

Exploring the Influence of Parents' Negative Language on Children Based on Satir Theory

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ABSTRACT

Childhood is the golden period of physical and mental growth and the embryonic stage of self-knowledge. From previous scholars' research, if parents habitually use negative language to teach, it will have many adverse effects on children and hinder healthy, positive development. This paper aims to analyze the adverse effects of the influence of negative words on children's behavior, psychology and cognition through Satir's theory. Children will get used to using negative words, affect their emotions and correct value judgment, and hinder the formation of good cognition. This paper uses the desktop research method and takes parents who frequently use negative words as the subject of this study. In order to create a family environment suitable for children's physical and mental development, two improvement methods of "consistent communication" and "growth mode" were put forward.

INTRODUCTION

Hao Yan (2008) mentioned that negative language refers to individual communication, which describes verbal effects. These effects are not conducive to the communicative reality and even make the communicative effect negative under the control of negative thinking. In this sense, the negative communicative effect refers to the inconsistency between the meaning received and the meaning delivered (p.48). Language is one of the ways to express inner thoughts and communicate with others in daily life. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the frequency of verbal communication between parents and children has increased due to the home isolation policy's implementation. Problems in verbal communication may lead to a crisis in the parent-child relationship. Parents realize that changes must be made when the parent-child relationship is in crisis.

The promulgation and implementation of China's "double reduction" policy and the Family Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China urge parents to realize the need to communicate with children more scientifically and authoritatively to raise children with good personalities. Data from Huang Dan et al. (2022) show that

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60.4% of parents indicate the need for family education guidance (p.30). The object of the early research is mainly the intuitive behavior education of parents, emphasizing the impact of positive behavior on children. However, there are few studies on speech, which is difficult to materialize. Satir's Iceberg theory focuses on the self-exploration and healing of adolescents or young adults, lacking studies on children whose self-cognition is unstable and still in the formative stage. Current studies have found that verbal abuse (verbal abuse) or parents' negative emotions can negatively affect children's self-perception, behavior, and personality formation. The definition of negative language is unclear, and no scholars have analyzed the influence of parents' negative language on primary school children based on Satir's iceberg theory. As Boxuan Xu (2022) said, children aged 0-12 are at a critical stage of personality development and self-cognitive development, and it is crucial to explore the impact of parents' negative words on children's "individual iceberg" at this stage (p.1). According to Satir's therapeutic beliefs, rather than verbal abuse and the parents' negative emotions, parents often repeat the familiar family patterns they grew up with, even if they are dysfunctional. The negative language parents use towards their children can easily go unnoticed, unlike apparent verbal abuse or negative parental feelings towards themselves. However, it can also have an impact on the child. This paper focuses on the influence of parents' negative words on children and uses Satir's iceberg theory to make a hypothesis analysis. This paper hopes to give improvement methods to encourage parents to realize the influence of negative words on children's "individual iceberg" and help them learn more scientific ways to carry out family education.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

Theoretical Background

Boxuan Xu (2022) believes that children aged 0-12 are at a critical stage of personality and self-cognitive development. Critical and skeptical education received in childhood positively correlates with self-deprecating behaviors in children's self-awareness, which will have an irreversible negative impact on children's future development. Therefore, when communicating with children in this period, An affirmative and encouraging attitude should be adopted to keep children open and further understand and adjust their self-cognition (p.4). By doing so, we seek to align each individual's behavior with society's and individual's reflection of his or her self-worth, to push each individual to constantly transcend his or her limitations and realize the maximum self-worth of society and the individual. Solomon and Serres (1999) studied the influence of parental verbal aggression on children's self-esteem and academic performance. They concluded that parental verbal aggression, separate from corporal punishment, would reduce children's self-esteem and academic performance. Coupled with the extent to which the average parent uses verbal aggression, Solomon and Serres suggested the need for parental education on positive parenting. Slatcher and Trentacosta (2012) found that parent-child negative emotions significantly impact children's daily

behaviors. When their parents are also inclined to negative emotions, children predisposed to become depressed, sad, and fearful may be especially prone to exhibit problem behaviors in everyday life. Sachs-Ericsson et al. (2006) mention that childhood experiences of abuse, particularly verbal abuse (verbal abuse), may carry risks of internalization disorders, partly because verbal abuse affects the development of self-critical styles. Johnson et al. (2001) found that offspring who experienced verbal abuse from their mothers were more than three times as likely to develop borderline, narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, and paranoid PD in adolescence or early adulthood as offspring who did not experience verbal abuse. In fact, parents' verbal abuse and their own negative emotions harm children's psychological development, self-recognition and personality formation. At an important stage of children's psychological development, it is vital for parents to be aware of the impact of negative language on children and to adjust it in time.

