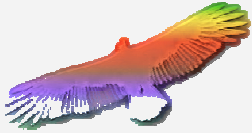


# Coping stances

Controlled Folly

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Read our other teaser handouts on techniques, methods and tools for preparing yourself for receiving critical feedback:

Learn to deal congruently with your own stress by fooling around with the coping stances (this document)

Cook a palatable meal with [Satir's ingredients of an Interaction](#) (pdf)

Set all tongues wagging in a [Temperature Reading](#) (pdf)

Respect the individual as well as the system when leading change with the [Satir Change model](#) (webpage)

Then bring it all together in

[Organisational sculpting](#) (pdf)

## Congruence

Congruency is communication that builds esteem of self and other. It is whole communication in which the self, other and context are honored.

Such communication can heal ruptures, break impasses, and build bridges between people.

In incongruent communication, either self, other or context is missing.

The basic four incongruent stress coping stances are placating, blaming, irrelevance, and super-rational.



For a thorough presentation of the stances, see *The New PeopleMaking* by Virginia Satir.

## Coping stances exercise

We're going for controlled folly, and do it all upside down and inside out.

We're forming teams of two, and each is to pick an incongruent stance.

**The blamer** has as job to criticize everybody else. It may mean that everybody wants to run away from you, but that is just because they are cowards, stupid, or inferior. Use phrases like "You always ... You never ..."

The job of **the placater** is to be agreeable and apologize for everything, and whine if possible. Try to take blame for anything that comes up, and some people might hang around because they feel pity for you, or may want to hit you.

The job of **the super-reasonable** person is to think as hard as possible about being proper and correct. Under no circumstances are you to reveal yourself or your emotions. Some will try to play tricks on you, or tune

you out, but that is not "IT". And "IT" is everything.

The job of **irrelevance** is to make sure that nothing counts for everything, and to get bored with everything real quickly. Look away from anybody that tries to make contact. Chatter, twitch, whatever you need to do to keep yourself off balance.

At regular intervals we switch roles, and then we discuss in the circle what happened, and what our internal messages were (recognized).



We are not to let ourselves be defined by the limited perceptions of others – Virginia Satir

The power in congruence comes through the connectedness of your words matching your feelings, your body and facial expressions matching your words, and your actions fitting all.

You come from a state of strength because all of your parts have flow with other parts.'

– Virginia Satir in **Making Contact**

## Transforming incongruence into congruence

We make a list of responding differently to the found internal messages, because incongruent fears are fed by old internal messages of low-self-worth that crossed our children's fire. Let's feed that flame some oxygen.

An example: "I feel weak, ugly, and selfish", that, updated to current realities can sound entirely different: "I am rugged, beautiful, and loving".

Or, transform "I feel strangled by tradition" to "I'm alert to my surroundings"

Or, "I agree because I should", to "I'm honest and committed"

Or, "I am procrastinating", to "I think I need to undo some projected perceptions first and accept my beauty and power"

Or, "I am super-rational" to "I like to think things through first"

Or, "I am being irrelevant" to "I have some voices I need to stop listening to"

Recognise that:

"It doesn't matter ..." voices have to do with insecurity

"I don't think I can ..." voices with trust issues

"Don't make me ..." voices with resistance

"It's not fair..." voices with self-pity

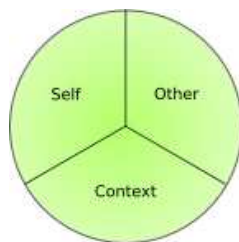
"That's nasty..." and "I am a ... if I do that ..." voices with self-importance

**Where can you not make what happen?**

I am soooo embarrassed ...

## Balancing Self, Other and Context

We say we're congruent, if we've balanced self, other, and context. That also means we (can) communicate (at that moment) congruently – our verbal and body language express the same message.



Self is usually an individual or a group, much like other (although self is probably more often an individual), other is another individual or a group, or maybe the corporation Self works for. Context is the here and now, maybe it's a project we're working on, or our clients' client. It's just a model, we get to choose how we use it.

We can recognise incongruent coping, because one or more of the three ingredients (Self, Other

or Context) are missing from the interaction.

A word of warning - incongruence is best detected by ourselves. If we label someone else as incongruent, we risk stepping into the trap of blaming.

In the workshop you receive handouts with stories illustrating and analysing several of the stances, and some additional concepts you can use to stretch yourself with

## Stopping the world

Before you can listen to your inner voices and make other choices, first you have to become aware of them, and that is hard work. It can't all happen in one workshop, and certainly not a two-day workshop.

What you can achieve in the

workshop is to mark that moment, and with the exercises, your body can remember and recognise when it "happens again".

Then you "stop the world" and can practice some of the other choices you tried out in the workshop.

And don't throw any of the old patterns away. In some contexts they are still valid and re-useful.

It's about making and having choices, dependent on self, other and context, not about silver bullets to kill a werewolf.