid out steps, there is also an energy exchange that is typical of the psychodynamic model for the process of change. As stuckness is resolved, energy blockages are cleared, thus bringing about the free flow of positive energy in the client. Originating in the same school of thought, Bateson (1979) claimed that if energy is in the right form it will allow a system to function in an optimal way.

Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse (1994), an expert in the technique, mentioned in her book *Family Reconstruction- the Living Theatre Model* that this technique is not

meant to be static but has an infinite amount of diversity because Virginia usually incorporated whatever works for her clients. In the process of family reconstruction Satir was actually repairing a dysfunctional system. Wegscheider-Cruse outlined two distinctive processes to be accomplished in it, namely “the learning” and “the unlearning” (p .xiii).

It is also suggested that there is a holographic effect in the process.

Wegscheider-Cruse (1994) highlighted that one must be aware of the fact that:

The entire reconstruction process is but one event in a much larger recovery process, but one part of the journey of recovery from old wounds and a painful past. The process itself is diminished when either the star or the guide attempts to make it more than a step along the way.” (p. 5)

She also advised that reconstruction not to be undertaken alone but in partnership with the guide, and pointed out that the effect extends way beyond the actual work.

Some remarkable studies done recently seem to have unlocked the mysteries of change and can explain learning and unlearning. Bruce Ecker (2008) explained change in terms of recent discoveries about the human brain:

“The synapses supposedly locking it in place can unlock for a short period of time. Then they relock, making a reconsolidation of the memory circuits.

While these synapses are unlocked, they can be disrupted, so that relocking is

prevented, thus erasing both the implicit memory and the behavioral responses

it produced. Afterwards, those old responses can't be evoked.” (p. 44)

There has been quite a lot of research done by neuroscientists trying to identify the key sequence of experiences that get the brain to unlock a long-held emotional learning.

Many long-held emotional scars harbor a lot of pain and emotional arrest; they often come up in therapy, along with shame and guilt. Shame is a way to know who we are, and guilt is a way to accuse and criticize ourselves for what we have done. So, often we feel shame because we are not the person our mother wanted us to be. In therapy, change happens when shame is recognized and effectively dealt with by the containment provided by the therapist.

Manny Matas (Gomori, M. & Adaskin, E.,2008), the former medical director of Adult Outpatient Psychiatry at St. Boniface Hospital and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, at the University of Manitoba, she wrote in the forward of *Personal Alchemy* as “a way to reveal repressed family-of-origin traumas” (p. 12). Her comment has highlighted on the healing effect of this technique. The employment of this technique reflects the originality and the creativity of the therapist in Virginia Satir, who was flexible enough to meet her

clients with what fit. She was also knowledgeable enough to accommodate all the change agents in the process of transformation.

Maria Gomori (2008), an expert on the technique of family reconstruction, has tried to comprehensively describe what the technique is about. She called her book *Personal Alchemy*, which signatures the transformative nature of her work. Even though there is no definition comprehensive enough to explain alchemy, she gives it an explanation on the front page:

1. The chemistry of the middle Ages, the chief aims of which were to change the baser metals into gold and to discover the elixir of youth.
2. A method or power of transmutation; seemingly miraculous change of one thing into another.

Carl G. Jung (1989) had a psychological analogy for this. He saw the process of alchemy as an analytical approach to confront the unconscious, where personality characteristics or traits that are not harmonious with each other are brought together to create harmony and a functional personality. Just as the impurities are burned away in the alchemist's furnace, in psychoanalysis the disharmonious personality traits are worked through.

Gomori (Satir et al., 1991) also sees family reconstruction as a transformational process, leading to a shift inside a person that provides freedom to

make new choices. She has further illustrated the foundation of this technique by quoting directly from Virginia Satir that the technique fully reflects her beliefs about human life and human realities which were called *sacred* and *spiritual*. In other words, her view of change or transformation in the process of family reconstruction takes on a spiritual dimension in which her core beliefs about humanness are crucial. The core beliefs can be rightfully summarized in the following five freedoms in her book, *The Satir Model* (Satir et al., 1991):

1. The freedom to see and hear what is here instead of what should be, what was, or what will be.
2. The freedom to say what you feel and think instead of what you think you should feel and think.
3. The freedom to feel what you feel instead of what you think you ought to feel.
4. The freedom to ask for what you want instead of always waiting for permission.
5. The freedom to take risks on your own behalf instead of choosing to be only “secured” and not “rock the boat. (p. 62)

The process is, in fact, a recovery and also a recreation of a person’s life through action therapy, which deserves a lot of trust and respect. It also offers an

opportunity for the reintegration of a person into the family of origin as an adult and a way to find out who that person is and who he or she can become. This indicates a continuum, a growth process and transformation that take place in this technique. By personal alchemy, Gomorie is also suggesting that the process is self-initiated, self-propelled, and self-contained

The Attachment Theory in Psychotherapy

John Bowlby (1988) sees a person's attachment status as a basic construct that determines how one relates to other people throughout life. Bowlby calls the basic construct one holds a *working model*, which is the blueprint of many important relationships in one's life. Different people have different attachment statuses as the core state that influences the way they see the world and their behavior.

In a secure core state, a person sees a positive outcome in the future and is able to use that person's full capacity to be effective and pursue what he or she wants. In the insecure core state, one feels unsafe and will often retreat to a defensive mode. In therapy, a psychotherapist often needs to juggle between the two and to reach a state where a therapeutic alliance is established, like a secure base to initiate self-healing. Bowlby describes the therapeutic process in relation to the attachment that was established at home: "A therapist applying attachment theory sees his role as being one of providing the conditions in which his patient can explore his

representational models of himself and his attachment figures with a view to reappraising and restructuring them in the light of new understanding he acquires and the new experiences he has in the therapeutic relationship.” (Bowlby, 1988, p.138). The therapist is often recognized as a key parental figure at home, so what he or she needs to establish before anything else is a working relationship in which security is the basic ingredient.

In most therapies there is a crucial relationship between attachment and affiliation—which might in different terminology be seen as the interplay between transference and the working alliance. The sensitive therapist, like a sufficient parent, is always alert to the client’s need for security in the face of painful affect on the one hand, and, on the other, the client’s wish to explore in a playful, humorous, or companionable way. Wegscheider-Cruse (1994) also pointed out that as a therapist, Virginia Satir was good at bringing her own self to the people she worked with. Her thoughts and dreams, and the experiences around her provided good guidance “to know how to work with people and perceive what tools and techniques would best expedite change” (p. 12).

In family reconstruction, one is brought back in history by one’s guide to revisit and reorganize old environments and reconstruct reality with a more objective perspective of the environment. This process requires safety that touches the core of

one's self. As one partakes of this journey of discovery and healing, the person is, in fact, stepping into not only one event but into the midst of a much larger recovery process. On any journey, one discovers and realizes many more things as the journey unfolds than one knows at the beginning. A secure and trusting relationship will allow the client to start the process with hope and confidence. During the process, attunement will allow both sides to realign and reorganize material in the past. Daniel Siegel (2007), a pioneer in interpersonal neurobiology, has presented two aspects of the management of transformation which, according to him, depend on the perspective one holds for any change and the resources one has to face it. The perspective and the resources depend largely on a person's working model for life. Secure attachment would allow a person to be able to utilize his resources well and help him identify training and the support in the change process (p. 201).

Siegel (2010) also sees the process of attunement happens in a deeper level; biological and neural. He has coined a new term about one's state of wellbeing—the triangle of well-being, which includes neural integration, a coherent mind, and empathic relationships (p.122). Siegel suggests attunement would lead to the development of this state of well-being, which is both biological and neural but beyond cognition. He claims that, "If eyesight permits vision, mindsight permits

triception. Triception is the way we perceive the flow of energy and information in the triangle of well-being.”(p.122)

Recent research has suggested that mindfulness meditation enhances the capacity for individuals to detect facial expression and respond accordingly, which allows neural integration to take place in view of stress and danger. Such ability is, in fact, developed in the first year of one’s life or even earlier, and it takes place in one’s reptilian brain, which is developed earliest and is beyond voluntary control and operation. Shore (2003) explained in his book, *Affect Dysregulations and Disorders of the Self* :

The mother’s emotionally expressive face is, by far, the most potent visual stimulus in the infant’s environment, and the child’s intense interest in her face, especially in her eyes, leads him to track it in space, and to engage in periods of intense mutual gaze. . . this dyadic system forms an efficient interpersonal channel for the transmission of reciprocal mutual influences. (Shore, 2003, p. 7)

Evidently, the transaction is nonverbal and happens in a neurobiological level between the dyad. It establishes a foundation for future relationship. Mary Ainsworth (1978) took Bowlby’s theory on attachment and elaborated on it with her famous experiment on strange situations. She claimed that attachment is more than overt behavior; it is

“being built into the nervous system, in the course and as a result of the infant’s experience of his transactions with the mother” (Ainsworth, 1978, p.429).

Trevarthen (1993) further illustrated the channel of communication between the mother and child in the following picture (Aitken & Trevarthen, 1997). There are three components to this channel of communication: the imagistic, visceral, and nonverbal implicit-procedural memory system of the right brain. (Trevarthen,1993, p.79, Henry, 1993; Schore, 1994, 2000c; Siegel,1999). Instant emotional effects are built between the dyad forming a resonance, which ultimately permits the inter-coordination of positive affective brain states. Such brain-brain interaction promotes the development of cerebral circuits. He also noted that “the prosody of the voice of the mother is responded to by the infant’s right hemisphere, which is more receptive and self-regulatory” (Shore,2003, p.42). Interestingly enough, he also noted that “the left side of the mother’s face has a stronger expression of an attractive smile” (Shore, 2003, p. 43).

Tucker, Luu,& Pribram,K.H.(1995) have done some groundbreaking exploration on the relationship between attunement and attachment; they have claimed that:

The capacity to integrate conscious attention with emotional experience may be fundamental to empathic experience. Although we can now analyze the

neural networks and circuits that are required, these neural mechanisms do not appear to become functional without appropriate development. (Shore, 2003, p. 707).

By appropriate development, they are referring to the secure attachment between child and parent, with which one will better attune with his internal self, the environment, and others around him. With attunement, parents stand a better chance of accessing the feeling and intentions of their children. Self-regulatory mechanisms integral to shifting self-other perspectives are also benefited. The skills of attention and attunement work together to bring about better adaptation and self-regulation.

Seven functions of the middle prefrontal region are thought to have association with the skills of adaptation and self-regulation: body regulation, attuned communication, emotional balance, response flexibility, empathy, self-knowing awareness, and fear modulation. These functions are in the region of social neural circuits; middle prefrontal regions, insula, superior temporal cortex, and the mirror neuron system. In fact, a wide array of research has suggested the close association between self-regulatory prefrontal regions and positive experiences with caregivers.

Many studies seem to have confirmed that our adaptations to experiences early in life impact our affective style, our narrative themes, and the ways we handle interpersonal relationships. Bowlby called this the working model that will form a

framework of reference for one's future. Wegscheider-Cruse (1994) explained in her book on family reconstruction about the inner-child that has yielded to the development of this working model:

When a child is very young, caregivers are gods. The child depends on them utterly for his or her physical well-being and safety. This makes the caregivers tremendously powerful . . . The goal of therapy is to . . . heal the wounded child and to set ourselves free . . . this child is part of any adult's personality and not a separate entity. (p. 90)

Martin Teicher, along with Glod, Surrey, and Swett (1993), on the other hand, concluded that some findings in child abuse and neglect cases indicate there is damage to the integrative neurons in the brain. Much research has indicated that mindfulness can improve the coherence of the parents' narrative. This research suggests that mindfulness will allow us to repair the damage, with a resultant earned security of attachment, which allows us to go beneath the many layers of adaptation and enhances the possibility of change. It is reasonable to assume that attunement, both internally and interpersonally, is a valuable asset to counselors in attuning to their clients.

Virginia Satir stressed the importance of making connection in her therapy, which is basically the working alliance and the attunement that we have discussed

above. In numerous demonstrations, the people involved found the experience enriching because Satir connected deeply with each person. Regardless of the size of her audience, Satir's attunement helped them "feeling validated, connected, important, acknowledged, heard, empowered, and energized" (Satir et al., 1991, p. 259).

Dutch scientist Christian Huygens discovered the principle of entrainment in 1665. He found that when two similar clocks are placed side by side, the pendulums will eventually swing at the same rate. This principle is found in human interactions, particularly in the mutual influence between therapists and their clients in a therapeutic process. There is both a harmonizing, and a synchronic effect in deep relationship. In the relationship between a therapist and his or her client or the relationship between a supervisor and his or her students for an extended period of time, the effect of entrainment will set in automatically and unconsciously.

Narrative Structures Related to Attachment Styles

Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse (1994) used the analogy of a group journey and theatre to describe family reconstruction, because she included the guide and the other role players as vital parts of the process. She sees the star, the guide, and the audience as equally important parts of the reconstruction process. The universality in humanness has allowed everyone in this journey to discover and realign their lives and engage in retelling life stories. The word *theatre* comes from the Greek word

theatre, which means a seeing place. As the technique of family reconstruction matures, many more elements of theatre, like plot, character, idea, language, spectacle, music, and movement are used. The employment of these elements opens different avenues for the participants to learn and to change, and they also gain new perspectives about their life stories. It is stressed that memories are dynamic:- through the reactivation of a memory, we can destabilize and necessitate a process called reconsolidation. The technique is also a process of mindful awareness, which allows us to access information beneath many layers of adaptations and defenses.

Every time we tell our stories, according to Jonah Lehrer(2007) “the neuronal structure of the memory is delicately transformed, a process called reconsolidation . . . The memory is altered in the absence of the original stimulus, becoming less about what you remember and more about you” (Lehrer, 2007, p.14). The layers of adaptations are, in fact, forming the structure of our selves.

The adaptations can be classified in terms of one’s attachment style and are manifested and “develop narrative that minimizes our reliance upon others” (Siegel, 2010, p.202). Siegel further explores the attachment styles shaped by one’s history. He found that parents who are unavailable emotionally will cause the child to pull away and develop avoidant attachment. These individuals will tend to be disconnected from others and from themselves, both emotionally and physically. Their narrative

structure is marked by a lack of memories of family experience in any detail. The person is prohibited from attaining receptivity, self-observation, and reflexivity as his self-protection mechanism kicks in. Such a pattern is likely to be repeated, and related problems become trans-generational.

Inconsistent parents who have a core experience of uncertainty tend to intrude into their children with their own state. The child will be confused, especially in relational issues. The attachment style in this case is called the ambivalent/anxious. The child influenced in this attachment style tends to be overcome with what was and what the child wishes would be. If the parent is the source of terrified or terrifying behaviors, the child is forced into a state of fear without resolution. Siegel describes the situation of stuckness created by, “the simultaneous activation of one set of circuits creates the impulse to move toward the attachment figure for protection and soothing, while the impulse to go away from the source of terror” (Siegel, 2010, p.203).

In the child’s conflicting state, he develops disorganized attachment and experiences dissociation, and a fragmented self. In the child’s narrative structure, we would find a lot of unresolved trauma or grief. With proper intervention, the fragmented self could be mended, but as family matters tend to remain untreated and unresolved, the terror could continue to impact generations. Siegel has, in fact,

introduced an assessment to an individual through his narrative structure, which provides ways of repairing childhood wounds. Siegel claims that parents who “come to make sense of their lives can actually alter their attachment status” (p.204) and this results in an earned security where the person comes to experience a coherent mind and narrative. He places mindfulness as a central tenet in achieving the desired outcome. He sees the value of mindfulness practice invaluable:

The interpersonal attunement of secure attachment would then lead to the neural integration of a mindful brain. Individuals, who have achieved such integration, whether reaching such secure states through parenting during the early years or later on earning security through self-reflection or positive, transformative attachment relationships as teens or adults, would be seen to have mindfulness as a trait of the self. (Siegel, 2010, pp. 205--206)

Spirituality and its Role in the Process of Change

Essential as change is in our lives, there is often obscurity about it that we cannot quite fathom. C.W. Brister (1997), who researched change and the spirituality aspect of it in his book, *Change Happens*, described change and transition as *soul crafting*, and he argued that if we are put into proper perspective in the Christian faith, we will make a great deal of difference in the way we live. He proposed that there are three models for mapping change and navigating life's transitions: exodus (leaving),

endings and beginnings, and vision and return. He also discovered phoenix-like stories that “hoppers can face the reality of a new day, find energy to work ahead, challenge forces of evil and injustice, discover strength in community, and remain faithful in the face of discouragement” (p. 105). Heroes and heroines who have clear objectives in life will be able to go through dark paths and obstacles in life. In Proverbs, it says, “The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day” (Prov. 4:18, NIV). Religious faith and beliefs that one holds tightly in one’s life will carry the person through life’s course with luminous pathways. The person will experience growth and change as a result of trust in a higher order from a religious faith or virtue. This is one aspect of spirituality as it relates to growth.

As we move through life we experience little deaths and rebirths. Self theorists, such as Erik Erikson and human development specialists, such as Daniel Levinson and Roger Gould, have sounded the same drum about transitions in life, inevitable as they are; they are often uncontrollable and unpredictable. Arnold van Gennep, a Dutch anthropologist, coined the term *rites of passage* to signify the dynamics of letting go, being in-between and new beginnings where each transition is marked by little deaths and rebirths. Brister (1997) agreed in the book *Seasons of Life* that “change, journey, and outcome (process) is the normal rhythm of life’s transitions” (p. 23). He also

added that “all of life is a process of anticipation, disorientation, and struggle for reorientation on the pathway of growth. Change is more than ‘nature’s way’ in seasonal fashion. It is the course of life in which the Bible speaks: ‘Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us’ (Heb. 12:1b NIV)” (p.24). His remarks added a spiritual dimension in understanding and integrating change.

As change may happen in and out of therapy sessions, it would be interesting to study how therapy evolves over a period of time. The storying and re-storying of experience over time necessitates the active involvement of persons in the reorganization of their experience, which is essential in a self-healing process.

In the process of transformation, there is a plausible call that rises within human beings—the call that causes individuals to redirect themselves to a higher self. It is like setting out on a journey to find a truer selfhood; one that is different from the outer. Joseph Campbell (2004) talks about this kind of inquiry in his book, *The Heroes with A Thousand Faces*, in terms of mystical pathways in different myths and legends. Narration in Myths and legends helps us explore and impoverish protagonists in the realms of their unconsciousness.

In Sumerian mythology, the story of how the goddess Inanna descended to the nether world is a good example of a spiritual death and rebirth, which is an archetype

of a human's struggle in transitions. In Campbell's (2004) account, the journey into the "great below" is risky and it was likely that Inanna would face death:

She adorned herself with her queenly robes and jewels. Seven divine crees she fastened at her belt. She was ready to enter the "land of no return," the nether world of death and darkness, governed by her enemy and sister goddess, Ereshkigal. In fear, lest her sister should put her to death, Inanna instructed Ninshubur, her messenger, to go to heaven and set up a hue and cry for her in the assembly hall of the gods if after three days she should have failed to return. (p. 97)

The natural surge of energy and the determination to go through metamorphosis in human life is unexplainable, but it is a process that many of us have to go through to purgate and surrender to gain bliss and wholeness.