Parental speech refers to the process and result of parents' use of language to educate children in family education. Childhood is critical for forming language, personality, events and self-definition. As Hu Jin & Wang Qinglan (2016) mentioned, children's psychological reflection content will be continuously enriched in the development of speech activities. The low psychological functions will be constantly reformed, and high psychological functions will gradually take shape. Consciousness and self-awareness arise, and individuality begins to sprout. This paper argues that parents' verbal expression profoundly and irreplaceably influences children's behavior, psychological development and self-cognition. Many scholars have defined and distinguished relevant important concepts in this paper.

Hao Yan (2008) believes that negative language refers to individual communication, which describes the verbal effects that are not conducive to the communicative reality. It even makes the communicative effect negative. Actually, negative communicative effect refers to the inconsistency between the receiving meaning and the sending meaning) issued by the speaker under negative thinking control (p.48). According to the different types of negative thinking, negative language can be divided into negative automatic speech and negative cognitive speech. The former is often associated with destructive emotions, which can be divided into four types according to the types of destructive emotions, namely: extreme speech, exclusive speech, uneasy speech, and self-abuse. The latter focuses on incorrect and unreasonable cognition, concept, understanding, or opinion generated by negative cognitive thinking. The differences in cognitive thinking can be divided into five types: aggressive speech (including life aggression and concept confrontation), self-contradictory speech, confusing correct and wrong speech, coerced speech, and malformed meaning and enlightenment speech. Negative words exist in People's Daily life and are spreading quietly in people's communication. They are imperceptibly changing people's communication and thinking modes, which has an important impact on the expression of individual ideas and the effect of interpersonal communication.

Satir Iceberg theory model is a growth-oriented psychoanalysis model based on humanism and system perspective created by Virginia Satir, an essential theory in Satir's family therapy. In this model, Satir et al. (2015) used seven layers of icebergs to

"icebergs" as a metaphor for individual behavior, response, feeling, perception, expectation, desire and self. By exploring and analyzing the seven layers of individuals, individual self-esteem and communication mode can be improved so that individuals can become complete people and finally achieve the state of "harmony and unity between body and heart". Satir Iceberg theory is widely used in family therapy and often used in individual self-exploration and mental state improvement.

