

Don't just walk it – swim in it

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Don't Just Walk It – Swim In It

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Summer 2015, Jean McLendon and Hugh Gratz led a week-long Satir Clinical Training Program sponsored by the University of North Carolina School of Social Work in Chapel Hill, N.C. This seven-day intensive earned participants 44 hours of CEUs. Below is a brief account of the experience of one participant, Leo Hepis.

If London is known for fog so thick you can cut it with a knife, then Chapel Hill, NC in the summer ought to be known for humidity so thick you wouldn't walk through it, you'd have to swim through it.

Humid *and* hot. Which was the least of the discomforts, on Day Zero. "Participants will do deep work in the groups," I had been told when I signed up for the Satir Intensive Workshop.

"Therapy in the Public," I remember thinking then. Has the world gone mad?

It was late July. The skies were mostly clear, the mercury bursting through the thermometer then dripping on the floor, the okra fried and filling the air from Mama Dips on West Rosemary St, while the draft beer at the Hickory Tavern—foothills of the hotel—was rumored to be ice-cold.

Familiar and unfamiliar faces descended to the lobby. The week-long intensive would start shortly.

Go get some of that okra!

Nah, cancel that. Grab an ice-cold beer instead.

Take fifteen strangers, throw them in a pot, and stir them emotionally for a week. You'd expect the niceties to melt away by day two. Masks would drop off, ugly faces would growl at each other, some probably hissing. "You said *what* about my primary triad? You incongruent piece of low self-esteem doo-doo!"

(Yeah, grab that ice-cold beer, this could be a wild ride.)

Or maybe not. Not if the gathering happens to be a Satir week-long intensive; and especially not if it's happening in the expert hands of Jean McLendon and Hugh Gratz.

Satir said we connect through our sameness and grow through our differentness. Jean and Hugh started Day Zero with sameness, their Ropes of Connection externalizing how we related to each other. Before the afternoon was over, we felt we knew each other: from past workshops, current geographical residence, people we knew in common, and so forth. We discovered we were already entangled—literally.

Then, every day thereafter, the a-ha moments piled up. Interaction Model, Temperature Reading, Iceberg, Change Model, several P's, and just as many A's. Mandala, Congruence, The Self-Esteem Toolkit, and even more.

And all of it experiential. The simplicity of *No Lecture*. Instead, the intimate engagement from participation. Because as our instructors had it, you didn't just move your mind to learn; you moved your body and along it your heart as well.

On and on it went for a week. And also good food, sweaty walks to the University campus for those who declined to take the bus, and a late night beer when we were supposed to be reading the handouts.

Taste everything. Then spit or swallow. Give and take as many hugs, at least twelve. The problem isn't the problem. Ready yourself to take another of life's journeys. Life is what it is. It is all possible.

And the strangest thing? Over three months later, through technology, we continue to consult with each other, support each other, and become even more fully human.

I have been exposed to Satir since the 1990s, but this wonderful group and instructors helped bring it all together to a new level. Experience comes from experiencing. The experience with the model built so deep and intimate over the week, you could say we no longer need anyone to walk us through the model, we could just as easily swim in it.

Leo Hepis lives in California where he specializes in Software Quality Management. Through the work of Gerald M. Weinberg and Jean McLendon in the mid 1990s, he has become a Myers-Briggs and Satir aficionado. He believes people can constructively differ, and that variety in cognitive styles strengthens organizations.

POSTSCRIPT: For information about the July, 2016 intensive Satir training at UNC-Chapel Hill go to: <http://satir.web.unc.edu>. The web site has a place where you can email your interest.