As Inanna descended and went through the seven portals, a part of her clothing was removed. Symbolically, she became more naked to her real self as her shields of defense were removed from her:

Upon her entering the first gate,

The shugurra, the "crown of the plain" of her head, was removed.

"What, pray, is this?"

“Extraordinarily, O Inanna, have the decrees of the nether world been
perfected,

O Inanna, do not question the rites of the nether world.”

Upon her entering the second gate,

The rod of lapis lazuli was removed.

“What, pray, is this?”

“Extraordinarily, O Inanna, have the decrees of the nether world been
perfected,

O Inanna, do not question the rites of the nether world.” . . .

Upon her entering the seventh gate,

All the garments of ladyship of her body were removed.

“What, pray, is this?”

“Extraordinarily, O Inanna, have the decrees of the nether world been
perfected,

O Inanna, do not question the rites of the nether world.”

As she was naked, rid of all the resistance and pride, virtue, beauty, and life,
she submitted before the throne of Ereshkigal, her sister goddess; Inanna found the
truth about herself. She and her opposite became one. This process symbolizes the

process of growth in which discarding what was or going beyond the external is an essential step to transformation.

In the process of a woman's growth, you will find a mythological touch of Inanna's experience. As a daughter experiences the process of differentiation, which may leave her feeling totally alone, unsupported, and abandoned because part of her, including her enmeshment with mother or people significant to her, would be like Inanna discarding her clothes.

Due to the nature of the mother-daughter relationship, the whole process of differentiation in my research subject may be problematic. The stronger it is at the conscious level, the more profound and disturbed it will be at the unconscious level. In this research, the mother-daughter relationship of the supervisor was problematic, but her resolution with her own mother has somehow impacted the star, which was also much enmeshed with her mother. In her quest to differentiate herself from her mother, she also built a new mother-daughter relationship with her therapist and supervisor.

Brister (1997) introduced another model for facing life's transitions, in which new visions:

That springs from quiet reflection and redefinition, fresh resolve, times of spiritual searching, revisioning values, nurturing dreams, and obeying the

Inner Voice . . . There is new sensitivity and appreciation of time, work, nature, and relationships . . . Life blooms with fresh resolve to make a difference in the world. (p.45)

Brister also cited characters from the Bible, like Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Samuel, and his mother Hannah, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Saul of Tarsus; they all changed life courses as the result of experiencing a sense of holy purpose.

The holy purpose echoes with the paradigm of the wounded-healer. Grant D. Miller and Dewitt C. Baldwin, Jr. (Baldwin & Satir, 1987) have a good discussion on this subject in relation to the use of self in therapy:

In the context of polarity, the concept of the wounded-healer takes on a powerful meaning for the helping professions. Indeed, the paradox of one who heals and yet remains wounded lies at the heart of the mystery of healing.

Jung (1958) refers to the wounded-healer paradox when he states, “only the wounded doctor can heal,” while Guggenbuhl-Craig (1971) maintains that a healer-patient archetype exists and is activated each time a person becomes ill . . . Not only does the patient have a hidden inner healer, but the healer has a hidden inner patient, and healer and patient frequently cast mutual projections upon each other on their hidden parts. Real cure can only take place if the patient gets in touch with and receives help from his inner healer.

And this can only happen if the projections . . . are withdrawn. . . , the healer must be in touch with and be aware of his own wounded side, if these projections are to be withdrawn. If the projections remain, both healer and patient attempt to manipulate the other to conform to inner need. (Baldwin & Satir, 1987, pp. 141–142)

A very interesting delicate interactive dynamic exists in the helping relationship. It is important that we commit the relationship to continuous self-growth and self-awareness so that the essential helping paradigm will not be hampered. Besides, supervision becomes extremely important for therapists to maintain their effectiveness.

Virginia Satir (1991) was well aware of the power of spirituality in the helping relationship. She called it the third level of congruence in her book, *Satir Model*, in which she was making reference to it as life energy and life force. The power of spirituality allows one to move into harmony with one's spiritual essence. Satir also explained it in the following way:

Being in the universe, we have access to the energy from the center of the earth, which brings us our groundedness; and from the heavens, which brings us our intuition. These are there for us at any time. We are already part of it. Our job is to know it and access it. When we do, we create that third energy,

which allows us to move out to those on the outside who are ready. Not those who we desire should be ready—only those who are” (Satir et al., 1991, p.81)

This piece is taken from one of Satir’s meditations in which she was addressing connecting to one’s being, the core of oneself where there is the energy of one’s life force. She also noted that, “when I can be in touch with another person’s spiritual energy, and he or she with mine, there is a change in the state of consciousness” (Satir et al., 1991, p. 81). That is why she stressed the importance of being congruent, by which, she felt “the therapist can create a context of trust and caring” and “enables the patient to dispel his or her fears and begin to explore new growth patterns.” The change of energy happens at the time when “the meeting of the deepest self of the therapist with the deepest self of the patient or client” (p. 81). The change of state of consciousness is when the energy exchange takes place.

The Altered Consciousness and its Role in the Process of Change

Human experience is created by a complicated process that until recently was explained by interpersonal neurobiology, which draws on a wide array of ways of knowing. There is a synthetic analysis that emerges from a process of integration, defined as having a FACES flow, which includes the following elements: flexibility, adaption, coherence, energy, and stability. The FACES anagram was first coined by Daniel Siegel (2007). In the flow of mental process, it is” flexible, adaptive, and

stable like a river” (Siegel, 2007,p.199). Siegel suggests that mindfulness will promote neural integration, which enables mental coherence. He proposes that neural integration entails coordination and balance in the functioning of the brain. He claims that the one reality of well-being includes neural integration, mental coherence, and empathic relationship.

The altered consciousness plays an important part in the process of change. It is a state of fluidity where alterations in both the content and the functioning of the consciousness will happen. Altered consciousness arises when the dominating influence of our rational conscious mind is reduced, allowing us to become more aware of the information we are receiving from our sensory conscious mind. When the sensory conscious mind processes its information based on the same sensory circuits that the subconscious mind utilizes, it is able to access the storehouse of the subconscious mind more quickly.

Therapists often work with the altered consciousness by putting clients in a meditative mode or narration. Out of a meditative or mindful state deep character issues and the client’s habit of coping and defense may arise. This state is also recognized as a “child state” (Kurtz, 1990, p.134), where a felt sense of experience of how the child first perceived the world from the child’s perspective is kept. It is also known as the core material, which may be painful. It also includes creativity and

aliveness when one returns to this state, which is also the state of his wholeness. If this energy of aliveness can be tapped, it will generate support, curiosity, existential responsibility, and truth. According to Eisman and Kurtz, this psychic core is vital to the transformation that we hope to bring to a client (Eisman, 2000–2001; Kurtz, 1990).

Sometimes change happens between consciousness and altered consciousness. It is also associated with mysticism, because it is significantly different from a normal waking beta wave state. In fact, these states or stages of behavior are quite common among religious practices. In prayer, meditative practices, and other enlightenment experiences, one feels a unity with God or the universe as one goes through or progresses in some altered consciousness. To some, these experiences are also recognized as transcendental experience, which render feelings of overwhelming joy or ecstasy, while for others these are experiences of bliss and peace, where self-awareness sets in quietly.

Sometimes, other experiences, like illnesses and accidents, can also cause altered consciousness or mystical experiences. To some people, great pain can release a neurochemical response and cause mystical experience. In this dissertation, pain opens an avenue into the process of change as the subject experienced intense pain in therapy and after therapy.

Ron Kurtz (2007), a pioneer in the area of body psychotherapy, has described in detail how he maneuvered between the different levels of consciousness in his work. He recalled how he evoked the child and attuned to his client:

Once I asked a woman who had come from out-of-state to work with me, how she'd gotten here. She told me that she'd come by plane. As she started telling me about all the things she saw look out the window and got quickly into being a child again..... Another time, there was a woman sitting in my waiting room when I arrived at the office. There was something in the way she was sitting and looking at me. I knew her, but I'd never worked with her before. I felt she was close to her child. I walked up to her, touched the tip of her nose and asked with that same special voice, "What's this?" She turned right into a three-year old and went into my office, I was saying to the child, "You're unhappy about something, aren't you." "In working with the child, the first thing to do is to make contact. Basically it's done by shifting your manner and tone of voice. You just start talking as if you were talking to a child. (pp. 134–135)

He thought that it is important to work with both the adult and the child because it is:

A great opportunity to do some integrating. The attunement will allow the client to relive some painful experience and to watch it at the same time. It is a

great chance to understand one's history, combining the emotional intensity of childhood with the reasoning capabilities of an adult. In a way, it's the best of both worlds. (p. 135)

In this example, Kurtz was working with an altered consciousness, which helped him gain access to the client's core. This stage of mind is called mindfulness, which is the royal road to the unconscious, or implicit, pre-reflective consciousness.

Johansson (2006) discussed the application of mindfulness, both in therapy and in personal life, at length in his paper, *A Survey of the Use of Mindfulness in Psychotherapy*. He quoted Nyanaponika Thera (1972) as saying that "Mindfulness enters deeply into its object . . . This concept is attractive to therapists who have found that clients continually rehashing their stories in ordinary consciousness can indeed begin to feel superficial."(p.52) He also claims that the practice of mindfulness will bring, "the capacity of deferring action and applying the brake.... Of suspending judgment while pausing for observation of facts and wise reflection..." (p.25).

Johanson said:

Mindfulness can thus be in the service of reorganizing deep structures, as well as provide distance and perspective on the inner ecology of our egos. It can be used as the main therapeutic tool within a session, as well as a life-long practice and skill during and beyond psychotherapy." (p.6)

Johanson and Kurtz (1991) also highlighted the difference between the Western and the Eastern psychology, an important change in the perspective in order for healing and understanding to occur in his book, *Grace Unfolding*. He introduces the Hakomi Method, which uses mindful as a way to access unconscious material. He also states that the approach represents a bridge between the East and the West. Western psychology concerns itself with the healing of the fragmented ego or self, while Eastern psychology assists people in achieving the unity consciousness of the no-self. By attaining to the practice of using mindfulness to distant oneself from the immediacy of how one organizes experience, one could release oneself from the emotional arrest of the fragmented self.

Satir recognized that meditation is a way to spiritual consciousness, which is a strong influence in healing. She was well known for using different ways of helping people enter and make use of their right brain. Her practice of breathing, feelings, and concentration clearly showed that her work in body-psychotherapy was the work of a pioneer (Satir et al., 1991). Later she incorporated a deeper level of mindfulness as she stressed the importance of living more fully in the immediacy of the moment and of heightening the awareness of what was going on at the moment. In her book, *The Satir Model* (Satir et al., 1991), she outlined the following, which she saw were important indicators that one was utilizing the right brain, “Focus their energy,

Preview the work ahead, Open their brain's affective, intuitive right hemisphere, Quiet their inner dialogue, Be more fully present in the 'now,' Open new choices and new possibilities, Integrate their parts and resources" (p.186). The following is an example of a demonstrations on family reconstruction from Maria Gomori (2008), showing how the meditation she conducted has incorporated all of the above elements and prepares her start to work in the right brain in the "now" moment:

With your next breath, give yourself a deep message of appreciation for your own life force. Maybe you can get in touch with the day you were born and just like all of us, coming into this world with a purpose and with all the potential to grow.

With your next breath would you appreciate that part of the universal life force which is unique of yours. From the time you were very young, you already knew in your families what to expect from others and what to expect from yourself in order to survive. And all of us, when we were little children learned one way or another to survive. And all these learnings as we grew up stayed with us in many unique ways. We learned who we were. Just reflect for a moment with your next breath how much learning went into it – how you became the person you are today. And with your next breath, would you send

a message of appreciation for your family of origin, for the loving hands and the teachings you got.

Would you appreciate your mother and your father and all the people in the family? And then with your next breath, would you go one step beyond and appreciate the parents of your father and the parents of your mother. And just get in touch with all of the families before you, all the traditions, the values, the beliefs which came to you as learnings.

And now we will see a family, which is (star's name) family, and we will find out how you learned who you are today, how you struggled, how you dreamed and what you did with your learnings. And would you give appreciation for this moment to you to be as generous as you are, sharing this with us.

With your next breath, would you just imagine that your father was a little baby just like you were and as he grew up, he had dreams and he had learnings and what happened to his dreams. And would you appreciate him and your mother, who was also a little baby when she was born. And would you appreciate her struggles, her dreams and her whole life.

And as we grew up, we made choices every single day. At the beginning we are dependent on other people. We are powerless and helpless

when we are small. As we grew up, we wanted our parents to validate us. And when we are adults, we often see ourselves as they saw us.

The purpose of this process today is to look into the past in order to appreciate what we learned, to find out what we no longer need. Some of the old learnings we don't need to use anymore.

And so we can make new choices to find out who we are and who we want to be, to let go of what we no longer need, and to become much more whole. As human beings we never stop learning. We are enriched with our resources and we are part of the universal energy.

And at this minute, would you get in touch with your own energy – energy of the earth which comes through your feet and travels to your heart. And would you appreciate this with your next breath – this energy coming to you. And feel your groundedness, your ability to make choices, your ability to be responsible for yourself. And then would you appreciate the energy which comes from the heavens, which flows down your heart and provides your energy for creativity, for sensitivity, and for loving. And those two energies dance around your heart and as a rainbow spreads out through your arms to the world as you connect with other people. This is energy which is present here right now since we are all connected. And I would like you to appreciate

that we have an opportunity to connect on the level of our spirituality and our level of oneness.

In this process we are going to ask you to role play. We will externalize feelings and we are asking the role players just to be themselves.

In this process we connect on the level of humanness. And I hope that today's experience is not only for (the star's name) but for all of us. Through his work and his example, you can connect with your choices and your opportunities and any change you want for your own wholeness. So just take a big breath and relax.

And if there is any anxiety in any part of your body, just breathe into it and let it go and bring here your curiosity and your courage and your loving for other people and your loving for yourself. And now just spend one moment to go inside and give yourself a loving message, calling yourself by your own name. Say to you, "I love me. I appreciate me. I value myself and I am also willing to share my love during everything that is going to happen here today" (pp. 189–191)

Meditation itself will not change a person, but it is a state of mind in which a lot of things can happen. Satir saw the possibilities and she used meditation. It was her common practice to ask workshop participants to sit comfortably and start their

learning with a meditative mood. In the technique of family reconstruction, the immediacy and the being in the now moment has heightened and allowed awareness to surface.

The Application of Metaphor in the Process of Change

Satir understood the limitation of language. She used metaphors generously in her intervention. By using pictures she helped engage her clients' intuition to bring about perceptual change beyond the intellectual realm.

Metaphor will activate the whole brain, and thus facilitate a whole person's participation. It can also impact our individual and collective evolution to a trans-egoic state of consciousness and bridge a gap between the cognitive and psychic realms. Psychotherapists have also found that metaphors can impact how clients think of themselves (McMullen & Conway, 1996). Often times, both clients and therapists discover insights in their understanding of different levels of self beyond their consciousness. The vehicles of change in the Satir Model include many metaphoric processes; for instance, coping stances, Parts Parties, and the use of ropes are good metaphors to externalize people's internal processes.

Fine, Pollio, and Simpkinson (1972) have mentioned two functions of metaphor in psychotherapy. Its first function is to enable a client to improve his or her awareness and to be able to draw out emotions, which are currently out of

consciousness. Another function is to bring the client to the interactive process in a less threatening context. Aleksandrowicz (1962) regards metaphor as a defense, which allows anxiety laden conflicts to be expressed more easily. The application of metaphor will put distance between the client and the therapist, thus relieving the intensity of the situation. In the Satir Model we find a good application and understanding of humanness in how metaphors and images are used to avoid direct confrontation and allow room for self-initiation and creativity to take effect.

The Stages in The Process of Change

Change is a natural process that unfolds over time. Biologically, cells in our bodies divide and perish constantly, as a self-maintaining and healing process. Even though we do not see changes outwardly, they happen constantly inside us at a molecular level.

James O. Prochaska (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 2004) raises the question of how people change, and he advocates the need to find how people change within and between therapy sessions in the field of psychotherapy in order to formulate a system that can guide us (therapists and clients) to chart the unknown land of change. He began his quest with a comparative analysis of the major systems of psychotherapy. Ten processes were identified and studied empirically (p.228). They compared people who were under treatment to those on their own, and they discovered a phenomenon

not considered in any of the leading theories of therapy. It was interesting how people took part in a process of self-healing in which “people apply particular processes to progress to the next stage” (p.229). He has identified developmental and environmental events that are driving forces for change to take place.

He has also discovered that change is a process that unfolds over time, which involves a progression of six stages: pre-contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination. Pre-contemplation is a time when clients are uninformed or under-informed about the consequences of their behavior. At this stage they may also be quite defensive, which is interpreted as resistant and unmotivated. However, early interventions are helpful.

For planned interventions, understanding what would happen could be quite helpful to both the therapists and the clients. Satir called this stage the *status quo*, in which she hypothesized that there is protection and resistance in the system. Her systemic view goes beyond the apparent symptoms, but touches base with the people involved, understanding and accepting their positions as a starting place from which to move on. Resistance is considered a survival resource for people of an unhealthy system. Her positive attitude and humanistic disposition has made it easier for clients to commit themselves to change, rather than spending more energy defending and resisting.

Prochaska also found certain conditions needed to exist for the phases to progress from one to the next. He called these *principles of change*. In the first principle, he advocated identification of all the benefits or pros of changing. In the second principle, he found that if the cons of changing were lower in action than in contemplation, change would progress. In the third principle, he found that the pros and the cons must cross-over for people to be prepared to take action. Principle four is the “strong principle” of progress which suggests the pros of changing must increase one standard deviation (p.240). Whereas, the fifth and the sixth principles suggest the cons of changing must decrease one-half standard deviation, and particular processes of change need to be matched to specific stages of change. Evidently, Prochaska translates human dynamics into cognitive factors and mathematical calculations. Satir had adopted a more humanistic approach to look for an internal shift, rather than an external change in terms of a person’s change of self-worth. Gomorie (2008) discussed how change takes place in several steps, both internally and externally. She stressed a tendency in the family system to maintain its equilibrium. Even families that suffer from stress in the system have their own ways of maintaining their wholeness. She claimed that, “There is predictability and a knowing in this equilibrium, but sometimes there is a price to pay” (p. 69). However, when the internal and external stress reaches an intolerable level, the system is forced to look

into options for change. Conflicts, stress, and problems are often trigger points for change. When a person reaches his or her threshold for change, the person experiences chaos and unpredictability, and these are necessary steps prior to change. She proposed that the chaotic stage is a high-energy state that can lead to new possibilities and choices. As change is an inevitable part of life, it is necessary to learn to tolerate chaos before new equilibrium is reached between changes.