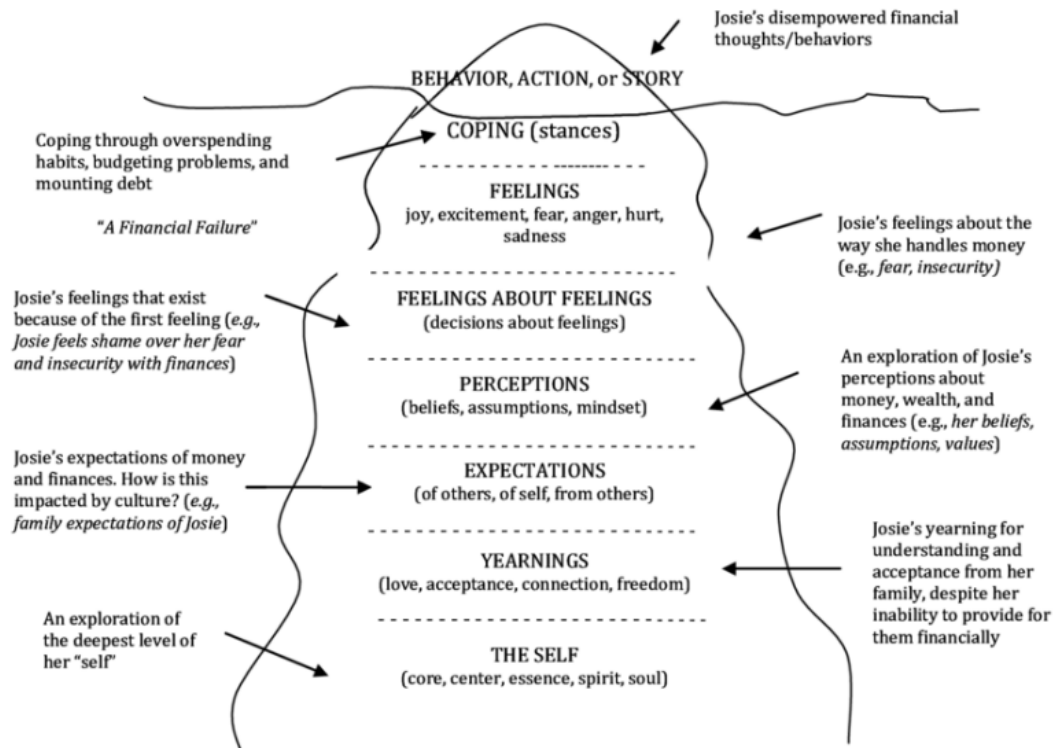


Figure 1. A theoretical model of Satir iceberg.

Empirical Background

With the official promulgation and implementation of China's "double reduction" policy and the Family Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China, as mentioned by Zhang Zhiyong and Liu Limin (2021), the role of parents in family education has changed. It is not only the responsibility of nurturers but also an educational profession that requires parents to have professional quality family education. Promoting the "double reduction" policy also requires family education to focus on personality shaping. Zhang Zhiyong (2022). From the "three insistence" of education first, health first and sound personality first, it is not difficult to see that family education emphasizes getting rid of utilitarianism, short-sightedness and exam oriented. One of the great significances of promulgating and implementing the Family Education Promotion Law is to standardize and guide most parents to regard family education as a

science. So that they can learn the correct family education methods and apply them to the actual education instead of upholding the education methods of "passing on from generation to generation" or "imitating others".

During the full outbreak of the novel coronavirus in 2020, the country entered home quarantine and started studying or working online. According to the analysis of 369 school students aged 8-18 in China by Zhao Lulei (2022), 114 of them aged 9-12 and 27 suffer from anxiety and emotional disorders, accounting for 19.1%. Liu Yujuan (2022) used the family system theory to explain why COVID-19 affected marital relationships and that parenting behaviors also changed during the pandemic. Under the pressure of the economy, marriage, health, etc., parents reduce their psychological resources and find it difficult to cope with challenging parenting tasks, resulting in improper parenting behavior. In addition to financial pressures and threats to their health, parents have had to cope with children's social and educational needs due to the closure of childcare facilities and schools or the shift to online home-based learning. Under such multiple pressures, parents' parenting ability is reduced, and they may respond violently to their children's problematic behaviors, which leads to more negative emotions in children, forming a vicious circle. Compared with traditional offline teaching in schools, the online teaching mode of home isolation dramatically increases children's time with their parents. It invisibly increases parents' verbal output to children, including negative language. Therefore, many parents begin to pay attention to improving parent-child relationships and communicating with children.

National policies and social background all reveal that parents, as the first teachers of children's lives, are also the implementers of the scientific discipline of family education. Parents need to understand how to conduct family education and make clear the impact of their negative language on children.

ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF NEGATIVE LANGUAGE ON CHILDREN

The Influence on Children's Behavior

INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION AND EXPRESSION

Bandura et al. (1961) suggest that children's observation of cues generated by the actions of others is an effective means of eliciting certain forms of response whose original probability is very low or zero (p.580). That is, many children's behaviors are learned through observation. As children imitate in childhood, parents' negative words will subtly affect children's speech expression. Peng Xiaohong and Li Lin's (2019) research shows that family members' language input characteristics will directly affect children's language acquisition and development. Children's speech behaviors and expressions will significantly differ in different growing environments. When children are exposed to negative language for a long time or in a family environment prone to negative coping styles, parents' conscious or unconscious use of negative language is

easy for children to acquire the same tone and manner of negative expression. When children are in similar situations or face similar problems in the future, they will subconsciously use negative words to cope. It also indirectly affects children's performance in interpersonal communication and teamwork.

INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES

Language has positive and negative reinforcement effects on people's behavior, as does negative language as a branch of speech. Parents' negative language not only affects children's expression and communication but also affects children's attitudes toward things. In children's education, parents' behaviors and coping methods, such as explicit expressions, directly affect and influence children. Influenced by traditional educational thoughts, some parents will consciously use negative words to preach to children, such as "other people's children are much stronger than you. How can you learn well?" and other negative words. These words hope to achieve the purpose of restraining children's behavior. However, the children are in a critical physical and mental development period. Expressing negative words not only cannot achieve the purpose of parents preaching, but sometimes it will play a reverse role, causing weariness, delay, lack of motivation, and other deviation behavior.

The Influence on Children's Psychological Development

INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL FEELINGS

As Yuan Zongjin (2015) put forward, the mentioned emotions will not only affect children's cognitive learning and behavioral imagery, but the emotion management education of children is of great significance for them at present and even when they grow up. In family education, parents should pay attention to the influence of emotions on children and the role of emotions in their life course. Suppose children preach negative words for a long time. In that case, they may form a kind of long-term negative emotions, thus anxiety, depression, fear, tension, and other pessimistic emotions, and it is difficult to treat their emotions accurately. Lu Renjie (2022) found, according to the domestic mental health epidemiological survey, that more and more children with sub-healthy mental health in China. Compared with other children of the same age, children in negative moods are more likely to develop psychological disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorder, thus forming pathological indifference to emotions and apathy. When children's negative emotions are significantly beyond the scope of emotional management, it even will make children at the end of the road.

INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S VALUE JUDGMENT

Childhood from 0 to 12 years old is a critical stage of self-awareness, when personality traits such as trust, autonomy, initiative, and diligence are developed, which will have a fundamental impact on the self-cognition and behavior of an individual as he

or she grows. Wang Min (2019) mentioned that the disharmonious parent-child relationship suppresses the development of children's self-awareness and inner freedom. Children are in the golden age of healthy development of body and mind. Parents' negative words make children easily question and distort the severe problems of self-perception, existence significance, and self-worth, thus hindering the formation of children's value judgment and healthy outlook on life and values. Children in negative language environments often find it difficult to identify themselves correctly. Gao Deju and Han Zhaobo (2012) believe that "people are intrinsically good, and if they want to connect with their sense of self-worth and confirm them, they will find inner wealth." Self-worth is the highest level of human needs and the most important essence of a person. When children cannot evaluate themselves correctly, they cannot feel and realize their value. Parents' negative words hinder children's interest in external cognition and internal desire to pursue and suppress their positive inner strength.

The Influence On Children's Self-Awareness

INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S SELF-COGNITION

According to Piaget's theory of children's cognitive development and Satir's iceberg theory, parents' negative words will hurt children's self-cognition. Negative language can be divided into negative automatic speech and negative cognitive speech. Negative automatic speech negates and rejects children's behaviors, namely the surface iceberg level. In contrast, negative cognitive speech is the negative language caused by the misunderstanding of children's behaviors, namely, the misunderstanding of children's behaviors defined by parents' cognitive mode. Both kinds of negative language can lead to unfulfilled desires and expectations. In the process of de-ego centralization, if children are often not satisfied in these two aspects, then at this time, children with more excellent external factors will further deny themselves. Being in a state of low self-esteem for a long time will weaken the vitality, spirit and spirituality of children, inhibit the development of healthy personalities of children, and make children have a deviation of self-cognition.

INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Parents' negative language will make children feel sad, confused, and even self-doubt, not only hitting children's courage and confidence but also causing children's sense of self-efficacy and self-acceptance to decline. Parents' negative words will be retained in children's conscious and subconscious memory as a kind of emotion and become a robust basis for children's self-arbitration, hindering the process of children's self-development and acceptance. When children reject their good image quality, there will be a sense of incompetence, negative belief, and even self-defeating and self-destructive behavior in painful emotions.

WAYS TO IMPROVE PARENTS' NEGATIVE LANGUAGE

Based on the analysis of negative language on children into three aspects, the treatment model Satir put forward two countermeasures for reference. Both strategies require parents to make changes from the inside out. Satir believes that change is possible for all. Hao Yan (2015) argues that even if the external environment change is not feasible, it is still possible for our inner world to change. So not resisting change is the first step to addressing and improving the negative language. Secondly, the two countermeasures proposed in this paper can be used to try.

