Using Solution-Focused Brief Therapy for Lasting Change

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Problem Solving

- Evaluate the problem
- Diagnose the problem
- Utilize known information about the diagnosed problem
- Evaluate client resources/strengths
- Determine the best course of treatment
- Implement the treatment
Solution Building

- Determine the desired goal
- Assist the client in creating a detailed description of the goal
- Assist the client in evaluating where he/she is in relation to the desired goal
- Assist the client in evaluating times in which he/she was successful in moving toward the desired goal
- Work backward to discover keys to success

Definition of a “Client” in SFBT
Solution-Focused Principles

• If it’s not broken don’t fix it
• If something is working, do more of it
• If it is not working, do something different
• Small steps can lead to large changes
• The solution is not necessarily directly related to the problem

Solution-Focused Principles Continued

• The language requirements for solution development are different than those needed to describe a problem
• No problem happens all the time. There are always exceptions that can be utilized
• The future is both created and negotiable

Common Interventions

• Goal Formation (MQ, Future Oriented)
• Scaling
• Coping Questions
• Difference Questions
• Relational Questions
• Exception Questions
• Compliments
Goal Formation Questions
The Key is to help the client envision the end-point

- Miracle Question
- What would need to happen in this session...
- Fast Forward
- Suppose...

Miracle Question

"Imagine that when you go to bed tonight, a miracle happens. The miracle is that the problem that brought you here is gone! However, since you were asleep, you are unaware that a miracle happened. What would be the first things that you notice that let you know that this miracle happened?"

Five Elements of the Miracle Question

- The change is of some significance to the client (unlikely to happen naturally)
- The “Miracle” is typically defined
- It often has the element of immediacy (“tonight while you are sleeping”)
- The client is unaware that the miracle occurred
- The client is to discover the clues that the “Miracle has occurred"
Other Helpful Future-Oriented Questions

- Fast Forwarding
  - Helpful when issue is centered on an event
- Imagine it is the end of our time together…
  - Helpful when client is overwhelmed and unsure what is needed

Class Homework

- Pick something in your day-to-day life that you are trying to improve (something you will run into tonight)
- How will this be when it is resolved?
- Rate your progress in this area on a 1-10 scale
- Pay attention to when this thing is just a little bit better
- What made the difference?

Solution Focused Homework

- Comes from what the client has identified as important
- Often generated from clues the client discovered during the session
- Can be observational or action oriented
- Can be assigned by the therapist or self-assigned
Purpose of Homework

- Emphasize points that might otherwise go unnoticed by the client
- Invites the client to notice positive elements or parts of the “Miracle” that are already occurring
- Generalize the work done in the session into his/her day-to-day life

Scaling Questions

- Makes concepts measurable
- Provides assessment information
- Provides the tool to measure change
- Neutral tool to explore exceptions and highlight change
- Use 0-10 or 1-10 scales
- The 10 equals the desired goal
- The 1 must be defined

Coping Questions

- Help to demonstrate empathy
- Effective when client is not ready to take the next steps
- Help client to identify what’s working despite pain, loss, trauma, feelings of being overwhelmed
Exception Questions

• Times in which the problem does not exist or is less severe
• Assists the therapists in exploring if something that a client tried was useful
• Highlights various verbal paths
• Client driven
  (Only useful if the client sees them as useful in helping to get to the “Miracle”)

Compliments

• Key Component: Should be client driven (highlight areas of success that the client has already identified as useful)
• Focuses on aspects within the client’s life rather than on behavior during the session (behavioral reinforcement vs. compliment)
• Must be genuine

Two Step Compliments

1. Express positive surprise in reaction to one of the client’s accomplishments
2. Ask the client how he/she did it
Difference Questions
• Explores meaning (has a deepening effect)
• Increases hope that change will make a meaningful difference
• Encourages clients to explore if potential changes are realistic, feasible, and worthwhile
• Enhances motivation by making the benefits more "real"

Relationship Questions
• Assists the client in exploring how the changes impact all elements of his/her system
• Assists the client in keeping the plan realistic and inclusive of all factors
• Increases the client’s ability to “step into someone else’s shoes” (Increases empathy)

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