Prochaska Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 2004) [article in book?] introduced nine processes with clients in specific stages of change, namely, “1. Consciousness raising, 2. Dramatic relief, 3. Environmental reevaluation, 4. Self-evaluation, 5. Self-liberation, 6. Counter-conditioning, 7. Contingency management, 8. Stimulus control and 9. Helping relationships” (pp. 241–244). It is interesting to add the Satir perspective on these stages when they are followed through in the technique of family reconstruction:

1. Consciousness raising

The purpose of consciousness raising is to increase the pros of changing. The process of family reconstruction often enhances one’s awareness by externalizing his or her inner conflicts. Being in line with hope and positive directional goals in the Satir Model, the focus is moved from problem solving into connecting and enhancing the feeling of closeness, on the result and satisfaction of intimacy.

2. Dramatic relief

Emotions can move people to contemplate changing. Psychodrama, role-playing, grieving, and personal testimonies are good examples of techniques that would move people emotionally. Even when the star is insensitive to his or her feelings, the stand-ins can help verbalize and express the true emotions. The acknowledgement of feeling will foster better self-esteem when feelings are respected in their own right. As the therapist models congruence in his or her communication, the client will be released from his or her defenses. It is the beginning of more congruent communication, which will bring about greater freedom of choice and responsibility in one's inner process.

3. Environmental reevaluation

This combines both emotional and cognitive assessment of how one's behavior affects one's social environment. It is important to the inherited hierarchical model of human growth to find out that is right or wrong. But as the communication between emotion and cognition continues, there will be a cooperative effort to find out what works.

4. Self-reevaluation

This process involves moving back and forth, both cognitively and affectively, viewing one's image free from a particular problem. The employment of stand-ins and roles will allow the client to move between cognition and affect to develop a more precise conception of the situations. The movement in the drama will engage the client to a future focus.

5. Self-liberation

This includes both the belief that one can change and the commitment and recommitment to act on that belief. The Satir Model suggests five freedoms as the ultimate goals of therapy where one finds choice.

6. Counter-conditioning

It implies a substitute or replacement to old files. When a client is moved back in history, he or she can look at it again cognitively and rationally, make better choices, and eventually replace or update the old files. The building of new circuit will eventually replace the old ones.

7. Contingency management

Self-reinforcements are encouraged through putting the client in new positions and stances to replace survival ones. When one chooses with new awareness, he or she is making conscious choice and is managing him or herself with internal force. The Satir Model places a lot of trust on the client that change

may happen in the inside, even though we do not see desirable outcomes.

Instead of making plans contingent on outside situations, a Satir therapist will continue to instill hope and celebrate efforts made.

8. Stimulus control

This involves modifying the environment, and in the case of family reconstruction, one can experiment adjusting and changing positions and stances (ways of coping) to appreciate what changes will bring. The Satir therapist will make reference to the change inside, while the client experiences changes outside to track the process of change.

9. Helping relationship

By helping relationship, we are referring to caring, openness, trust, and acceptance that provide support for change. Therapeutic alliance is emphasized in the Satir Model. It goes beyond good terms and building of a good working relationship. It calls for equality of value. Satir's explanation of promoting such equality is to allow the capacity to be whole, and to embrace the idea that we are beautiful and capable manifestations of life. In the case of family reconstruction, the client is considered the star of the process in which he knows best what he wants and where the process should go and stop. The guide will follow closely on the star's cues, trusting in the process.

Integration of the Parts of Self in the Change Process

Satir (Satir et al., 1991) introduced people's sub-personalities as parts. Her approach in doing a Parts Party is to look closely at the many parts human beings have and how people handle and can transform them into resources for being whole and congruent. In the process of change, she helped her clients identify, transform, and integrate their inner resources. She also called parts *facets*, which mean possibilities. The parts are often organized in terms of good and bad, thus making some of our resources unavailable and the unable to move freely.

Richard Schwartz (1995), the originator of the Internal Family System (IFS) has high praise for Satir's work on combining the study of intrapsychic sub-personalities with systems theory. She was regarded as a pioneer in studying the parts of people; she was also the only prominent family therapist to write about parts of people.

Swartz(1995) also notes that several family therapists who have dealt with people's parts in different ways use techniques/models that are similar to IFS, which is like a system of the mind in which a system is:

Composed of smaller systems (subsystems) but is also part of larger systems, just as a state contains counties and cities but is also part of a nation. Thus, depending on one's point of view, any entity being examined will be the

system-of-focus, a subsystem of the system-of-focus, or the larger system containing the system-of-focus . . . the family is the system-of-focus; the family members and their relationships are subsystems; and the family's ethnic community or society is a larger system. (p. 17)

The IFS model was developed with the idea and understanding that our minds are naturally multiple. Extreme feelings or thoughts are the result of only part of us, rather than a pathology of our cores. It is more helpful to interpret critical or hurtful things that loved ones say about us as only opinions of one or two angry personalities within them. Swartz also reforms psychiatric care and maintains that:

Many medical or psychiatric symptoms can be reframed along similar lines.

The clusters of symptoms that traditionally result in monolithic psychiatric diagnosis can be seen through the lens of multiplicity as manifestations of the way a person's system of inner personalities has organized to help the person survive. Rather than diagnosing a person's disease, then, a multiplicity-oriented therapist can help the person explore his or her system of inner parts to understand which of them are distressed and why. (p. 16–17)

For many family therapists, it is assumed that the family system level is the most important system level to change that trickles down to each member's inner life.

Swartz suggests going beyond the external family system. He explains parts as

sub-personalities and:

It is a discrete and autonomous mental system that has an idiosyncratic range of emotion, style of expression, set of abilities, desires and view of the world.

In other words, it is as if we each contain a society of people, each of whom is different and has different interests, talents, and temperaments. (Swartz, 1995, p.6)

The dramatization of the parts in the Parts Party in Satir's original design is to bring the intrapsychic to the external and conscious level.

In the process of change, parts are unlocked from their prescribed roles to move from a survival stance to discover what they are really like. When one is not overwhelmed by one's rejected parts and becomes self-led, the person can get to know what is going on inside, and healing emerges. It was found that people become involved in focused activities in deep concentration and with an absence of distracting thoughts when they are actively engaged in their lives; they are not concerned about rewards other than the activity itself and a feeling of transcendence. It is also known as self-leadership, which takes place when one can take charge internally and externally.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH

Research Method

Clark Moustakas (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985) first describes the heuristic process as, a way of being informed and a way of knowing, which fits perfectly with my quest to know. In this research I will go into different avenues of perception, senses, and intuition to discover and gather data. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) described this tacit knowing as a basic capacity of the self of the researcher that gives “birth to the hunches and vague, formless insights that characterize heuristic discovery” (p.49). I will follow my hunches in my research in a process Moustakas called indwelling, nonlinear, sometimes illogical, but I will allow my intuition to take the lead.

Virginia described the process in family reconstruction; she introduced the holographic memory and its resolution in therapy. When she applied the technique she used the creative abilities of the mind to move the old scene with the charged affect from the nervous system, and replace it with a new scene, envisioned as a healing scene with positive effect on the nervous system. Clearly, she is using intuition, which is an indwelling part of her and of many psychodynamic therapists, but it does not

warrant a logical explanation or scientific inquisition. So often it is described as magical, but Moustakas (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985) gave a more detail explanation of it: “The indwelling process is conscious and deliberate, yet it is not linear or logical. It follows clues wherever they appear; one dwells inside them and expands their meanings and associations until a fundamental insight is achieved.” (p.24). In both the process of therapy and this research, I have trusted my intuition to guide the heuristic process.

This problem with the old scene is also called the “*impaired integration*” by Daniel Siegel (2010), a prominent figure in the contemporary healing scene who combines psychotherapy and neuroscience. The therapist is the source of creativity to facilitate and activate the discovery and the creation of a new scene; her internal process is involved in the coherent integration, and it will also be the subject of study.

This research will incorporate the client’s input over her choice in the client’s storied life. Narrative theorist Michael White had special insight into how people give meaning to their lives and relationships by storying their experience in a certain way. When a person seeks therapy, that person may envision an alternative way to re-story his or her life. In this research we will find big shifts in how one stories one’s life in the motion of transformation.

I have worked with the technique of family reconstruction for over ten years. It always amazes me when I am told how differently people see things after the therapy. In this research I want to ask the question how the way one organizes one's story corresponds to the process of change and healing. In order to confirm the discovery, the investigation touches the healing ingredients and the helper-helpee dynamic. I have included the process of entrenchment I experience on the side as a healer. I experience changes in myself through my practice and at the same time these changes impact my subject's transformation.

For this dissertation I have used the data from the written reports of a student named D, whom I met in several courses and who also remained in the seminary for an extended period. Her story somewhat resembles a longitudinal study. The ways she storied her life and re-storied it after therapy and after she had gained skills in reflection and self-awareness has given the best data to study the process of change. I have also included my own process to demonstrate a parallel process that goes side by side with D's healing and growth.

The Supervisor's Process

From time to time I heard from an inner voice or received inspiration to plan my course of life and make crucial decisions about teaching and doing therapy. I was often amazed by the precision and the wisdom of such inner guidance.

In 1998, I started teaching a personal growth course at a seminary. As I put together the materials, I was astonished by the fact that I was actually using my own protocol for the curriculum. I also supervise practicum students who have developed very intimate relationships with me and who look at me as a mentor and role model. Many of them share the experience that my life has impacted on theirs, and there have been a lot of similar obstacles that I have overcome earlier.

Over the years, many students have revealed to me that I touched the very core of their lives. My story somehow resonated with theirs, and there have been several students who stayed on to work in my counseling center and receive supervision from me. In their growth process, I was strongly compelled by the principle of entrenchment to influence and impact my students to become the kind of therapists they want and to actualize their dreams. I am also well aware of the parallel process between me and my supervisees. As a rule of thumb, I work diligently and congruently to improve my awareness and to achieve wholeness; consequently, I hope will also improve the people I help.

An Inner Guidance

I have spent a large part of my life living independently and on my own. I am saying this in terms of the situation of my family of origin. My parents divorced when I was eight years old. I officially lived with my father, but he was absent most of the

time. So I learned early on that I need to ask for help from a higher divine force for comfort and guidance, or, for the most part, I have to be self-sufficient.

Throughout the years it has occurred to me that there is a higher hand guiding my path, and its voice sometimes comes through to me while I am in a meditative mood or dreaming. I recognize this voice as the Holy Spirit, which yields shape to an inner voice, an intuition, a picture, a metaphor, a helping hand in time of need, and a vision I never dreamed would happen. Somehow, the inner voice, intuition work together to coordinate my life and help me feel peaceful and safe and help me be able to practice counseling.

This dissertation is a product of this inner guidance. Only when I sat down to write did I realize that I started gathering and asking questions about the change process more than ten years ago. The materials I have included in this dissertation came from different sources of training, previous connections, and books that I have obtained due to a quest for answers and a curiosity to know. I do not follow the traditional methodologies that tend to confine the investigation to a preconceived hypothesis. Heuristic research allows me to follow the lead wherever I intuitively feel guided to go. Just as Douglas and Moustakes (1985) pointed out: “Learning that proceeds heuristically has a path of its own. It is self-directed, and open to spontaneous shifts” (p. 44).

Professional Training and Research

I started learning the Satir Model in 1999. For over ten years I gradually integrated more and more of the beliefs of this model into my work and my personal life. I studied the technique of family reconstruction with Marie Gomorie in 1998 for two years. I was fascinated, but was not able to fully grasp the technique. Driven by a quest to know, I continued to practice using the technique for over ten years and have interviewed clients several years after the work.

Among many clients and students with whom I have worked, I chose to focus on D. because she was closely attached to me. We both had an issue with our mothers. While motherhood is a main theme in our growth and development, we both have taken up similar roles as caregivers and developers in different settings. In the context of this unique relationship between us, I find that the mutual empathic process led to a heightened development of self in both of us. The interaction has brought about stimulus for growth of empowerment and self-knowledge for both of us.

My Counseling Practices

To understand how and why I have come to do what I am doing, I must go back to my family of origin and my early recollection to find the answers. I learned very early in life that life itself can be very unpredictable. I knew very early on that my life has to be connected to a higher power in order for me to stay afloat in my life.

Spirituality has always been an important part of me and has a long root in my background. The journey to make meaning out of life and to build my sense of trust was also a long one. Many significant things happened and facilitated my way of self-healing and self-discovery. I have learned many coping patterns for survival, but as I become more self-accepting I start to modify and change myself.

My Early Experience

I was the first child of a handsome couple. My father was quite successful in his business when I was born, and there were menservants and maidservants around the house. Of course, I was given a lot of attention very early on in life. My father took a particular liking to me because I bear a resemblance to him. So, in my early memory I felt like a princess, a very privileged one. I was very close to my father and was grateful for the extra attention he gave me. However, I can only vaguely remember my mother, because she always had something else to attend to. I grew very attached to my father.

My life took a sharp turn when I was eight. My mother suddenly disappeared. My father told me that she ran away with someone. Then I remember endless days and nights of stories of her betrayal. My father, who used to be a giant, suddenly collapsed right before my eyes. Soon his business tumbled down, and I lost all the privileges that I used to enjoy. I was turned into the caregiver and emotional provider

for the family almost overnight. I took up the responsibility willingly and did the best I could to manage the house. He was gone most of the time. The house was always gloomy and dark without my father. I can remember endless days and nights longing and waiting for his return. On many occasions, money was scarce; I and my brother went to sleep with no food. I often sense coldness as I talk about this period of time. Almost at the same time, I was molested by a manservant at home and a teacher at school. However, I survived this period of turmoil because I reasoned with myself that it was only a nightmare and one day my father would return and right the wrongs.

My problems were compounded when my father lived with another woman, who became my stepmother later on. I experienced a severe power struggle with her for quite a number of years, until I became a Christian at seventeen. There was a critical time when my father had to choose between us, and eventually I was advised to leave home at the age of fifteen. That experience trained me to live independently and established my identity as a survivor. The exit from home turned out to be a very positive thing because I was able to unhook myself from the emotional burden that I had inherited from my family.

Turning Point in My Teenage Years

I started living with my maternal grandmother at eighteen. She had cancer and thought she wanted to spend some quality time with me. Before our reunion, we had

very limited contact with her because she had divorced my grandfather and remarried. Her marriage had created the same kind of suffering like what I had experienced from my mother, so my grandmother was rejected both by my own mother and later by my father. I liked her because she was very nice to the grandchildren. As she returned her homage to God, she also helped me establish my association with a church family. My grandmother died two years after our reunion but her impact on my life is still having an effect to this day. She is the model of a good loving and giving mother.

My father died soon after my grandmother's departure. My grief for him was very great, but I suppressed it with my strong rational mind, because I knew I would totally collapse if I did not. I managed to deal with it on several occasions later on in life, when I was more resourceful. I experienced deep grief at both deaths, but slowly I recovered and I am able to deal realistically with death and parting with loved ones.

My Marriage

I married at twenty-four, a year after my graduation from college. I knew my husband in high school, and we shared a common life goal. Marriage has gradually changed my outlook of life. I became more connected with my husband's family. Marriage has allowed me to change my role from the eldest daughter of the family to the youngest and the most protected one among the siblings. My husband's cheerful

disposition has a balancing effect on the melancholic qualities I have inherited from my family. To put it simply, he provides shelter for my weary self.

After marriage I enjoyed a long period of peace and quiet. My husband provided a safe haven for me, because I did not need to shoulder the responsibilities of the first born. I did not have my first child until eleven years later. The long adjustment period allowed me to reorganize myself and to align myself to meet the challenge of the busy life of the ministry I was called to do. I was able to pursue my interest in counseling and guidance. However, the biggest breakthrough took place when I had to deal with my relationship with my mother. Shortly before I became a mother myself, I reconciled with my mother, and that has helped me settle my sudden outburst of anger and regain control over my emotions.

Now I am a mother of two daughters, and I enjoy an intimate relationship with them. Ten years ago, I even invited my mother-in-law to live with us. With her addition to the family, we maintain a more stable dynamic, even with a very hectic work schedule. My husband appreciates the arrangement because he can provide care for his mother more readily and easily.

I have tried to sketch some the significant things in my life. But the more I reflect on what have happened in my life, the more I realize that there are many aspects to each incidence. I have tried to go through them and have worked on many

issues in my life. I think I will continue to work on my own healing process. To me, at this point, there is no urgency in dealing with any particular issue, but rather a desire to be able to utilize my learning in different incidences to enhance my practice.

My Growth in Counseling Practice

Throughout the years, I have used journal writing to gain better self-understanding and I also used it as a venue for self-therapy and healing. As I embark on my psychotherapy journey, I generously employ meditation and prayer, because a quiet mind enables me to accumulate new learnings. There are also other tools that I have picked up from my professional training that have added to my capacity for self-growth. Family reconstruction and psychodrama have allowed me to come to terms with my family of origin and to tap the resources I have inherited from it. About ten years ago, I enrolled in a professional counseling training program in the Satir Model. Through group interaction I was able to see my way of coping and how I reacted to people. I have also learned to use dreams to unlock information at the subconscious level. As my self-understanding increases I have a better grip on my intuition.

I find myself learning constantly, trying to keep abreast of the changes and new developments in psychotherapy, but I think my most helpful reference always comes from my clients. Their struggles and their intention to grow have become my

encouragement and inspiration to continue in this career. As my understanding and my acceptance of family dynamics changes, my focus has gradually shifted from a personal to a family-oriented approach.

Major Discoveries in My Self-Therapy

Of all my self-discoveries and growth, I distinctly remember two things as being most helpful in my psychotherapy journey. In 1984 I was heavily involved in a student ministry at my church in Oklahoma City. In order to develop and help new believers settle in their spiritual lives, I did discipleship training with them for four years. As I trained other people, I experienced tremendous growth myself. My habit of practicing meditation on a regular basis was established at that time. It has proven very helpful in my practice, because I can quickly ground myself in any situation, allowing myself to be consciously aware of what is going on within myself.

Another thing I think is significant to me to this day is my reconciliation with my mother. It was a long and winding road to meeting and accepting my mother. I thought of numerous excuses to avoid it. Then I realized anger was in fact a life force to me. Abandoning my anger toward my mother would mean abandoning everything I had, including my meaning of existence. I felt a drive from my inner wisdom to become whole. I yearned to be connected with my femininity, which used to be represented by my mother, and which I rejected strongly. But now, the experience of

coming to terms with my mother had secured a sense of triumph, like a well of strength that I could constantly draw from in my practice. Through reconciliation I regained my femininity and enjoy being a woman.