Language Conversion: From "Inconsistent Communication" to "Consistent Communication"

Satir's theory emphasizes the consistency between the outside and the inside. Internal and external consistency of thoughts and speech acts has become an essential indicator of mental health. Shen Yufan et al. (2012) argued that if the invisible part of the iceberg theory is not well expressed or communicated, it is easy to create disagreements between the speaker and the listener (in this case, between parents and children). Therefore, previous research has shown that "consistent communication" is an excellent method. This ideal communication posture is a product of positive psychology's idea of focusing on the positive aspects of human nature. The "consistent communication" advocated by Satir focuses on the harmonious interaction of "self, others and situation". All communication should be considered from the three aspects of "self, others and situation". Cheng Zhaoji & Xie Xuhui (2012) mentioned that when people's verbal information is consistent with their non-verbal information, we call it "consistent communication", also known as "consistent communication between the outside and the inside". Therefore, based on the existing "consistent communication", this paper makes assumptions: Influenced by age differences, ways of thinking, surrounding environment, cognitive differences and communication skills, speakers may find it challenging to pay attention to the harmonious interaction and integration of "self, others and situation", thus resulting in non-idealized communication modes that are inconsistent with other parts under the "iceberg", called "inconsistent communication". That is, negative language is "inconsistent communication". Niu Xiulan (2020) mentioned that if parents' behaviors hurt their own images, such as vanity, cheating and falsification, children's minds will be traumatized, and their cognitive standards for the world and things around them will be directly affected. Among them, "vanity, cheating children, falsification" are "inconsistent communication" caused by duplicity. Therefore, the realization of "consistent communication" will be conducive to forming children's healthy personalities and forming intimacy between family members.

To achieve "consistent communication," the premise is to have a consistent state of existence. According to Satir, there are three levels of being consistent from the outside to the inside.

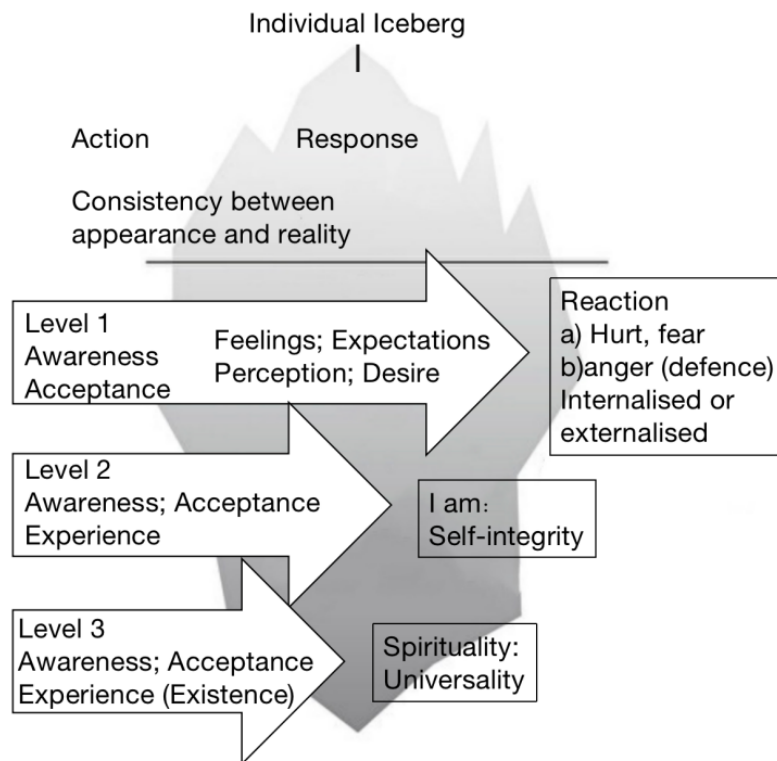


Figure 2. The three consistent levels in the table.