My Spiritual Journey

I have a very personal and intimate relationship with God as the result of many upheavals and struggles in my life. I actively seek God whenever I sense major crises in my life. I used to feel that I was on my own. I projected a rescuer-father image on God. My expectation and my yearnings have driven me to Him, but at the same time they drove me away from Him. I wanted Him, but at the same time was afraid of losing Him. In 1979, I left Hong Kong for the United States with my husband. We responded to a call for mission. At that time, we both saw ourselves as a ministry team, and many incidents had reinforced such a thought.

My vocation in full time ministry was inspired by Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” My understanding is that I always responded to God like a daughter to her beloved father in whatever fashion that He sees fit. I am a unique person; therefore my training to do the job is also uniquely tailor-made for me.

My Experience in Group Process and Psychotherapy

My first exposure in group was in 1978, when I attended a Human Resources Development Seminar offered by a commercial establishment. At that time I was still in the aftermath of a burn-out syndrome. I was overwhelmed by the impact of group work. The facilitator used Transactional Analysis to help us see how I related to the external world. To my dismay, I discovered myself a placating adopted child. Later, my experience in self-awareness and personal growth came from a contact group I helped facilitate.

I did not fully participate in a group as a member until 1999. I joined two Freudian analytical groups for two consecutive years. In the process, I have reflected on my coping, my sense of self, and my relationship with significant others. I realized my yearnings for love was a strong driving force for achievement. I went through a long chaotic stage to unlock my freedom to feel, because the drive to achieve was so strong that I inhibited the expression of my real self.

My Experience in Family Reconstruction

Throughout the training in family reconstruction, I have experienced a lot of changes in my perception of self. I was invited to play different selves of the stars, which allowed me to experiment and get in touch with the different parts of me. There were three parts that I remembered particularly well. As I played the yearning part of

a wife who faced her husband's super-reasonable stance, I became alienated and lonely. I felt that I was treated like a little girl and punished for not being able to meet the standard of requirement. The stuckness resembled a similar situation in my marriage. I could not reach my husband with my feeling self. He was not able to deal with the demands of this part of me and resolved this through avoidance. I touched a deep sadness within me that I could not understand at that time, but it gradually unfolded. I realized that it came from my mother, who constantly felt rejected in her marriage. She married my father, who was much older than she was, and she was also inferior to him because of his higher social status. Besides, my father never expressed affection or fondness for her. Ironic as it sounded, he also had very low self-esteem and was not sure of his commitment in getting married at that time.

Another self that had an enduring impact on me was an irrelevant part of me. I was placed between a star's husband and her parents. Being needed between two families I kept myself busy and became irrelevant to avoid having close contact with anyone. I did not like the irrelevant stance, and I could not recall any instance when I played that stance but it suddenly dawned on me that it was my grandmother who was always irrelevant when she was drunk. I did not know that I could be so irrelevant, until I was put into a stressful situation.

I could also see myself in a rescuer's role that kept me away from building equal and intimate relationships with other people. The discovery has helped me clarify some confused motives in some over-involvement in my work. I realized this part of me out of survival needs, because I constantly need to rescue different members of my family in order to survive. I was suddenly thrown into a caregiver role when my mother disappeared; I had to work very hard to maintain a family. There were many crises that I had to manage to stay afloat.

Finally, there was the role of an ideal mother. I was very surprised to be chosen to play the part of a mother, because I rejected the role of motherhood. It was ironic that I portrayed an ideal mother. In real life I experience the pressure of a perfect mother, because I expect my two children to be faultless. Such expectation has often driven my children away from me. The ideal image has caused a lot of strain on both sides. The realization forced me to explore other options.

The most astonishing discovery was from my own piece of family reconstruction. I felt a strong sense of embarrassment as I saw how my child self worshipped my father and begged him to marry her. Out of idealization I adored my father and grew very strongly attached to him. The scene was disturbing to the point that I had to rush through the process to get over it. I felt so sad, because I was only a little girl but he wanted a mature woman. I could not cry. I suppressed it and held on

to my sadness, but as soon as someone gently embraced me, I collapsed in her arms. I cried continuously and unceasingly for a long time and re-experienced the grief and sadness that I have held back for many years. It was also like a last farewell to my father and to my little girl part.

After the process, everyone felt relieved, and they commented that they were happy to see the “human side” of me. They revealed that I had always portrayed myself as invincible. The crying catharsis had helped me lower my defenses and release the tension of the inner, weaker self. Gradually I learned to accept it.

During the process I felt supported and valued by my group. Time was limited, but everyone was willing to participate. Even though I had other issues that were not dealt with, I think the integration allowed me to gain more strength to handle them in the future.

I experienced personal growth both in and out of the meetings, with two small groups of three and four. The dynamic has helped me see the influence of the primary triad in my family. Though I have spent very little time with my mother, her impact on my life was as strong as my father's. Gradually, I became more accepting to my family, and my expression of feeling was easier and richer. I became a more flexible person and can relate to people in a more congruent way.

I also went through some personal therapy with my trainer and my direct supervisor. With their help, I have explored my relationship with men and dealt with my childhood trauma of sexual abuse.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

D. had received a vision from God, but she felt so weak and so small she kept it to herself, thinking that she was just too naïve to think about having such a dream.

D. was passive and uncertain about herself, because she was afraid of failure and needed confirmation and assurance from authority figures to help her move towards her goal.

The year 2003 was a year of many changes. D.'s husband was a pastor of a church. D. moved her church membership with her husband as he changed jobs. She did not feel anything until her husband needed to resign and they had to move again. She erupted like a volcano. She raged with fire and was then overcome by a big blanket of sadness.

Later the same year, D. decided to do something for herself. She registered as a part-time student in a bachelor program on religious studies in the fall semester. She had always wanted to do a university degree and perhaps, if she had more education, she would be able to handle herself better or even be able to move away from the shadow of her husband.

D.'s vision was to touch the lives of others around the world with God's love, mercy, hope, and truth. School started in September, but in October, D. was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, because she experienced tremendous pressure in her studies. D. went to talk to her counseling teacher.

The following is a report written in 2003 by D., a student in a Personal Growth class. This is a personal account of how she saw she was shaped and became the person she was. In the report we can see how attachment in her early days affected her relationship with herself and others. Bateson has also proposed that the understandings we have of ourselves are presuppositions that constitute our maps of the world, and are founded on the attachment style we had.

D.'s working model, according to her experience with her caregiver, is that of the ambivalent attachment style. She yearns for love and acceptance, and yet she refuses or feels too overwhelmed when love and care come to her.

Prior to this report, she had come into therapy and complained of her anxiety in facing examination and evaluation. In her history there were occasions when she could not function when anxiety became too much.

Personal Report of D.

I grew up in a middle-income family. My mother was a housewife and father worked in a company owned by a relative. His title was director and manager. His primary responsibility was accounting, taking care of the books and accounts of the company. I have a sister one year of my senior and a sister two years younger, a brother four year younger and a youngest sister 14 years apart. Most of my siblings fall on the quiet side while my brother and I are more creative and outgoing.

My name in Chinese on the ID card stands for quietness. My father picked this name because he thought it was special. My sisters and I were studying in an English school, so I needed to have an English name. The name D. was originally given to my older sister but she could not quite pronounce it so father decided to give my sister another name that was easier to pronounce.

In my childhood, I was active and loveable. Among three sisters, I looked prettier. I can still remember how members in the family used to call me ‘pretty Miss Young’. On rainy days, as I walked past the hillside path, water would rush down the slope like waterfalls. I would walk into the ‘waterfall’, stayed for awhile and then came out laughing happily. As I returned home I usually would be soaked up with rain, even my books would

be all wet. They would help me dry them up. My mother used to ask if the rain was heavy. I remembered nodding very hard each time to say yes. I enjoyed inventing new toys, like using drawers for boats, planks of the bed for slide and see-saw. My mother did not want us to grow long hair, because she thought short hair was easier to handle. In order to own my long hair, I would put pants over my head and imagine that I had two long hair braids.

Sometimes, I would organize a live band and perform on the sofa. We use ball racquets, and shuffles as guitars and played pretends. Whenever I think about these old stories, I could still laugh.

When I was young, my creativity was always discouraged by my mother and my sister. They laughed at me. I loved to hear stories on the radio but I hated commercials which interrupted the stories. Forty years ago, I had already imagined one day that there would be programs like 'advertisement magazine'. But my sister thought I was ridiculous. I always thought my older sister is more outstanding and I always followed her footsteps and often fell short. I was dependent on her and felt safe around her. As I reflected on these incidences, I discovered that I have leadership ability. I also appreciate my creativity. I can identify with a cartoon character called Chibi Maruko-chan who has a lot of interesting ideas, but with poor memory and talks a lot. Her

mother and sister always criticize her like what happened in my family. I also think that I am like another cartoon character called Doraemon who is an inventor, always actualizes his dreams. I love to make dreams come true (See Wikipedia, n.d.a; Wikipedia n.d.b).

When we played, mother would only look at us and never get involved. Even if we invited her, she would not be willing to participate. Neither would she condemn us for using the furniture as our toys. Most of time, she was sleeping when we played. She was sick a lot and often rested in bed. I was the one to accompany her when she went for checkups in Central District in Hong Kong. I was prompt to motion sickness easily. Only a short ride would trigger it. In some worst scenario, I could not walk and had to be held by my mother. In my memory, there were many occasions when I had to wait with my mother in the clinic for one to two hours with candies on my hand. My other responsibility is to yell for help in case my mother fainted on the street. In fact, mother had fainted twice. I saw her cry because of her sickness. She often said that children without mother would be very pitiful and sorrowful. When mother was sleeping, I often would sneak in to check her breath. I have this habit till this day. When I had my first baby, I was afraid that she would be suffocated by the blanket so I went in to check on her. Ten years ago, it gave

me a great big startle as I saw blood dripping from her mouth when she was taking a nap. Later on I discovered that it was due to some mismanagement of the nursing care people. Since then, I remained quite alarm of the breathing of my daughter and my husband. I would be especially concerned when they were sick. Only when I see that they start moving then I would be relieved. I know that I have been affected by my mother's sickness because I was afraid that my loved ones would suddenly leave me.

When I was seven, I was punished by my mother for no particular reason. I rebelled and fought back. As a result, she fell sick. They did not punish me at that time. But later, mother asked her sister and another friend that I had never seen before to exercise the punishment. They asked me to hold my ears and knelt in the middle of the sitting room. I was all by myself with two adults. Mother stayed in her own room and all my siblings were all hiding in their rooms. That incidence had great impact on me. It left a permanent scar of guilt in my heart. It also caused me to feel abandonment. I'd rather be punished by my parents than by people I don't know. Before, mother used to take me with her to banquets and movies, but since then I seldom get to go with her. I felt that I lost my special place in her heart. When I received the Christian faith, I had written her a letter to apologize, but she made no

response. Last year, my sister told me how mother dealt with a conflict she had with my younger sister. She responded positively to her apology and asked my sister not to worry. From that incidence I knew that mother would eventually forgive me. This has disturbed me for many years because mother would mention this incidence every now and then. Four years ago, I talked to a counselor friend and discovered that it still affected me tremendously. She encouraged me to keep more contact with my mother, like calling her every week for just five minutes. I ended up talking to her for 1 min. 4 sec. Then she hung up on me. My mother is a very efficient person. She goes shopping; she just buys what she wants and leaves. The same way she handles telephone conversation. She ends when she finishes what she has to say. My daughter commented that grandmother never said good-bye. My friend talked to me for several times, I saw some improvement. Last year, my older sister told my daughter about my fear of my own aunt. I was furious when I learned about that because I thought she was making fun of me. I was shamed and she was making it worse. I did not want my daughter to have a bad impression about my relationship with my mother. I felt that it is an unfinished business. Later, I gathered up more courage to tell my daughter the whole thing. I felt that I had a big step foreword.

My Study

My mother emphasized a lot on my study. She came from Mainland China and insisted on pursuing her study. She was a few years older than her classmates. She was the only one who could excel academically. I originally studied in a Chinese school, but had to repeat in order to enter an English school. I was grateful for my mother's choice. Now I can read a lot of books in English because it is an international language.

When I was a student, my scores always listed as no. 9. It pronounced the same as 'dog' in Chinese, so I got laughed at for that. When I was in form three in middle school, I chose the science stream. I did not think very thoroughly about what I wanted or if it fit me. I chose it because people generally thought students from the science stream were better students. My parents did not give their opinion. My father only signed on the application. I could not handle chemistry and physics, but I did not ask for help. In one year, I had a major catastrophe in Math. I was between passing and failing. Finally, I failed in the examination but I still got promoted because there were only 16 of us who passed. I had developed immense fear about examination since then. I became very pessimistic and my results at school had plunged down. Luckily, I had a good math teacher when I was in form four. He gave me good

feedback and encouragement. But I still held great fear about tests and examinations. Then there was a new Chinese teacher, her comments and encouragement had helped develop an interest in writing and expressing myself. My math teacher died of cancer one year after my graduation and then Chinese teacher died in her sleep suddenly.

When I was taking the School Certificate Examination, I was very anxious, came down with vomiting and losing sleep, my feet trembled uncontrollably. I needed to receive medical attention while I was taking the examination. My mother would complain about my burden on her and yet gave me care. She was constantly reminding me not be like her brother who suffered nervous breakdown. She even suggested that I should stop any further study. I knew that she meant well but I felt that she rejected me and looked down on her, and she felt that I was not capable of any further study.

When I was doing the physic examination, I thought one major question was very easy but I doubted myself and eventually changed my answer. It was unfortunate that my original answer was correct but I changed it. Because of this, I failed the subject. I was unhappy about this for many years. The day when the results came out, I was smiling; my classmates all thought that I was doing very well. I smiled because I felt relieved. I did not need to

ask my mother for her support and I did not need to face expiation again. I was so nervous that I even did poorly in Chinese. Even though I had three credits, I felt I did poorly. I did not even develop my graduation picture and I forbidden my mother from attending my graduation ceremony. I did not give her any reason, strange enough she did not inquire any further. On the graduation day, only my older sister and my younger sister came. When I was asked about my parents, I could not quite figure out an answer. Of course, when I saw my friends' parents, I regretted my decision. My mother made no comments about this until many years later. Now I am a mother, I am more mature, I understand what she thought. I really wanted her to come to my graduation ceremony when I graduated from the seminary this time.

Last year, as I talked to a friend about my problem in studying, I suddenly realized my mother's perspective. For the first time in many years, I was truly grateful to her for not supporting me for any further study at that time. She was afraid that I could not cope with the stress. However, I was not willing to give up. I really would want to do a university degree but I was very afraid of examination.

Under the encouragement of my husband, I began my study in this seminary. I have a long departure from school life for twenty-eight years; this

move brought me a lot of anxiety. In the beginning, I totally immersed myself in the study with no break. Fortunately, I was able to talk to the school counselor and sorted it out.

Encountering Fear

Fear is my obstacle. My life was controlled by fear. I was moved by the Holy Spirit to understand that I need to deal with my fear otherwise I would lead a difficult life, and not be able to serve God very well. I discussed with my school counselor about this need and she recommended that I used Family Reconstruction to deal with the obstacle. A few days before the ‘work’, I remembered reading about how a little girl was dragged out of her house by her father, I became furious and remembered how mother said that I was naughty and disowned me. I was very angry; I hated my mother for that.

When I was asked to assign classmates to play the roles of my family members, I stood before them. At one moment, my teacher asked me to say the most important message I heard from them. The message, “You are naughty. I don’t want you!” came gushing out. I immediately burst into tears. There was sharp pain in the back of my head. I became nauseated and wanted to throw up. I experienced the most severe pain in my life. But I told myself that I must endure it and face up to it. I am already forty-seven years old at the

time of Family Reconstruction, but I felt like a little kid. I was amazed by that change. I was asked by the counselor about the meaning of 'naughty'. I knew the 'naughty' stands for many things. It affects my sense of security. Mother never explained what it was to me so I never really know what it meant. When I was struggling with my mother, the house maid taught me to apologize to mother. If I said that I would not dare to do it again then I could return to the house. But in fact, I truly did not know what I did was wrong. I dared not ask and never knew. I was unclear. I only knew that if I provoked my mother and then I would be thrown out of the house. I would be abandoned. I had to do really well and to follow her will to avoid being rejected. Finally I realized that 'naughty' means talked back and snatched the whip from my mother. I did not see why I should not defend and protect myself. At that time, I was a kid, I did something wrong but I was punished severely for minor offenses, that was very unfair. Mother did not explain to me what I did was not acceptable. Now that I am a mother, I understand that a mother wants respect from her children. At the time of the struggle, I felt very helpless. It was like going to be hanged. My classmates had imitated the pus three times; I still can feel the enormous impact. It touched the helplessness in me as I was facing it all by myself. Whatever I did, I would fail. My effort seemed in vain.

A Special mother

Ah Ngan was my house maid and during the process of family reconstruction she came as a surprise to me. She was a little overweight, so I gave her a nickname 'fatty'. When I was asked about Ah Ngan's name, I did not want to call her by her nickname. I respected her because she often rescued me. When I was choosing the characters I was very serious, except when I chose Ngan. I chose someone who had helped me before to play her role. I remembered in one assignment I wrote about people who had helped me. I remarked that I did not like the way she teased me in my report. When I was in primary three, I was chosen the monitor of the class; she teased me for being an attention seeker. My husband was surprised that I had never mentioned Ngan, he only knew that I was displeased with her comment about me. But, I enjoyed talking to her. He thought Ngan and 'Fatty' are two different people. Ngan gave me a lot of good time. While mother was taking her afternoon naps, I would meet Ngan in the kitchen. We talked. I watched her sew. She was illiterate, I taught her to write her name. I would also draw pictures to show her and asked her to do the same. It usually gave me great delight when she tried. What Ngan was able to draw were not good looking flowers, but it gave me great satisfaction in our relationship. Ngan's husband and children were in

Mainland China, she only had one relative in Hong Kong. I was the only child who would talk to her in our house. She often confided in me about her private things. She even trusted me about where she placed her money. She hid her money in her bag of sanitary napkins. She thought they are dirty so even robbers would not care to search that place. I had my first sex education from her. When I think about this incidence, I have very complicated feelings. On one hand, I felt happy about those carefree days when I could talk about anything I wanted with her, but on the other hand, I was saddened by the thought that she was not my mother. Ngan worked a few years and left because we were much older and did not need a helper. When I was in the middle school, we did not have any helper at home. I lost touch of Ngan. Recently mother met her again. I asked myself if I wanted to see her, but I did not seem to have the urge to do it. I was afraid of my reaction when I see her again. I was quite sure that Ngan was a substitute of my mother. I found love in our relationship. My mother seldom gave us affirmation and appreciation, even when she said it, it would carry the sarcastic tone. She believes that praises and appreciation would make us proud. She would only give us teaching and directions. Mother seldom touched us, let alone hugs. She complained a lot about how I learned to walk. I urged her to hold me while my

little sister could walk for a long time on her own. I yearned for my mother but when I was with her I often experienced fear and pain. My feeling for her is ambivalent. I know we love each other but we don't know how to express it. This is what I need to learn and to breakthrough

The major emphasis of this report centers on fear. D. suffered from the fear of losing her mother, her mother's love for her, and her control of the external environment. As all knowing requires an act of interpretation, how one acknowledges one's experience and tells one's story will show how that person interprets his or her environment. It is necessary to go into D.'s interpretation of how she sees herself, her environment, and her relationship with others to find clues about her self.

In 2004, D. learned about another program at the seminary, which she thought would fit her life goal. She felt that God spoke to her through Luke 1:5–22, which addressed her fears and doubts directly. The story in the verses involved an almost impossible situation, in which God had performed a miracle in order for it to take place:

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no

children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lot and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside.

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him; "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this?

I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." The angel answered, "I am Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to

“speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.” Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

In a regular assembly, D. felt God spoke to her through these verses and addressed her doubts directly. At that time, she had the message as a command from God. She told herself that she could not possibly make it, because she knew the course was very demanding.

In retrospect, she thought the biggest decision she made was to study in the seminary. She knew that she had always wanted to gain a degree in order to fulfill her need for self-esteem.

In 2006, she graduated from a bachelor program and immediately entered a program in marriage and family therapy. In one of her reflection papers on the subject of spiritual practice and ministry, she expressed her weariness in the journey toward growth:

I am fifty-one years old, being a full time housewife and a student at a seminary, and I have worked hard for four and a half years. I felt that my energy was drained. I felt that my body has depreciated. May be it is due to

menopause [menopause], I have experienced insomnia and feel tired easily.

My memory often fails me so study has become taxing. I know that I always have high expectation on myself so this makes me more nervous.

Obviously, she is proceeding in her journey of growth, as she finished one degree and then started off on another. She has gathered energy to do what she has wanted to do. The report shows that D. has more self-awareness about what is affecting her, but the newfound knowledge has not been fully integrated into her resources.

D. continued to reveal her internal struggle and the unfolding material in her journey of recovery and change. This included chaos: a very crucial part in the growth process. In reorganizing her material, she is re-storying her experience which will bring forth new experiences and new choices.

In D.'s report, she recorded:

Prayers are fellowship with God, an inevitable part of life. I always have the burden to teach and to share my experiences in my praying experience. I have finally managed to start three prayer classes each lasts for twelve weeks. In this first attempt I have discovered my blind spots and through teaching, I have gained some new inspirations. However, I also experience depression after the excitement.

Evidently, D. was in a lot more reflective, meditative mode as she pressed on with her journey in personal growth.

D. discovered her Sunday school students had a very twisted image of God that led to a poor relationship with God, erroneous projections, and low self-esteem. She tried to correct their faulty perceptions and to improve their relationship with God, others, and with their own selves. In her own reflection, she found herself having the same problems. She had a hard cry for the unfairness of this. She noted in her report:

In different occasions when I witnessed how God has fulfilled someone's dreams and desires, I would ask for the same treatment. But if I don't get what I wanted, I felt that God was being unfair. As I reflected more deeply, I realized my need to be attended to and cared about. That need stemmed out of the experience in my growing up. When I realized the blind spot, I felt great relief. I also learned a great lesson in sharing empathy with people who are in agony and struggles like me. I would be able to appreciate and accept what they were going through.

Such reflection has helped me move deeper and be able to reflect and explore myself more. I have decided to integrate physical, mental and spiritual aspect in my pastoral care.

Interview of Stars of Family Reconstruction

In 2006, a brief interview was conducted to trace the development of the work.

Some students reported definite and positive effects from the work done on them, while some did not register or even notice what had been done. There were seven interviews, five males and two females. They were all students who were chosen or volunteered to be the stars of family reconstruction in the personal growth class. The interviewed subjects were selected because of their availability. They were interviewed either in person or over the phone. They were asked to respond directly to the questions. There was no cross-checking on the information, because subjective memory was the primary focus of the interview.

Each subject was asked to respond to the following five questions.

1. What is the most impressionable image from the family reconstruction that you took part in?

2. When was it conducted?

3. Describe the process in terms of :

Your role in family role-playing

The reason you volunteered/were invited to participate in family reconstruction

Who was present?

What was done?

How did you feel during and after therapy?

4. Did the picture from family reconstruction affect you in other areas of life?

For example, in your perspective of looking back at the past, at the moment of the family reconstruction, and looking to the future? Would you carry anything from family reconstruction in your view of the future?

5. Is there suggestion for how the course or family reconstruction can be improved in order to help you more in the time?

We hoped to identify new patterns or images laid down in the process of family reconstruction and how they would evolve over time. It looks like a self-healing process, which is kicked off in family reconstruction and brings an unfolding of the meaning of metaphors and new decisions over time.

D. was interviewed in 2006, three years after the family reconstruction. In the interview she was asked about the image from the family reconstruction that made the greatest impression on her. Here is her response:

The most impressionable image from Family Reconstruction is the image of jumping the hurdles. Several classmates were asked to form hurdles for me to jump across. The first classmate was very concerned that she might hurt me, but the second one was more

confident in me. As I made it to the third one, I jumped without hesitation.

Another scene I remembered vividly was when I grabbed my mother's whip. I was ten years old at that time. From that incidence, I discovered my power to protect myself and also realized that nobody could stop me from doing anything I want.

As D. continued to reflect on the process, she recalled what had happened and what had affected her since the therapy:

I was the star in Family Reconstruction. There were about twenty other classmates taking up roles as my family members and my maid, including two who represented my rational self and emotional self, respectively. The phrase which most struck me was when my mother told me that I was not good enough and I was discarded from the family. That was a phrase said to me over forty years ago, but when I heard it my emotions immediately rushed out, and a pain started from my back spreading all the way to my head (the pain lasted for two weeks). I began crying like a child, and the guide asked if I needed a break or she should stop the therapy. I decided to continue because I felt that I wanted to get over those emotions.

D. volunteered to be the star in family reconstruction because she was feeling stressful about schoolwork at the seminary. She had previously approached the school counselor for stress problems, and the counselor proposed that she participate in family reconstruction.

She thought the family reconstruction process helped her a lot. The goal was to decrease her fear of and stress involved in studying. This was achieved. Her fear peeled off bit by bit, and she felt that the difference before and after the therapy was very great. At the time of the interview, the therapy had been done for about two years, and she was still digesting material from it. She realized a lot of things through reflection after the actual reconstruction process. There were many things during the family reconstruction that had helped her discover herself, especially in her development of becoming a counselor herself.

This report intends to show her hope and development. As her parts become more securely attached to self, she is transformed from her frozen stage to a more active and free stage in a process of self-healing, with more readily accessible energy from within.

As family reconstruction was part of a course, she felt that there was not enough follow-up or debriefing after the role play. She wanted to talk more about her

experience with the guide. She also felt that the time constraint in class did not provide the opportunity to get more of her experience acted out.

D. was chosen for the study because her interview reflected a clear subjective memory on her part. Besides, she continued to study in a marriage and family therapy program, making the tracking easier.

In 2006, D. had taken a course on spiritual guidance and reflection; she had written a report, which showed signs of fatigue in her vigorous way of self-improvement and personal growth. The following is a report from one of her courses.

Self-Reflection Paper

I have taken many courses that carried a self-reflective component in them. I have thoroughly reflected on my personal growth, personality, psychological underpinnings, my religious faith and my spirituality. There were struggles and conflicts that I needed to deal with. I was forced to look at my weaknesses and dark side. I took risk to adapt new paradigm, cope with my new self and to try new ways of doing things. Between trials and errors, I almost exhausted myself.

In the summer, a lot of things happened in my family. My mother suddenly felt sick. It lasted for almost a month; she ended up spending a week

in the hospital. Up until now, we are still not sure about the cause of her sickness. As soon as mother was discharged, my sister felt sick. Everyone in the family was anxious. I spent the most part of my summer going to see the doctor with either my mother or my sister, feeling nervous and stressed out.

In a summer intensive course, I had different opinions with a member of my study group. We were both stressed out by some family affairs and were unstable emotionally. We had conflicts. I was guilty of my outburst of emotions. I had to handle two difficult cases at my church. One of them involve disciplinary action, I was so worried about mismanagement that I could not sleep for many nights.

As I reflected on many of the happenings, I realized that I was experiencing burnt out. In my middle age, I am adjusting to many changes in myself and my environment, I cannot continue my usual perfectionist disposition and keep asking from myself. I must make new choices. With the new insight, I let go of myself and ask God to help. In my low tides, I usually would read to help myself. In my reading, I came across I King chapter 19 in the Bible which reminded me to rest. Then I adjusted my schedule and allowed myself to have plenty of sleep and rest. I strolled in the park in the neighborhood, watched my favorite TV shows and listened to music to relax

myself. I reduced my work loads, I did take outs instead of home cooking, and I lowered my standard requirement and slowed down the pace. I also asked God for forgiveness and asked Him to help repair the relationship. I continued to rely on my regained faith and experienced healing from God's presence.

I have been away from the job market for more than 15 years. May be I have lost confidence in myself. The anxiety is high.

D. looked at herself candidly and acknowledged her limitations. She also showed better awareness of what was affecting her, inside and out. In spite of the weak stage she was going through, she was able to draw from her resources in spirituality and her relationship with nature. There is evidence of better self-acceptance and change in her self-esteem. She was not relying on achievement to feel good.

A Self-Analysis on Personal Growth

In 2007, D. did another course on personal growth, which adopted a more objective approach, and in it she did a thorough analysis of her background and her personal traits using the 16 PF assessments.

D. told her story under a diagnostic lens, and she saw quite a lot of dysfunctional issues and problems. In her report, she recorded:

I came from an enmeshed middle-class family. My father lost his father in his teenage years. He came to Hong Kong to seek help from a rich relative. With that background, he developed into a 'yes' man. He placated his wife and his children. Mother is a housewife. She came from a broken family, lacks security in her background. She adopted blaming and controlling to manage her environment. She exhibited symptoms of anxiety, paranoid and depression, but she refused any treatment. My sister is capable, strong minded and blaming. I and my youngest brother are both irrelevant. We are all married, have moved away from the parents. Perhaps, that is why we are not like our two sisters who are both placating, one is suffering from paranoid and the other is having depression. They both are receiving treatment.

My original family has a lot of unhealthy copings for stressful situations. There are many family rules. My mother is highly manipulative and controlling so that we must do according to her will. She is obscure and satirical, incongruent in her way of expression even in conveying care and concern.

Communication in the family is superficial. We never openly discuss our concerns or disclose our own feelings. Crying is strictly forbidden. My father is passive and the family dynamic is skewed towards my mother and my

elder sisters in terms of functioning and decision authority. My parents love us but they are overly dependent on my sister. She and my younger brother are heroes in the family. I am the lost child. My other sister is the scape goat. My youngest sister is a baby. The major themes in the family are sickness and study. My parents are very careful with money, spending the largest portion on medical consultation. Mother uses the most renowned private doctors. She thought that if anyone unsuccessful in his study will be useless in everything. Study has its supremacy over everything else. Such attitude encourages success and achievement. When I failed in secondary school, I developed a crooked image of poor self-image and certain faulty personality.

In my family, there are dysfunctions like anxiety, enmeshment, success oriented and manipulation. I could cope with conformity, competition, comparison and control only because of my religious faith. When I was twenty-three, I became a Christian. I felt that my conversion has made my days easier. I enjoyed good working relationship, harmonious family and a good marriage. I have good relationship with my daughter who is a university freshman. I have learned to laid my burden to my God and get my assurance from God. This change has helped me change my outlook of life.

My image

Sometimes I am serious, distant and quiet. Occasionally, I am irrelevant and playful to certain people. My emotion is balance. I can be dependent and also enjoy calling the shots. I can become emotional and uncontrollable sometime. I observe rules and regulations.

Intuitive

I can be creative but sometimes not practical. I may say things and regret later. I may appear incompetent. Conscientious, overextend myself and stubborn, nervous and easy going

I reject the following comments:

Excellent performance in school-work and outstanding counseling skills

A 16 PF Analysis

The following analysis D. did for herself according to the book called *Essentials of 16 PF Assessment* (Cattell & Mead,2008).

Standard 10 Scores

D. saw that her scores were within the medium range. In her adaptive ability, she felt that she was doing fine, because she has a c=5, An=6, Q3=3 and Co=4, all within the medium range.

From the scores, D. saw that she has a balanced personality, having no particular problems in adaptation and personality, which corresponds with how people perceive her.

Her Analysis of Second Order Scores

From the Second order score D. saw that her personality is more introverted and dependent, her self-control ability is a little below average. She has an average level of anxiety. D. saw the analysis matches how people perceive her.

1. Introvert (4)

Even though D. has an N=4, her tendency in distancing herself (A=4), (H=4) and (Q2=7), she ended up being more introverted.

D. realized that her relationship with her mother had to do with sickness. She had to accompany her mother to see the doctor so that when she fainted, D. could yell for help. When D. was sitting for the Secondary school leaving examination she was brought in to see the doctor by her mother. She was blamed by her mother for the trouble she caused. There is a mixture of intimacy and pain in her early experience with her mother. D.'s mother always complained of some ailments, but after many examinations nothing was found. D's mother felt the process was worrisome and troublesome. D. felt those early experience explained why she avoids facing other

people's sickness and building intimacy with other people. She would not initiate a deeper relationship or talk to anyone.

D. felt that her family life was plain and boring. Mother had very little social life. She refused to let D. join any extracurricular activities, because she felt that would hinder D's study. In her growing up, she was complained about and criticized for wandering when she went out with friends or went to church. When D. was open about her comments and emotions, she was shamed by her mother. The nickname she got for her behavior was a dog that only barks at home. All those comments had brought shame and belittling to D. She became serious and shy. When she was in her primary school, her mother would only watch her play and seldom talked to her. When D. reached secondary school, she could recall less time to play and communicate with parents. She was isolated emotionally. D. learned to be avoidant and gave up easily on relationship (Q2=7). D. learned to stay in her world of fantasy to get away from her mother's control and gradually became self-sufficient for self-entertaining.

D. prefers to do things on her own; she does not like other people's opinions, because she sees that as disruptions and manipulation. All the changes evolve and shape around her relationship with her mother.

My Strength

My introvert tendency has helped me stay calm and reflective. I am a thinker and can concentrate on important things. By distancing myself I keep from being too involved with other people's problems.

My Problems

My avoidance has caused me to withdraw from social circles. I felt the lack of ability to handle conflicts. When I worked in teams, I feel the pressure in dealing with conflicts among the members.

How It Affects My Counseling

By being an introvert, I am able to remain reflective and explore deeply into the case. I need to remind myself to be empathic instead of too analytical and judgmental. I need to practice being calm and be able to handle conflicts in handling marital problems.

2) Independence (4)

I have E=5, H=4, L=3 and Q1=4, my independence is medium, tilt towards dependence. Facing the dominance of my mother over me, I became submissive to avoid getting into trouble. I also learn to control and become manipulative. My parents have high regards on loyalty and making

commitment. My whole family is honest. I seldom come across deceitful people. Perhaps, I would not have known it even if I come across them.

I am highly creative. Mother and my elder sister are both very conservative. They stressed rules and regulations. When I had new ideas, I often received criticism and shaming remarks. I often trapped between choosing new ways and old methods. I am so afraid of failures, blames and guilt that come from new attempts that I would rather tolerate dissatisfaction and remain unchanged.

There was very little advice and support from my father in my growing up, my mother was overly protective, her fear and control over me has caused me nervous about making decisions. I would rather stick with my mother's opinions. I become enmeshed with my mother, accustomed to manipulation and have no personal opinion. I have a tendency to surrender to authority in order to feel safe. On being submissive, I can easily get help from others. My confidence comes from following traditions and regulations which ensure my successes.

Some people thought that I have leadership ability because I have good interpersonal skills, could perform quite well at school and would be able to deliver presentation relatively well. But I know quite well that I don't have

enough decisiveness, courage and care to be a good leader. I feel more comfortable being a follower.

My Strength

I am a submissive follower, I respect traditions and authority. I perform very well with clear instructions. I can get along well with what is thought of as a difficult personality. I trust other people and am welcomed by them.

My Disturbances

Due to my fear of making mistakes, I need to rely on other people and therefore restrict my own development. When I rely on other people to make a decision for me, I would feel cheated or betrayed if it doesn't match my expectation. My reaction would be bewilderment, blaming self and others and destroys relationships.

It's Effects on My Counseling

In counseling I need to work independently with a client, I would feel uneasy being on my own. As I face ambiguity and need to be flexible, I need to learn to be flexible, conquer my fear and to try out new approaches and techniques. I need to learn to trust instead of simply believing and taking everything my client said. When I feel deceived, I can go to the cause and be able to handle my anger and not affected in my counseling.

Self-Control (4)

I have F=4, G=5, M=8 and Q3=3, which means my control is not enough. Generally speaking, I'm good at observing rules, because I'm responsible, and hold good moral standard. I'm used to obeying rules at home, therefore any violations would cause me to feel uneasy. However, I would also challenge regulations and restricted frames. I would also pamper myself in order to feel a little more sense of control. I enjoy fantasy and imagination because that is the source my creativity. I also have the tendency to overlook priority and must-do things in order to reach for my ideal and achieve perfection. However, I have a strong need to comply with others, I will not allow myself to have a lot of spontaneity and fun.

My Strength

I can be spontaneous and creative which adds funs and brings good laughs to people around me.

My Disturbance

I would get emotional and change my original plan. That can be disturbing to some people to prescribe to routines. When I'm too focused in what I do, I might affect people around me. For instance, I would continue to

work or watch TV and skip sleeping or neglect housework. I would also waste time on daydreaming.

It's Effects on My Counseling

I may not be able to stay focus in the original plan and objective. I may overlook and overrun my time in counseling.

4. Anxiety (6)

My parents have stable relationship in marriage which helps me enjoy emotional stability (c=5). I can trust other people easily (I+3) because I don't have the anxiety and worries from doubts. But I have the tendency to feel guilty (o=8) and feel nervous (Q4=7), making my anxiety medium range. The two issues on sickness and examination often cause me to worry a lot. My grandmother's illness has caused her early departure which has very negative impact on my mother causing her to feel disastrous if she were to die of sickness and leaving her children behind. My mother was overly anxious about our study, making me feel nervous about not performing to her expectation and disappointing her. The impact of the issues may be trans-generational.

Mother wants us to keep many secrets. She does not want us to tell anything about her family of origin, or anything about our present family. It is

absolutely forbidden to talk about my sister's sickness. To keep many things as secrets are the sources of anxiety.