The first level focuses on our feelings, staying in touch with them, accepting them, acknowledging them, and dealing with them. At this level, parents need to be aware of their negative emotions. For example, anger, sadness, disappointment, etc., recognize them and accept them. Do not be too quick to deny an emotion (e.g., "I should not be angry") or to express it physically or verbally (e.g., directly to a child, "How!"). Once you know your emotions, understand that they can be controlled rather than used to direct your words or actions. Therefore, at this level, parents must be aware of their negative emotions and accept them.

The second level requires changes in perception and re-consolidation of self-esteem. The point is to change perception and let go of the unfulfilled expectations we have projected on others to avoid defining ourselves by an expectation that cannot be met. For example, parents set expectations for children and define success based on whether children meet those expectations. Define "who I am" from within, not through objective conditions or other people's expectations. The direct expression can be used instead of self-denial or emotional control at this stage.

The third level is in harmony with the forces. Satir calls the universal life force. In this aspect, parents need to focus on developing self-vitality and spiritual integrity.

In order to achieve "consistent communication", Satir developed some instructions be aware of self, others, and situation; When connecting with others, give them your complete attention; Be aware of their physical messages; Be fully aware of their defense

mechanisms and their family norms. According to these instructions, parents need first to control their own emotions. Secondly, by observing children's words and deeds and combining them with the situation, give children care and further explore the state of children below the iceberg. In a state of high self-esteem, one must express one's emotions correctly. At the same time, it is necessary to clarify at what level further communication and emotional expression are needed between one's and the child's individual iceberg.

Transformation of Mode: From "Hierarchical Mode" to "Growth Mode"

Hierarchical and growth models belong to the perception of the world part of Satir's theory. In this section, Satir argues that the hierarchical and growth models are two different ways of looking at the world. The way of looking at the world is divided into four aspects: the way of defining relations, the way of defining a person, the way of explaining an event and the attitude toward change. The hierarchical model implies that there are two roles, the originator and the executor, in either of these four aspects or that one is superior and the other is inferior. People with a hierarchical mindset prefer to avoid change and judge what they say and do by external standards. According to the research of Fu Minghong and Li Peng (2002), autocratic obedience becomes the second largest parent-child relationship type after understanding and trust. According to the definition of Fu Minghong and Li Peng, autocratic obedience is parent-centered, and children must obey their parents' parent-child relationship, which corresponds to the hierarchical model proposed by Satir. For example, a parent-child relationship makes it easy for children to form the concept of hierarchical mode. Parents must obey everything and are the only standard solution in the code of conduct. Wang Min (2019) proposed that parents' life experiences, words and deeds subtly influence children's cognition of the world. When children's low-level needs of physiology, sense of security, love and belonging are satisfied, it can help children develop towards the higher needs of self-esteem, self-realization and even self-transcendence. The disharmonious parent-child relationship will hinder children's inner free development and even become a hidden danger buried by some mental diseases. The growth model proposed by Satir emphasizes maintaining the mental state of equality in all aspects while being able to accept and try to change in a state of high self-esteem. Only through equal communication and parenting can children have high self-esteem, strong vitality and form good personalities.

According to the stages of change in Satir's theory, change can be divided into six stages, namely "status quo". The need for change appears in the current state of individuals or systems. "Introducing an external factor" means that the system or individual explicitly expresses the need for change to another person -- a friend, a therapist, or someone outside the system. "Chaos" means that the system or individual begins to change from the present state to an unbalanced state, in which fear and anxiety will be felt. "New selection and integration" mean that the new learning content is integrated and the new state of being begins to develop; "Practice" is to strengthen the new state obtained from the previous stage. A "new state" represents a more functional state of being. Therefore, according to the stages of change in Satir's theory and Satir's

iceberg theory, the countermeasures proposed by this question about the transition from the hierarchical mode of parents to the growth mode are as follows:

1. "Current situation": After parents realize that their negative words will adversely affect their children's development, they seek ways and means to change.