My tendency to get nervous easily and lack confidence could be caused by the following reasons: Mother has special affection for my older sister and younger brother. I stubbornly hope that I can surpass their position in my parents' mind and I was disappointed. I studied in the same primary and secondary school with my elder sister; I was often placed in comparison with her. I tended to overlook my strength but compare my weaknesses with her strengths. I often felt inferior. Mother used criticism as an expression of love because she wanted us to correct our mistakes. She thought praises would encourage us to be proud. I was overly corrective, exaggerated on mistakes and overly responsible. I lost confidence in my school performance. The failure in my secondary school had remained disastrous for a long time causing me to feel nervous most of the time. When I did not perform up to expectation I felt guilty, and such guilt cycle repeated constantly.

My Strengths

Nervousness has given me the energy to achieve. I always finish before deadline. Guilt and anxiety has driven me to change for the better.

My Disturbances

I worry constantly. If I were met with obstacles, I would become impatient and disgusted. I am highly imaginative, have the tendency to overreact and being irrational causing me to become more nervous.

Impact on my Counseling Practice

When counseling progresses slowly or having no progress, I would doubt my ability or blame myself. When the counselee does not want to change, I would feel impatient. If the counselee fall sick or die, I would have projection and feel very uneasy, and afraid to explore further. I am accustomed to superficial communication, afraid of going deeper into the problem because I avoid the possibility of keeping secrets for my clients. I am worried about not being able to handle some in-depth disturbances.

6. Tough Poise (6)

I am sensitive (I=6) to my own needs as well as other people's needs. But I am distant (A+4). I will not be emotional even though I am creative and full of imagination (M=8). I am also conservative and traditional (Q1=4). I think successful conservative has its track record to prove its applicability. When I practice counseling, I would use my rational self to make assessment and use my emotional self to empathize with other people's feelings.

III. Other Personality Combination and its Analysis

1. Self-Image (I=6, L=3, N=4, O=8)

I have some fixed image at church, make presentation and act in plays.

I have confidence of myself, and perform well. But I lack confidence at home.

Overall, I need to adjust my self-concept.

I had some good time in my developmental phase; both preschool and childhood period. My parents' relationship was good, they were nice to me, and I played with my siblings, enjoyed special attention from my teachers. I score CEF (C=5, E=5, F=4) which reflects no early trauma. But in teenage period, I suffered frustration and failure in school work, I lost confidence in myself. I doubted myself and was afraid that mother would not accept me. My work life was smooth, enjoy happy marriage. I retired early in midlife to study theology and do what I enjoy.

The reasons of my low self-concept are my stubbornness towards school performance, my mother's absolute belief in scholastic achievement. I was afraid of being rejected by her. Fear and anxiety has affected my performance. I fall into the cycle of feeling defeated, and self blamed. I yearn for mother's affirmation, but no matter how hard I have tried I have not got it from her. She only remarked sarcastically, "You're so smart!" I feel her control

over me is increasing as I grow older. My personality clashes with hers. There are lots of frames and out-dated rules. As I struggle for independence I ran into conflicts with my elder sister. When I placate my mother who has personality disorder, I got stuck in conflicts and frustrations, and feel guilty about it (O=8).

I am very frank (N=4), I have tried for over ten years to explained to my family that my younger sister is sick. They only started listening recently. I felt helpless (F=4) and frustrated because I felt that my position in the family is very low.

I can easily trust other people (L=3). Criticism coming from my mother, elder sister and my husband is accepted indiscriminately. I have not thought about possible biases and personal opinions. I have not thought about my choices or not doubted that it may not be anybody's fault.

I am intuitive (I=6). I long for my mother's love and affirmation, I felt second class because she has favoritism.

For many years, I suffered from criticism and over correction. I have stubborn restrictions. I expect too high from myself. As a result, I always feel inferior and the feeling of 'not capable.' I insist on my failure in the past and overlook some objective evidence which includes my performance at work

and at school, other people's appreciation, etc. In fact, from the scores of 16PF, I realize that my self image is not as bad as I thought.

The feeling of 'not capable' has discouraged my confidence in doing counseling. I think I need to overcome and break through.

1. Moral Restriction (guilty O=8, Imagination M=8, self permission Q4=7, Indulgence or discipline G=5)

Guilty feeling (O=8) and indulgence (Q3=3) causes tension. I am a Christian; it is natural that I comply with laws and order; I will not do anything amoral. But I must restrict my imagination (M=8) so that I will not stir up the negativity and the dark side of me. I'm also afraid that I might push people into wrong deeds.

Conclusion

From this assessment and self-analysis, I have discovered a balanced personality. There is not anything too difficult for me. I can be improved in the areas of a tendency for social withdrawal, anxious, guilt ridden, highly imaginative. I can benefit from improving my self-image. I have been strongly influenced by my mother. I cannot change her but I can change myself in the areas of irrational thoughts and biases.

Plan on Personal Growth

After this self-analysis, I hope to expand my social life, improve the relationship with my mother, improve my ability on self-control, and strengthen my power in making judgment. I would like to reduce my anxiety level and self-blame tendency and to improve my self-esteem. I figure if I were to succeed in the above areas, I need to work on different areas because a person is the summation of different parts which include body, thoughts, cognition, emotion and spirituality. I hope to take better care of my body, personal life, I can adjust the irrational thinking and thus bring about changes in emotion and behavior. I envision myself to be able to live positively in the present, and to trust God as my help and my guide to reach my goal in personal growth.

Care and Life Management

Exercise can reduce tension, calm emotion and train myself in perseverance, and control. I seldom exercise so I will start with a routine of twice a week to exercise on the seaside prominence for a twenty minutes walk which will gradually be increased to a thirty minutes regime. In the summer I would swim once every fortnight. I hope these exercise regimes will help me

relax and improve my physical self. When I am healthier I can feel freer, because a lot of my anxiety comes from health issues.

When I am nervous I feel heat and chills in my body and my heart pounds. I have learned to breathe with my diaphragm in order to calm myself down. When I inhale, my abdomen protrudes and when I exhale I passed the air out from it. The process requires concentration and slows me down and I would be able to relax.

I need to strike a balance between work and rest. If I don't get enough sleep, I become restless. I will restrict myself to retire and go to bed before midnight. As a signal to remind myself, I set the alarm to sound at 11:45p.m.

Often I eat in a rush and sparingly. I must learn to eat slower and to enjoy the process. I can also set my work aside and cook for the whole family so the whole family can benefit.

I can record the activities in a week, and look at the proportion of time of my activities, then I can readjust and regulate my work and play.

Occasionally, I can be spontaneous and not follow any priority or schedule. But experience teaches me to continue to write down my schedule so that it helps to restraint my heart.

Removal of Irrational Thoughts

I need to discriminate and control the thoughts that cause me to withdraw and influence my judgment and self-control. I need to learn to adopt a more realistic view and put my energy on real issues instead of over-exaggerating on disastrous outcomes. This would help me admit to my limitations and unavoidable accidents. Even if the unavoidable and unpredictable happens, I can still handle it.

I can ask myself about extreme situations, like, "If the worst does happen?", "What would be the worst situation?" I can also double check with other people if what I thought would happen in order to obtain a more realistic view on the situation. I can also assume that if such thing happens on someone else, how could I respond or give advice to him? With this, I can obtain a more objective view on the case. I can also imagine if it happens again, how would I respond to it? If I find that it is not that worse then I can relax. If it is serious, then I would see if I can take the toll or compensate for it. Or I can investigate into the core of the matter.

When I see from my own journal my unreasonable thoughts, I would remind myself to be sensible and reasonable. I will withhold self-blame because it affects my confidence. When I see myself having negative thoughts,

irrational thoughts and self-criticism, I immediately tell myself to stop. I need to tell myself that those are useless and will hamper my personal growth. If that really disturbs me, I would use a rubber band to induce pain and to stop myself.

Perfectionism drives me to feel anxious, self-criticism, and hurt my confidence. In order to deal with “being perfect and indisputable”, “I cannot stand criticism and rejection,” “I have my mother’s attention only when I’m successful”, I constantly remind myself that “perfect and indisputable” is a restriction I have on myself. I must learn to allow myself to be imperfect and to make a mistake. I also need to lower my standard of requirement so that I will not fall prey to criticism. I need to remind myself that the irrational thoughts contradict with my belief system.

Positive Attitude

In order to deal with my tendency to withdraw, I need to learn to be positive and not to stay away from people. I also need to learn to discard my defense, remind myself that dissonance and disharmony are unavoidable. I cannot control other people’s behavior but I can control how I see the hurt or how important other people’s comment to me. There are many levels of friends, and I do not expect to be close to every one of them. I can select those

whom I feel I can communicate well with me. I can initiate the contact and try remaining in touch with a list of friends every other week with e-mail and telephone.

I don't want to have conflict with my mother so I do not initiate contact but it causes me to feel guilty. My relationship with my mother also drifts apart and we often have misunderstanding. I have contact with her only when she has health problems which naturally couples with feeling of unhappiness. The belief that my contact with mother will result in unhappiness is a destructive thought which affects my behavior and cause me to feel isolated and withdrawing. I need to learn to establish various ways to contact my mother. Now, I have no fixed time to visit my mother. Often she is caught in working around the kitchen while father is either reading newspaper or watching television. My contact with family members is only around holidays and birthday celebrations. I will try to make contact with my mother for one minute because that is how much time she would allow for conversation in the past. My brother and I live in the same housing estate. I occasionally run into my parents' visit with my brother, I could stay for thirty minutes. I may not have anything to talk to them about but I can learn to get used to being

together with without activating my emotions. I can also go to the tea house with my parents while my brother is there.

When my mother talks about her health, I need to be careful not to overreact but carefully ask questions and to clarify about her situation. When she starts giving advice, I need to control my reaction not to look at it as control but concern. I need to exercise self-discipline not to change her. I need to pay more attention and to double check on what she said to know if she is really having problems with her health.

I can afraid of making decision because I am afraid of making mistake. I often use avoidance to make decision but now I realize avoidance is also a decision. I must learn to really make decision, not to do it reluctantly. I can start with those things matter less to me like the decision to eat, where and what. When I learn to make decisions, I can pay attention to how other people make theirs and try to understand their perspectives and their way of handling problems. I can also ask for other people's opinion and then decide and not just follow. I need to take the responsibility of making decision. When I give up on decision making, I need to learn to accept the consequences without blaming on other people.

When I avoid, I lost confidence in myself. I can learn to use rehearsal to exercise my ability to make decision. Progressively I will be able to conquer my problem.

Living in the Present

There were two events in my secondary school days. Their impact has greatly affected my confidence. One of the event happened when I was in form three, my math results are between passing and failure. I felt very helpless then. Another event was about the School Certificate Examination in Form five. I was too nervous and it caused me to fail in my Physic examination. I feel better after my therapy several years ago but I still need to remind myself that secondary results are no longer important to me. I have a master degree and I must change what impacted me in my history. I need to concentrate and enjoy what I am studying now.

I am very imaginative but I also have a tendency to daydream. I would think about my future and feel nervous about it. I cannot concentrate. Sometimes, I lost myself in reminiscence, or feeling dissatisfied about my own performance. I waste a lot of time in doing these. I must learn to focus on the reality now.

My Choice to Be Positive and Flexible

I can see things with different perspectives. I need to move away from negative view and fixed framework. I can remain open, adopt a broad view, and pay more attention to the positive side and the environment. I would be able to move to a new frame of mind. When I realize that I have different choices, I can become more flexible. As a result, I would become less anxious and be able to move away from my stubbornness.

The two episodes in my secondary school are regretful but I can choose to put them down. I can also choose appreciation without reservation and skepticism. I can choose to learn from my mistakes instead of over-focusing on details and improvement in order to elevate my confidence.

I can count the blessings by noticing and being grateful to what my family has given me. I can choose not to talk about studying with my mother when I see her. I can talk to her about her grandchild, the stock market so that we can have a pleasant conversation. In term of personal growth experience, I can look at it as preparation to equip myself to care for and administer to people of the same experience.

I need re-evaluate the rules and regulations from my original family, some may be out-dated and inappropriate. I would adjust and react

accordingly but I don't need to rebel and challenge my mother any more. I need to admit to my mother that I am a grown-up with personal values and life style of my choice. I may or may not follow the suit of my original family. I can choose freely but learn to respect other family members. I will not force anyone to change because that will affect our relationship and I can become controlling, stubborn and angry. Mutual respect will help me balance the relationship and help me avoid the tension and self-blame coming from relationship enmeshment.

Spiritual Growth

God is the creator, He is the ruler of all. He creates me. When I need to change I go to Him for help. I need to learn to be humble and let God control but not by myself. In this way I can release myself from anxiety and self-blame when I lost control. What I really need is self-control. I need to control my irrational thoughts, my overreaction to my mother, avoidance attitude, self-criticism and inconsiderate response and reaction. I accept my limitation and inability to control myself and need God's help.

God is the real judge therefore I must stop judging myself. I need to be reminded that God will not criticize me so I can stop doing that to myself. When I want to be perfect, I need to discriminate between excellence and

perfection and be aware that only God is perfect. When I desire perfection, I can learn from God image. When I yearn for eternal God, I see my study and performance not as important. I need to be careful not to drift away from the correct goal and value. I must accept my limitations. God's love for me is not due to my achievement. I will pray that God will help me see myself in the right light. I can find and experience God love in everyday life. As I feel God's love, I feel more secure and confident. I need to learn to trust God. When I decide and work independently, I can always ask God for His guidance and wisdom.

Besides praying for my family and my personal growth, I can copy related scriptures from the Bible and place them on my desk to remind myself. I can also memorize these verses and use them to remind myself whenever I have irrational thoughts.

Picture and Images

Hillman (1996) once wrote: "Images come and go (as in dreams) at their own will, with their own rhythm, within their own fields of relations, undetermined by personal psychodynamics" (p. 7). "Learning the components of story, restoring the importance of the narrative function, and illuminating the narrative by expanding its images demonstrate the process by which cultural images become restored to

meaningfulness” (p. 7). Discussing and restoring the images in a client’s mind helps to build a way into his or her sub-conscious mind.

Re-Storying

Here is a recollection of D. in 2010, seven years after the therapy. Her stories have been told and retold many times after the therapy. In the process D. is making choices for herself and her relationships with others; we sense her ownership of authority over her life. She used a lot of metaphors in her story, and she also thought of herself in a metaphorical context, which gave her greater control over her ability to change.

I remembered before the family reconstruction, as I went into your room to tell you about my fear, you asked me what that fear was like. I said it was like a hurdle. You commented that it would be easy if it was just like a hurdle. The first picture I remembered was your room, a sunlit room. I still remembered that as the first picture. Then during class, I was asked to pick out people to play the roles in my family. I had to choose a relative who was a woman but I chose a man. The class laughed because I chose a woman instead of a man, but you said it was alright because a man can also have feminine qualities and you also commented that I was a creative person. Then I began choosing different people to play the roles. I remembered myself making choices. Then

I was asked about the most significant message I had heard from my family . . .

I distinctly remembered that a message came up immediately, which said,”

You are naughty. I don't want you!” At that moment I distinctly remembered a

pain shooting from the spinal. I was nauseated, wanted to throw up. I

remembered I analyzed and rejected what did not fit. I saw the classmate who

played me; she had a blanket over her head. After the role play I saw that she

was relieved. I remembered some people cried during the role play.

I was asked how I felt during the process. I was asked several times but

I felt pressured but finally gave my answer. You said I need to jump the hurdle.

There were three hurdles. I was scared in the first jump; I did better with the

second one and then full of confidence to jump the third one. That picture of

jumping over the hurdle successfully stays so vividly in my mind throughout

my study.

Later on you asked me about a character in the family reconstruction. I

chose someone very skinny to play the role of someone very fat. It was

because I felt that the character has certain constructs of the person. I

remembered she was a nice companion for me. I had many pictures and they

triggered one after another.

I somehow have some strong feelings burning in my mind. I get angry at people whom I thought have tried to trick me. My fear is deep down not the hurdle that I wanted to manage. I was afraid that I was not able to manage. I still recalled how I was dragged out of the house by my mother. My anxiety of that fear is more severe. But my awareness and my differentiation are much better, now that I have the guts to deal with it. I was very frustrated in dealing with a borderline client. I remembered myself like a fireman. I pictured myself walking out of the fire; I go home to clean up and come back.

The fire is changeable, very scary and could have swallowed me.

Recently I had a dream about a fire behind me. I was a fireman. Fireman has a distinct duty and a trained professional to put out the fire. May-be it connotes a rescue mission and to beat the impossible because the fire is very big. It was a very big contrast because I was leaving the fire behind. When I compared the two pictures I discovered a big difference. I see that hurdle is not very big. But today I come to think again I thought my fear is more like a mountain. I thought I would not climb over it but it is big like a mountain. The more I thought about it is more like a mountain. My fear is that I will not be able to handle. The picture of the fire was 2-3 stories high. Now that as I compare the two pictures. I still remembered what you said about hurdle. Fire is

uncontrollable and changeable. I know I can just jump over a hurdle. In terms of scale, a hurdle is very small. But recently I feel that my fear is big like a mountain. The way I managed fear is like facing up to a mountain. After my study in a program of Master in Christian Marriage and Family Therapy (MCMFT) I feel that my perception of fear is more like a fire which represents something that I cannot handle. I am often affected by not being able to manage. It can be anything.

When I was asked the following question, “What is guiding you in this time of your life?” I responded with an understanding in the spiritual dimension; “I have finished the program and at this point I’m kind of lost. I have a clear mission that I am to touch people round the world through what I say. Like in Isaiah 40:9 which said, ‘You, who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!”’” I am not sure what I will do or need to do in order to reach this mission.”

You once asked me what I’m like. I said I was like Doraamon (a character in a Japanese cartoon who has a magic bag that contains solutions to

all sort of problems). You said it is like dreams come true. At this point I'm like a combination of the two.

Touch people and touch people round the world, what is the difference?

I want to reach the people of the whole world, to touch as many people as possible, then later, it is to touch people round the world. I'm not sure. But I will start touching people near me.

In the following story, D. structured her story around change and development, which shows that she has reorganized her story. Michael White (White & Epston, 1993) commented about how narration has affected us, "Re-storying of experience necessitates the active involvement of persons in the reorganization of their experience" (p. 17).

My Story of the Change Process

My Mother's Keeper

As far as my memory can carry me, my very existence has always been tied in with the well-being of my mother. Mother was sick a lot and she required constant care. Somehow I was chosen to be the keeper around her because I was just old enough to know what was going on but young enough not to be occupied with school work. So, mother lives or mother dies depends largely on whether I can yell for help in time. So I have inside of me the

anxiety of a fire siren just waiting to sound the danger. A part of me is always hyper-vigilant and it worked well with a responsible part. Over the years, I carried out my responsibility faithfully and diligently. Responsibility is a good part because it gave me good feelings when I met other's expectation but it also stressed me out.

My mother had all sorts of sickness and I was also told how critical her condition was and how terrible it would be for us to live without a mother. I trusted everything she told me and was really worried that she might die during my watch. So hyper-vigilant always worked overtime. However, for many years and after many episodes, my mother is still around. My fear of losing her is not eminent but the alarm and the emergency light is always blinking. In fact, she had fainted right before my eyes, since then I never doubted that she would. Of course, I performed my duty very well and was praised for my reaction in time to rescue her. The rescuer in me constantly rose up to that wake-up call. But from a distant, my guilty feeling was always stand-by because I was afraid that my slightest blaming may cause her to die.

For some reasons, mother just loved to keep me as her companion. I took up the role of the medical check-up agent of my mother with special pride. She would go with me to her medical visits from time to time. I

considered that my show time and would like to work some fun into the routine. During the long wait outside the consultation room, I could enjoy ice cream, lollipop and all kinds of goodies while I kept watch over my mother. My creativity was very much at work during these visits. The physicians that we visited were usually prominent ones and their offices were in the reputable business districts. I loved the expensive air in those offices and I would look around and watch people there, nosed around and curious about everything over there. I was fascinated by the non-ordinariness. This part of me likes to sneak out from time to time to enjoy a faint sense of pride and snobbishness. As I talk about it now I sense my body even carries that high-upness in my posture. In some of my pictures, I see my chin slightly tilted upward when I enjoy myself

Those medical visits were some special things between me and my mother. I received special attention for being her companion and was rewarded both physically and psychologically.

I imagined she picked me for a reason but I never knew why. I felt ambivalent about our relationship. I loved to be the chosen one around her but the worries and anguish caused me to avoid her. Being chosen became the very thing that I could use to beat my elder sister because she was considered

the most capable one in the family. I got my value out of being chosen to do the job. But I was confused. Did she love me, or did she just want me to perform the function that she had trained me to do? —After a while, I gave up in figuring out why because that was just too hard for a five year old. There is a part of me that would compromise and would settle for ambiguity. Sometimes, I just called it lazy. I have a tendency to yield and give up when things get too complicated.

I did not have much impression about my father at that time except that he was a good guy. I thought he worked hard and had to be away from home most of the time. I just assumed a father's role was outside of home. My super-reasonable part often just jump in to reason and make conclusion very quickly. I suspect that it always works overtime.

My memories of my preschool years mainly consisted of my mother and her sickness and my role as a medical check-up agent. I sank or I swam had a lot to do with my mother's emotion. I was at the mercy of her emotion. Given time, I have a victim part of me waiting to be called upon.

My Playmate

I have four siblings. I am the second daughter followed by a brother and then a sister. I played with my younger brother most of the time. He

seemed to be the only choice I had at that time. My elder sister was so serious that she always had better things to do; my younger sister was too fragile that I was afraid that she might be broken by some rough games. I ordered my younger brother around and we played all sorts of make-beliefs while mother was resting in bed in the afternoon. My leadership part was most happy to have its say in those afternoons when mother was not there to interfere. I felt that was the most wonderful time of the day.

My younger brother made me feel like a commander and a director. He was always behind me and was willing to support me in all kinds of crazy ideas.

Once in a while, I would be caught red handedly and punished for the crime of leading my younger brother astray. The punishment was often severe. As I come to think about it now it still chills my spine. Mother made it such a serious matter that she had arranged jury to witness while she executed penalty for my crimes. The most ultimate and horrible punishment was her disownment. As soon as the sentencing was announced I would be practically thrown out of the house. The most horrid crime that I had committed was not following my mother's order. To this day, it still rings loud and clear how she declared my sentencing, "Out! You don't belong here. You did not listen to

me.” Then, I would be dragged out of the house and my world would suddenly tumble down and everything lost its color. It was pitch dark as I sobbed in the corner of the corridor. At those moments I felt an adopted child shivering inside of me. In numerous occasions, a maid servant named Ah Ngan often came out secretly and rescued me. I feel that my shameful self is always hiding at a dark corner waiting to hack me and render me helpless. His faint voice constantly muttered, “I don’t want you!”

As I was often punished for guiding and directing, I grew to be nervous and worried about being caught in those positions. I gradually sabotaged my leadership by forsaking all the activities at school and remained very much a loner most of the time.

My Favorite Part

Other than the special role of a hailer, I spent most of my time playing. I loved everything around me and I thought they were all fun. I could spend hours watching the clouds change or splashed water in the puddles. Of course, it was more fun to have my little brother tagged along because I found directing and commanding more fun than playing on my own.

Mother always warned us of the rain and not to get wet because that would bring sickness and sickness means disasters. But for me, rainy days

were wonderful days when I could shake off rain water from the trees and get myself soaking wet. Besides, I could wade in the puddles with my rain boots and kicked up the water to rage a water fight with my brother. It was very unfortunate that my game would end with a sad note if it were found out and was caught by my mother. She would punish me by shaming and alienation which left me with ugly scars that I could never erase. It was unfortunate that my creativity was matched with shame. For many occasions, I heard myself said, "It's a stupid idea. You are messing things up." Then all my ideas would die. The critical mother part of me is always working.

My inner wisdom told me that safety is more important than anything else. So I had to constantly look out for trouble. I know I have a good self-protection part but it has a tendency to overreact and become defensive.

The Darkest Moment In My Life

It must have happened on one of those ordinary days. I was caught unguarded and totally unprepared. Several of my mother's friends came over one afternoon. Among them was my mother's older sister. For some reasons I disliked her because she had that serious and stern look on her face which told me not to mess with her. I'm sure she disliked me as much as I did about her.

My mother called me into the room where her pre-arranged jury was there, sitting in a semi circle. As mother sentenced my crime, those people pointed their fingers at me and echoed what my mother said. Worst yet, they looked at me with despise. I remembered my world just collapsed instantly. Shame, betrayal, guilt, bewilderment, and fear gutted out from inside and I was totally flooded and immersed. I cried hysterically but they did not give up. I felt that the world had abandoned me at that moment. I was totally shattered and that day remained the darkest day of my life. That experience taught me to follow my mother's order no matter what. I did not stand any chance in winning my mother. I declared myself a total loser on that day and this loser in me was a damper and downer to me. I also seriously consider it to be the major reason for my depression. He is not welcomed on board but he is a tyrant.

I have also come to the conclusion that I cannot trust anyone, not even my own mother. To this day, I prefer to look at anyone from a distance and always remain reserved and skeptical in any relationship. As I talk about this, I can almost see the blinking light of the emergency signal that I rely so heavily on all the time. He finds good alliance with hyper-vigilant.

My Secret Relationship with Ah Ngan

Ah Ngan was a maid servant of the house. Since mother was sick a lot, she hired Ah Ngan to help her with cooking and all kinds of household chores. Ah Ngan always worked in the kitchen and I enjoyed sneaking out and went over there to talk to her. In fact we had a little exchange program between us. She would show me how she sewed and I would teach her how to write and tell her about all the wonderful things happening at school. Ah Ngan was illiterate. The little teacher in me enjoyed this teaching job immensely. I would teach her new words and show her how she could write her name. The time I spent with Ah Ngan was a little secret I kept for all these years. It was the most gratifying and also the most uninhibited moments in my life. I did not have to worry about what she thought about me because she seemed to accept and agree to everything I said. Besides, I didn't need to worry about right or wrong. My guard could really rest when I was around Ah Ngan.

Ah Ngan did not have anyone close to her. We were like her family, or at least I felt that way. Ah Ngan trusted me and treated me like her family member. She even confided the most important thing to me. One day she signaled me to go to her room, and then she said in a shy but boasting way, "I put my money away in a very safe place." As she talked, she pointed her

finger to a bag in a small drawer, “The thief never would have suspected it.” I saw in the drawer some sanitary napkins and miscellaneous. “The bad guys don’t like to touch these things, they think women’s stuffs will bring bad luck and omen to them.” Ah Ngan smiled broadly and her face shone a little witty light. Though I was kind of puzzled because I did not see what was wrong with those napkins. But I did not ask any further. At that time, I sensed a witty cunning part in me was hissing. I thought it was great that she trusted me with her money.

I felt very proud in front of Ah Ngan. But after one instance, I thought my image was all shattered and I felt so ashamed of myself that I stopped our little exchange program altogether.

One day I was punished by my mother for something terrible. Even to this day I could not quite figure out what happened on that day. All I could remember was what my mother said, “You are naughty. I don’t want you anymore!” And as soon as she declared that, I was dragged out of the house. I cried and cried for a long time until I was all exhausted and my crying turned into sobbing. I was terrified, exhausted and shameful. After a long time, Ah Ngan came out through the back door and quietly took me into the house. At that moment, I could not look at her any more. On one hand I was grateful for

her rescue but on the other hand I felt that my pride was totally wiped out. I could never hold myself together in front of Ah Ngan anymore. Since then, she rescued me many times. But our relationship was different. I liked her but I also hated her. I felt shameful to be seen abandoned by my own mother and her seeing me had made me more shameful because I used to be admired by her. After that incidence, I did not know how to handle relationship any more.

My Study

As I grew up I soon learned that study took priority over anything else. If I were to gain any attention, I needed to excel academically. I studied hard and it paid off. Hard working was a very dependable part in me. I gradually relied more and more on this part. My results always ranked the first few in class. My parents took pride in me.

I was given an English name which used to belong to my elder sister. She could not quite pronounce it so I was given the name instead. According to my parents, they thought I could carry the name better. I liked my name because it was like a pretty dress that was put on me. But at the back of my mind, I was worried that the dress did not fit and it outstood me.

I prided myself in my achievement at school. May-be I was also trying to placate my mother because she thought highly about studying. She thought

extracurricular activities would distract my attention, so I went straight from school to home after class. Gradually, I spent more and more time on my study, less and less time with any other things, not even my pastimes. It was like one big pillar that supported the whole house.

As I grew older, I became more demanding towards myself. I wanted myself to be perfect so that no one would ever be able to criticize me. The perfectionist in me has brought along fear, anxiety, and tension. I was very worried that I was not able to fulfill other people's expectation. I grew more and more reluctant to making decisions because I was worried that I might make wrong ones. I also spent a lot of time rehearsing or criticizing myself. I did all that I could to improve myself but I grew more conscious of my failure and I disliked myself more. I also tended to get away from other people.

I lost confidence in Mathematics because I was overly anxious about being wrong and getting poor results. I grew from worried to being helpless as I felt that I was losing control over my performance. My results ranged from barely passing to failing for almost a year. My anxiety kept piling up.

I developed headache, insomnia and I lost appetite in food. I did not know my body was communicating to me a very important message. The somatic alarms were so rampant that it affected my health and my study. I

could not concentrate and I would fall sick every time as the examination drew near. As the approaching of the School Certificate Examination at the end of my secondary school, my anxiety eventually rose to the highest point in my life, I suffered the discomfort of all kinds of somatic illnesses. My body collapsed right before the examination. I received psychiatric treatment and was on medication for several years. My world turned from gray to darkness.

I had mixed feelings about studying. It was the source of satisfaction and recognition but it also brought me pain and suffering. It was through school results that I was valued discriminatively. I gained a lot of good feelings throughout my primary school years. But as pressure compiled, I could not cope any more. I grew skeptical and worried about my ambitious part. Some of my parts are not getting along. Their disharmony causes me great pain physically and psychologically.

My First Break Down

I used to enjoy a lot of attention for being a good student at school. My performance has helped me win affection from my parents, friendship from my peers, and recognition from teachers. My doing part was my favorite part but it broke down and became unreliable. It disappointed me.

I became more of an introvert and preferred to stay home and only spent time on what I thought would benefit my school performance. I punished myself for enjoying and getting satisfaction out of learning. Soon my acquisition became restricted and it was purely for fulfilling expectation of the people around me.

I was totally swept away when I learned that I failed my Mathematic tests. It was such a blow to me and my mother that she exercised more control over my social life to help me return to where I was. It was only study and nothing else. With a little more help from my perfectionist tendency, soon I became oppressively compulsive. My mother worked extremely hard to drive me but I worked even harder to exploit myself.

My Mother

When I think about her I can't help relating to an image of a distant judge. She was relentless in pointing out my flaws. I played and had fun as I wanted but all of a sudden this judge would move in and tell me to stop. I can still hear her saying loud and clear, "Don't play. You are wasting your time!" She trimmed away the extra things on my tree of life leaving the bare trunk. She was a strong big hand that pushed me through many hurdles in life. I disliked the many wounds she made on me but I could not live without her.

Throughout my childhood I had the imminent fear of losing her. I was made the protector of her. I took the job seriously. For many years, she survived numerous visits to doctors' offices and numerous close calls. The urgency she claimed had quietly discolored into hassles and demands. I have become more and more skeptic about what she says and wanted to avoid and reject her.

I used to turn to her for confirmation, but this is becoming more and more difficult. Because I could not trust her, I was never sure about what she said. Even when she praised and appreciated me, I heard her mocking tone. Her voice was always full of biting sarcasm. Her conversation was mixed with understatement and shaming. She said a million times that she had a noble mission to struggle to live for her children but I could not trust her. I could not find evidence to match with what she said.

I wanted to use my discernment on what she said but after numerous disappointments, I finally decided to abandon my judgment. I would rather accept what my mother said totally and wholeheartedly without any discrepancy because I love her.

Some of her comments still rang like siren at critical time; they carried heavy weight on my heart and on my nerve. I can still recall how she despised

me when she called me, “A barking dog at the door step”. I felt humiliated and belittled. And because of that, I was nervous about speaking in front of people especially authority figures.

Her other announcement was about her departure, “If I die, you (meaning all the children) will be so miserable.” That announcement had made me worried for many years and I still carry that notion of losing her at any time and that would render me helpless immediately.

However, I did not really understand my mother as a person and why she behaved in a certain way. Until one day when I entered into therapy I finally had a chance to really look at her as a person. All of a sudden, it became clear to me that my mother was affected by her mother as much as how I was affected by her. She was no longer just a ‘mother’, she appeared wounded and hurt like me. I also realized what she said to me was in fact something she said to herself throughout her life. She inhibited herself because she was afraid. Her creativity, her emotions, and the adventure spirit were all locked up deep within her. No wonder she was always sick. Sickness may be her defense against fear. When I looked at her again with this new understanding, I could appreciate how sickness had helped her lock herself in a little safe place. With her sick role, help became more available.

My mother was the third child of a big family. Her mother was the first of three wives who gave birth to five children, while a second wife bore another five children. She was stuck and mixed with many children in a chaotic family system. There was certain status in being the children of the first wife. But with another two wives and so many children, survival became an important issue. Hyper-vigilant easily became an adaptability second nature in her life, I could use it to cope with many difficult and demanding situations.

Her father was Portuguese descent who enjoyed certain privilege of some affluent family. My grand-father worked in the monetary and trading department in Macau. My mother grew up in a big family that there was a lot of power struggle and complicated human dynamic in her original family between the wives and their children. As a protective shield, mother learned to suppress her emotions and feelings at an early age. She surrounded herself by rules and regulations to protect her from the chaotic circumstance that she grew up in. She knew how disastrous it was for the children because her mother died early. She needed to watch out both for herself and for her siblings. She has an elder brother who was diagnosed as schizophrenic very early on in life, and a younger sister who committed suicide when she was eighteen. Both of her other two siblings had problems in marriage. Fear and

anxiety seemed to be the dominant themes in her family. When I saw her family, I felt sorry and sad for a long time. As trees in the garden, her tree of life was as bare as mine.

My Father

My father was an invisible person in the family. All I knew about him was that he worked hard and he was quite fluent in English. He came from a prominent family who owned big businesses but as his father died he needed to move to live with some rich relatives and supported by them. I think he must have done a lot of compromising in order to carry the nick name of ‘a yes man’.

I never knew where my father was when I was punished. I wish he could rescue me but that never happened. I could only know him through my mother because he was always at work. He gave me special names both in Chinese and English by which he gave me much more than just names, he gave me a sense of uniqueness. The Chinese character in my name is quite rare among girls. The English name was not a common name. My father took pride in his knowledge in the English language because he had the chance to study in a reputable English school before the decline of his family. From his

background, I understand the importance of uniqueness to him because he could easily lost himself in the midst of successful relatives.

However, I was also stuck between being different and being overly looked at because if I am different I may stand out too much and be easily criticized. The safety issue is too much for me. Fear remains a dominant emotion for me for a long period of time.

My father was an existing father but has not been available to me. I hardly knew him. He spent most of his time working outside thus making him out of reach. Gradually I have resolved to depend only on myself when I have conflicts with mother. I figure if I am out of control, I would face disastrous results. So I decided to avoid rather than losing control and making wrong decisions.

My Marriage

I met my husband at church. He spotted me behind the church pulps. Under the supervision and guidance of our pastor and his wife, we started dating very soon. I liked the relationship because I could be very relaxed and became the joyful little girl again as long as I was behind my husband. He made all sorts of decisions and I just followed. Later on, he became a pastor and I remained invisible which was basically expected of a pastor's wife

traditionally. I had to admit that I had some honey-moon time leading a sheltered life. But one day he resigned from the pastor's role. When he left his position, it was almost like leaving a home that he had taken so much time to build. I felt forsaken and dragged out of the house. I began losing sleep, experienced trembling and shaking inside for no apparent reasons. I knew that I never like being driven out and it was that familiar experience. Shame, anger, helplessness, sadness and betrayal all came crawling out like poisonous scorpion ready to sting. My vigilant self watched from a distant sounding all the alarms that he can possibly find.

Death and Fear

I remember myself always being engulfed by fear. An imminent sense of death often accompanies fear. I was afraid that my mother would die. Starting from the age of five, I earnestly believed that if my mother died I would too, even though I did not understand what death was.

In my teenage years, two of my favorite teachers died suddenly. They were like fathers I wish I had. Soon after I graduated from my secondary school, my Chinese teacher died of a serious illness, leaving some very young children and his wife. I was sick and could not attend his funeral but I could

imagine how sad his wife would feel. I was lost and I plunged into depression.

Everything became gloomy and dark and I had to stay home for a long time.

My Math teacher also died just a little later. His children were very young. Instead of grief and sadness, I felt fear, the same fear that my mother would die and left us helpless. Both teachers were nice to me and their death left great big holes in my heart. For the first time, death had become so real and I sensed the power of sickness and I felt feeble and helpless in front of it.

Soon after I married, my father-in-law fell down on his birthday party. He died three days later. His sudden death caught me unguarded. I wailed at his funeral. All my sadness just gushed out from a reservoir from deep within. My crying was like, "See, what you have done to me. Poor me! I have been a victim for so long. I know no one will ever care about me." I almost saw myself pointing a finger in accusation. He was friendly to me and he was like a father whom I had always wanted. I liked him but his death triggered my fear and sadness. I felt a repeated cycle of abandonment. My needs and yearnings would always end in the same place of a previous wound.

I looked for help

I finally decided to enroll in a seminary after many years' struggle with the calling from God. I knew I had to start with some preparation but I was

very nervous about entering any study program. Deep within, I felt the need to do something about my low self-esteem. I thought if I could get a higher degree, I would have a higher sense of self. That was my logical thinking from a rational self.