2. "Introducing an external factor": According to Satir's explanation of this stage, it is inferred that parents need to seek help from a third party outside the individual and family system. However, given the reality, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, social instability and parents' high pressure make them too tired to ask for help and hesitant to change. Therefore, at this stage, referring to the examples in Chapter 5, "The Process of Change" in Satir Family Therapy Model (Second Edition), this paper believes that parents can carry out inner remodeling and behavior change through the following questions:

- (1) Do I notice changes in my child's mood or behavior when I say negative words?
- (2) How do I feel when my child has such a change in mood or behavior?
- (3) Have I asked my child how he feels about my negative words?
- (4) Have I ever received negative words from my parents?
- (5) How did I feel at that time?
- (6) How do I feel differently after knowing these contents?
- (7) What new decisions do I plan to make?
- (8) What new activities are to be planned or implemented? (Imagine, for example, that avoiding negative language would lead to effective communication with the child and would benefit the child's personality development and promote intimacy among family members.)

Through the questions and answers to themselves, trace back to the inner self-level of parents, and judge whether they get along with their children in a hierarchical mode. Then I began to change my speech and make adjustments consciously.

3. "Confusion": at this stage, because positive words are used instead of negative words, parents themselves and children do not adapt to the situation, the child may have avoidance or be uncooperative, and parents will think that the child's failure to cooperate with the declaration of change. However, at this stage, because of the fundamental change from the hierarchical mode to the growth mode, from the command-obedience mode to the mode of equal communication, it is normal for the family stability to be destroyed when children or parents do not adapt. It takes validated beliefs, high self-esteem, and long-term persistence to get through this phase. The change in patterns is likely to happen over time. However, if the change is not sustained now, it can lead to estrangement from family members and low self-esteem in the future as the child grows into adolescence or adulthood.

4. "New selection and integration": In this stage, parents can try to carry out behavioral or verbal norms with their children on an equal footing or gradually combine their own and children's characteristics to form a unique way of communication or solution to events. Satir suggests that as we use new, healthy, and open ways to receive, experience, share, and evaluate our inner experiences, we may learn how to separate the physical cues accompanying our past experiences from our new knowledge.

5. "Practice": After the transformation of the model in the previous stage, through continuous attempts and adjustments at this stage, the communication method and the solution to events that are most suitable for the development of oneself, and children will be worked out to avoid the occurrence of pain or discomfort. Satir considers this stage a time to emphasize "how to avoid the things that have become obstacles to our progress".

6. "New state": In this stage, the growth pattern of parents tends to be stable, and harmony and balance are reached in the family. A state in which growth patterns can be maintained over time.

DISCUSSION

Based on the perspective of Satir's Iceberg theory, this paper analyzes the influence of parents' negative words on children and finds that parents' negative words have adverse effects on children's behavior, psychological development and self-cognition. Parents' negative words, combined with Satir's iceberg theory, affect children's way of knowing the world, self-cognition, emotional regulation, communication and expression, and their attitude towards things from the bottom up. Therefore, parents' negative words affect children's character formation, survival posture, ways to solve things, and high or low self-esteem. Through the analysis of this paper, parents' negative language is related to the type of parent-child relationship and the hierarchical pattern of parents. Previous studies have shown that family education aims to shape children with healthy personalities. The cultivation and education of children with healthy personalities need to start from the position of parents themselves, through the proposed method of changing from "inconsistent communication" to "consistent communication" and "hierarchical mode" to "growth mode". In family education and family relationship improvement, parents can re-examine their own "iceberg" while educating and cultivating a healthy personality in their children and achieving the ideal state through continuous adjustment. This action is conducive to forming a good and healthy parent-child relationship, enhancing the sense of closeness and affection with other family members, gradually forming a healthy family environment and ultimately promoting the formation of a healthy personality in the child. Since this paper mainly adopts a theoretical analysis model and has yet to be designed experimentally, it may not be able to quantify parents' negative language and the degree of influence, so there are still some limitations.

CONCLUSION

Through the concrete analysis of the influence of parents' negative words on children in family education, this paper expounds on the negative influence of parents' negative words on children's externalizing behavior, psychological activities and the deepest self-cognition. Based on Satir's theory, this paper proposes improvement ideas for transforming parents' communication style and hierarchical mode. It proposes specific and operable improvement countermeasures according to parents' language problems.

Changing parents' negative language expression helps children develop a good family speech environment and promotes the renewal and perfection of parents' educational concepts and the development of the parent-child relationship. Based on the limitations of this paper, it is hoped that future studies will conduct experimental designs for parents' negative language to increase the data support for the aspects and extent of its influence on children.

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