I sailed through the first semester even though I did not like the anxiety that came along with study of any kind. I was still nervous about how people see me. The urge to excel was faithful like an automatic motor that once it was kicked off, it would push me to work hard. As a result, I was close to the verge of breakdown in many occasions. I was well-aware of it but was helpless and could not do anything about it.

Fortunately, the first semester went quite well and my dedication and hard work was rewarded by good grades. In the second semester I began to feel something disastrous would happen. I went into the loop of helplessness and fear. I worried and I lost many nights' of sleep. Finally I took up all my courage and visited my English teacher. I talked to her because I felt most comfortable with English and knew that I was the best in her class. I sensed a little superiority and a peculiar familiarity in our relationship. However, I did not want her to see how bad my situation was. I felt a temporary relief after a brief conversation with her but soon I came to a collapse. I wanted to talk to

her again but I could not find her. Instead I found another counseling teacher and he helped me empty out my feelings and encouraged me to seek serious counseling.

After the examination, there was a long break between semesters. I was able to recover and resume to my normal functioning self again in the new semester.

Soon, I saw her among my teachers and she happened to be teaching a Personal Growth course. I wanted to tell her more about my struggles and my problems but I hesitated and worried. I watched her from a distance. It looked like she enjoyed what she was doing which echoed with what I concealed inside of me. I sensed that she wanted to help but I still felt the resistance inside me telling me to be careful not to let my vulnerability show. The blinking light reminded me if I did not stay away I might have to suffer the pain of losing everything like what happened to me before.

Towards the end of the course, she invited me to be the star of a process called Family Reconstruction. I was very nervous, remained undecided for several weeks. Finally I heard from myself that I had to take that chance like the last call to get on board of a train. What I had in my mind

was to 'fix' myself from all that anxieties that I had suffered for so long. I was determined to be different because I felt I could enjoy life more.

Family Reconstruction

I was the star of Family Reconstruction. I liked the idea of a star but afraid that the people who looked at me did not find me a star. Later on, I discovered that the attention on me was good loving kindness projected on me. I felt loved, accepted and supported. The feeling was new to me. The guide looked like a mother-teacher combination. When I was asked to think about what I wanted out of the work of family reconstruction I was too overwhelmed to realize what was going on. I only felt compelled and attracted to do what was suggested to me. I had not thought about what I could ask for.

Before the actual work I went into my teacher's room to talk about what I wanted out of the work. I was determined to get rid of my fear about examination and study because I felt evaluated and weighed for what I could or could not do. I also felt nervous about doing family reconstruction which was new too me. Part of the reason was that I did not know what that might lead to, and I was worried about how people might look at me after the work. I knew about uncertainty which often triggered fear. But I knew the real fear was from my mother. She could easily destroy me by abandonment. Besides, I

was never sure what her next move would be. There was no way I could be prepared to face up to my mother. I had a mixed feeling when I was invited by my teacher.

To my surprise, I stepped into a sunlit room. It was as though I was welcomed by the sun into her territory. I felt relieved. My teacher proceeded gently and slowly and asked me to describe my fear. I immediately had the image of a hurdle.

On the day of the work, I came into the room early not feeling much of my emotions because I told myself that I had to do it, and had to rely on my rational self to do the job right. My rational self was overriding my emotional self. Besides, I thought that the sunlit room as a positive sign.

As we proceeded to do a meditation, I felt safe with a nurtured voice from my teacher because I trusted that she would protect me and guide me in the process. I was also glad that I was chosen to be the star; the familiar feeling of being chosen helped me rest assured that I was valued.

I could not hear very well when she explained my family map to the class. My mind wandered off someplace else. I knew my avoidance was a way to save myself from any possible harm.

Then I was asked to pick out people in the class to play the roles in my family. I picked a man to play my aunt because I suddenly felt funny and wanted to act silly and played with it. Some classmates immediately burst into laughter. But my teacher who was guiding the process did not seem to mind at all and she even acknowledged the fact that some men had feminine characteristics. I sensed that I had dehumanized some people I disliked. They were like stickers labeled bad people in my mind. I also chose someone very skinny to play someone who was very fat. I knew I picked her for a special feeling and a relationship that I thought she had shared with me.

My guide thought I was creative and I continued to pick different people to play the roles in my family. I felt that I was given permission to make choices and I was glad. I almost enjoyed it like a game. I also sensed my creative part was waking up and was allowed to move about and experiment with different things in the process.

In the middle of the process, I was asked about the most distinctly remembered message from a family setting. My mother's voice just popped up, "You are naughty. I don't want you!" When the person in that role uttered that in a loud voice, my body just shivered in pain because that was like an arrow shooting through my spine. I was immediately rendered immobile and felt

nauseated. My legs were feeble and weak and I wanted to throw up. It was like being cut off from the tree trunk, I was discarded by my mother.

I saw the person who played the little me covered herself in a big blanket of shame. She murmured something like stuffy and she could not breathe behind the blanket. I felt sad for the rejection she felt and wanted to comfort her. But I could not do anything. My energy was sapped and I was immobilized by what my mother said. I felt weak and small inside.

My mother was also holding a stick getting ready to spank me. To my surprise, my anger suddenly took charge. As I took the place of my stand-in, I reacted to my mother in an unusual way. I grabbed the stick from her and challenged her authority over me. I did not know where I got the courage. All of a sudden, I saw her as a very unreasonable person. I would not let anything stop me from doing what I wanted. I also felt the vulnerability and hurt of my stand-in. I could not help but rushed out to help her. However, I stood far away from my mother because I did not want to get hurt. I did not know what to do with the stick but stood there and looked at her. There was a pause. I saw from a distance that she was startled and did not know how to react to my sudden reaction. I felt a little triumphant because I could finally act out what I had concealed in my mind for a long time.

At that moment, I heard people cheer me on. The guide asked them to form hurdles for me to jump. I felt something inside of me suddenly materialized in front of me. It was not easy to jump over the first hurdle. I barely made it as my legs were weak and my perception of a hurdle was big difficulty. As I jumped over the first one, there was a second one, I suddenly perceived it differently. It was more like a game to me. My child part just took off to take the challenge and enjoyed the fun. When I jumped the last one, I thought it was fun. As soon as I landed my feet after the third hurdle I felt strength in my legs again.

As I came back to face my mother and tell her how I felt about her, my voice was weak and feeble. With the support of my stand-in, I could say how badly I was hurt when she dragged me out of the house. The danger signal in me suggested that I needed to stay away from her when I did not feel comfortable around her. I gladly accepted the advice and stayed a long distance from her.

There were also some strong feelings burning in my mind that I did not have enough time to deal with. I knew that I get angry at people whom I thought have tried to trick me. My fear was much deeper down than the hurdle that I wanted to manage. I recalled how I was dragged out of the house by my

mother. My anxiety and fear of that experience was much too severe to bear. A sharp pain shooting from my spine at that time told me something deeper was calling for my attention.

I shifted from the emotional self to the rational self back and forth several times throughout the process of reconstruction. I was like that in real life too. When life was too much for my feeling self, I switched to the rational self to take charge. I swung from one side to another and felt that either one was given enough credit for what they did because they were only called up for survival. I realized that I was constantly burdened with survival struggles and alarms.

Unfolding Metaphors and Images

The images and metaphors that I have picked up in the process of Family Reconstruction have gradually evolved and unfolded. I used to feel weak and indecisive, but the strength that I gained from my experience in family reconstruction has strengthened me and help me stand more firmly and more flexibility and be able to move back and forth to manage myself externally and internally.

I have discovered a remarkable resemblance between myself and a cartoon character Chibi Maruko-chan from a Japanese production. She was the

trouble maker of her family. As I watched her, I cry with her and laughed with her. I think she is wonderful because she is funny, simple in mind and always has a good intention behind all her seemingly trouble making character. I specially applaud her guts to be nasty and self-centered in many episodes. Even though she is not a real character, I gradually pick her as an idol and perhaps a healthy and safe way of expression. She is like a sounding board which echoes my internal dialogues and grievances. Honestly, I love the very same thing that she loves. The sneaky part of me just cannot agree more with what she can do so shamelessly. Sakura is able to say what I don't have the courage to say out loud. She is like a shadow part of me that I could enjoy safely. I also admire her determination to become what she wants to become.

However, there is a sad note to Maruko's story. Her curiosity is often misunderstood and she is labeled with ill intention and often gets punished for that. Interestingly, her absent-mindedness and her irrelevant stance have made the allegation less lethal. Quite often I could not help but laugh at the silliness of the whole thing. From her, I have learned to adapt a more positive view on my shadow parts. Like her or not, I feel safe to watch her from a distance.

I always have an internal picture of me sitting on the beach all by myself. The weather may be bright and sunny but I feel lonely. This picture is

almost like a framed image that I have for a long time. I may not want to change the picture, but I want to change the feeling. I know this image is telling me about a deep yearning inside. I know that I don't need to rush to do anything about it because it is not hurting me or only part of me.

During the process of family reconstruction, I was asked to name fear. The image of hurdles immediately came into my mind. I have never been big on sports and my legs were kind of weak. But as I saw hurdles in front of me, I quickly gathered the strength to jump over them. The first attempt was a little shaky, a second one easier than the third one was just simple. It felt like an obstacle in the beginning but as people cheered me on the side, it turned into a game. It was fun in it. The image of hurdles remained very vividly in my mind and it called up the creative part of me coupled with my child. With the cooperation of two of them, I sense the awesome power of them.

Another picture came to me when I was working on my master in marriage and family therapy. It came when I was in a bad shape. At one point, fear and stress were accumulated so much that I could not handle. After the work of family reconstruction, I saw myself wearing the uniform of a fireman walking out of a fire scene with head holding high walking in big steps. It happened one day quietly. I had the sense that the fire was the anger which

dwelt within me. It was much more severe and difficult than the hurdles. But there was also a voice in me that said, "It's such a big fire, I must go home, clean up and then come back." I knew what I was doing because I was a professional in a rescue mission. I knew I could beat the impossible but I would allow myself to relax and take time to do it.

Now I call my mother from time to time because I care about her. But now I allow myself to see her at a distance. Seemingly, she is smaller in stature. I also see other mother figures in my life. Shame has blocked my view of appreciation and acceptance in the past. When I look from a distance I see the mothering that Ah Ngan was giving me when my mother was not available to me. As I allow other people to get closer to me, I am accepting my mother self to grow in size and shapes. I feel that I have several mothers growing inside me, namely they include the critical mother who holds a high standard for her work, the caring and accepting mother who is willing to give and share what she has, the protective and vigilant mother who is sensitive and always look out for trouble, the intelligent scholarly mother who constantly wants to improve herself, the angry and sarcastic mother who can kill with words and the creative and nourishing mother who is willing to teach and develop other people. With the newly adopted mother parts, I feel more satisfaction being a

mother to my daughter, a pastor's wife who is mothering her church and a counselor who re-parents her clients. I enjoy a more relaxed and open attitude in mothering as I feel more resemblance between myself and my counselor and teacher. I am so glad that I even proceed to mention to her about how I feel about her. It took a bit of courage but I could acknowledge my true feeling.

I still take my mother to see the doctors but I would request my other sisters to share the work load. To my surprise, as I put on my counselor's head, I see how her sickness has tied the family together even though there is anxiety attached to it until one of my younger sisters has taken up the role of the 'patient' in the family. As she took over the sick role, we are able to see more clearly about my mother's 'heart disease.' My elder sister who used to be the favorite child in the family is quite self-centered and she is always distant and not able to empathize with mother. It came clearer to me why mother had chosen me to be the check-up agent. I gradually see my role beyond the role of a hailer. I allow myself to be more involved in the check-up agent role. In a recent regular check-up, I directly consulted the doctor about my mother's situation and found out that she is in fact quite healthy! She did not have any terminal illness!

A new metaphor gradually evolved after I have studied in the master program for a while. I heard from within that I would touch the people around the world. I also saw the image of a puzzle in a dream. I saw that I was being put it together slowly like that of an ancient urn being put together in reconstruction, one piece at a time. The historians work patiently to put together the pieces from excavation to rebuild the urn back to its original state of grandeur. Every single part of me is realized as an essential part in the reconstruction process which is in fact a healing process. The need for approval, the fear of abandonment, the feeling of not being good enough have formed my fixation on relationships, fear and self-criticism. I feel from within that the process of healing continues as I proceed to heal others. As I work as a counselor both at my church and at the school counseling center, I begin to feel the healing power working both ways on the clients and on myself.

I still do not have the faintest idea about how I can actualize anything in this metaphor but I think I could trust my heart.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary and Discussion

Satir(1991) has mentioned that “change is the cornerstone of therapy and education” (p. 85); it is important to understand and embrace change as it is an inevitable part of life. Her trust and respect for her clients fostered a climate for change, which Nathaniel Branden (1994) called greater self-esteem. Branden further explained one’s capacity for change as having greater acceptance—that is, being able to talk with ease about both accomplishments and shortcomings and being able to give and receive affection and appreciation. This dissertation is designed to outline the many tenets involved in a change process, which are related to self-esteem and self-acceptance, in the journey of personal growth and transformation.

In order to study the subject of transformation in the Satir Model, I went through the experience as a star and found a self-propelled energy in the metaphor or images employed in the process of family reconstruction. There is a direction for the change to unfold and evolve, as though there is a life in itself which is self-healing and a natural process of self-recovery when one finds one’s energy to integrate one’s parts.

We are born into this world with a self that is expecting to be loved, nurtured, and cared for. But as our relationship with our care-giver evolves, we form a working model that will continue to impact and formulate our other relationships in our lifetime. This dissertation also offers a way to explore the internal selves and their formation through early attachment bonds and how they unfold over time after proper intervention to bring about more choices and new experiences to the client.

Therapists need to be aware of what is going on in their own systems before they can impact their clients' systems. Therapists need to be conscious of their own systems and be aware of a parallel process working between them and their clients. Through narration, this dissertation introduces a parallel process, both of the therapist and of the client. It is interesting how one affects the other in a wounded-healer paradigm.

Meditation is one way to gain access to one's core material. As people settle down in their own systems of self, letting down defenses, they can hear themselves and are able to hear both their own voices and the expression of their needs. This dissertation also looks into the spiritual aspect of change that is closely knitted with the subconscious or intuition when one meditates and is in a mindful state.

In order to gather enough energy for change, it is necessary to overcome blockages in emotional arrest when we were with the primal triad. Pain caused by

childhood wounds, like anger, hurt, and shame need to be acknowledged, both rationally and emotionally. In the intervention process, a client may gain access to core material when he or she is drawn to the child state. In the immediacy of confrontation through gaining awareness, self-acceptance, and knowledge the client can foster change and regain his wholeness. Satir called this being congruent.

This dissertation has allowed us to look in a subjective way at the therapeutic relationship, the application of mindfulness, the working through of defenses through acceptance and gaining safety, and the spirituality of change.

This dissertation is designed to demonstrate the change process facilitated by family reconstruction and how it continues to unfold in the life journey.

This dissertation provides a subjective way to look at the process of change and identify different ingredients that facilitate and activate the change dynamic. With the narrations of both the supervisor-student, therapist-client roles, we can see how the impact of change works dynamically both ways.

This dissertation also starts with a calling and a yearning to move out of the status quo. The process of change expands and validates the concept of realization of the real self through accepting and integrating all the different parts of the self, even from the shadow.

The wounded self that resulted from the family of the past is nurtured and healed through experiential action therapy. Toxic emotions of shame, guilt, and judgment gradually yield to a higher self-esteem that enables one to accept limitations. It leads to an open attitude for criticism and allows more choices for change to happen.

In the process of growth, one will foster more wholeness as one is able to allow parts to live in harmony with each other. With greater harmony and freedom in the self-system, one can gain access to energy and achieve greater momentum to move in a self-initiated direction of self-healing. Change may not be recognized from the outside, but it starts impacting from the inside and provides a paradigm shift.

Recommendations

As a heuristic study, this dissertation is based on my teaching and clinical experiences. This dissertation offers a good example of how adding awareness will enhance personal growth and self-healing. The process will unfold over time in transformation, as the result of adding instead of stopping and eliminating. Adding new ways of connecting will continue to impact the whole system in the whole spectrum of the iceberg. With new feelings about feelings, revised expectations, new choices, and the change in self-acceptance, the client will be able to change his or her survival stances into more congruent forms of communication.

I recommend that further studies be done for validation of this study. This could include presentation of more cases in a more diversified population. A pre- and post-assessment could be conducted to assess the intervention and its impact on the self-system of a larger population of clients.

Evaluation of more supervisor-supervisee and therapist-client relationships in their parallel processes could be conducted to determine how the change process impacts both sides of the relationship.

As therapeutic relationships may involve very profound feeling related to one's style of attachment, it is worth looking at the attachment style and its effect on one's supervision or expectation in the process of change.

Another issue related to D. and her supervision, involves a complex process of differentiation. D. and I experienced the process of differentiation both consciously and unconsciously through supervision and personal therapy. The creation of newly defined self-images happened as a result of the change process. As a result of better self-differentiation, we are able to see our mothers as persons, thus bringing more acceptances to the otherwise idealized mother role. Likewise, it would be interesting to explore similar issues involving male-to-male and male-to-female relationships between supervisors and supervisees, teachers and students, and therapists and clients in a change process.

I believe that additional studies, such as those described above, would yield more insight about the change process from the perspective of intervention other than the change vehicle of family reconstruction in the Satir Model. Considering the power of an experiential narrative approach in this research, we can see more substantively how change happens between the different parts of the self to bring more harmony, better acceptance, and a higher level of congruency.

Through my narrative and that of my subject, this dissertation has also touched the interesting paradigm of the wounded-healer, revealing a humble reality of the presence of the wound in the healer and the patient alike. Yalom (1980) has wisely stated that effective therapy requires genuineness and wholeness on which any healer needs to honestly and continuously work.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Suggested reading

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Susanna Wong Ip received a BA in English and English Literature from the Baptist University of Hong Kong in 1976. She went on to receive an MA in Counseling and Guidance from the City University of Oklahoma in 1983, and an MPH in health education from the University of Oklahoma in 1985.

She was a counselor at a Transcultural Counseling Center in Oklahoma City in the 1980s, and has acted as a workshop and group leader since she received her counseling degree. In 1996 she began teaching at the Bethel Bible Seminary in Hong Kong and set up the Bethel Pastoral Counseling Center there. She is currently a professor in the counseling department and the director of the counseling center.

Her training in other areas includes supervisory skills and pre-school education. She has worked as a training consultant to a training consultant company and practicum supervisor to kindergarten teachers. She has also studied Transactional Analysis, Somatic Experiencing and the Hakomi Method, and has received a professional certificate and four years of training in the work of Virginia Satir, including her technique of Family Reconstruction.

At this time Ip is teaching and practicing her beliefs about human nature and God's grace and promise as a counselor, teacher, trainer and writer in Hong Kong.