

# Brief Solution Focused Counseling

What's in your toolbox? Revisiting a valuable model for individual counseling in schools.

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# Consider this...

- Is there any such thing as objective reality and objective truth, or is all reality a subjective matter?
- Is the task of counseling to construct solutions and restore one's life?
- If you agree with the premise that the client (student) is an expert on his or her own life, what implications does this have for how you are likely to practice therapy?
- If therapy is a collaborative partnership, how would you teach clients (students) ways to become active partners in the therapy process?

# Exercise #1



# Solution Focused Therapy

## Themes

### **Problem Focused**

*How can I help you?*

*Can you tell me about the problem?*

vs.

### **Solution Focused**

*How will you know when therapy has been helpful?*

*What would you like to change?*

# SFBC: Core Beliefs, Assumptions, & Concepts

## 3 core beliefs of SFBC:

1. “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”
2. “Once you know what what works, do more of it.”
3. “If it doesn’t work, don’t do it again.”

## 5 assumptions that guide the SFBC model:

1. Counselors should focus on solutions, rather than problems, for change to occur.
2. Every problem has identifiable exceptions that can be discovered and transformed into solutions.
3. Small changes have ripple effects that lead to bigger changes.
4. Student clients have the necessary resources to solve their problem.
5. Constructing goals in positive terms is more effective.

## 4 concepts that guide the SFBC model:

1. Avoid problem analysis.
2. Be efficient with interventions.
3. Focus on the present and the future, not the past.
4. Focus on actions rather than insights.

# Solution Focused Counseling is...

- **Future focused**
- **Goal oriented**
- **Brief Therapy**
- **Emphasizes strengths**
- **Focuses on now and future-not past**
- **Behavior change=most effective approach to change**



**“There’s nothing wrong with you  
that what’s right with you can’t fix”  
Insoo Kim Berg**



# Solution-Focused Brief Counseling

- Solution-focused brief counseling (SFBC) is particularly valuable in schools where time constraints are crucial.
- Brief counseling models parallel the generic model for individual counseling by encouraging students to:
  - Assess the problem in concrete terms
  - Examine previously attempted solutions
  - Establish a specific, short-term goal
  - Implement the intervention
- SFBC emphasized strengths, resources, successes, and hope, and is a model that can be used with students from diverse backgrounds.



# Therapeutic Process of SBFT

- Collaborative approach vs. Educative
  - = more effective with student involved!
- Find out what the student wants rather than searching for what they do not want
- Do not look for pathology = avoid diagnostic label
- If what student is doing is not working, encourage them to try something different
- Keep therapy brief, as if this session were last and only session

# Therapeutic Process (cont.)

- “How can I be useful to you?” Listen respectfully and carefully to the student describe their problems.
- “What will be different in your life when your problems are solved?” Work with the student in developing goals as soon as possible.
- Ask student about when their problems weren’t present or less severe. Focus on what the client has already done to solve their own problems.

# Implementing the SFBC Model

- Professional school counselors begin the first session with students by explaining the SFBC approach.
- Professional school counselors can then help the student formulate goals using a wide range of techniques:
  - The Miracle Question
  - Identifying Instances and Exceptions
  - Scaling
  - Flagging the Minefield

# Getting Started: How to Pay Attention to What the Youth Wants

- Problem description
  - How can I help?
  - How is this a problem for you?
  - If more than one problem mentioned...which is most important for you to work on first?
  - What have you tried so far to solve the problem? Was it helpful?
- Development of well-formed goals
  - What would have to be different as a result of our meeting today for you to say that our talking was worthwhile?

# How to Amplify What Clients Want: The Miracle Question

“Now, I want to ask you a strange question.

*Suppose that while you are sleeping tonight and the entire house is quiet, a miracle happens. The miracle is that the problem which brought you here is solved.*

However, because you are sleeping, you don't know that *the miracle has happened.*

So, when you wake up tomorrow morning, *what will be different* that will tell you that a miracle has happened and the problem which brought you here is solved?”

# How to Amplify What Clients Want: The Miracle Question (cont.)

*After* asking miracle question...

- What will you notice that's different? What will be the first thing that you notice? What else?
- Who else will notice when the miracle happens? What will he or she notice that is different? What else?
- When he or she notices that, what will he or she do differently? What else?
- When he or she does that, what will be different for you?

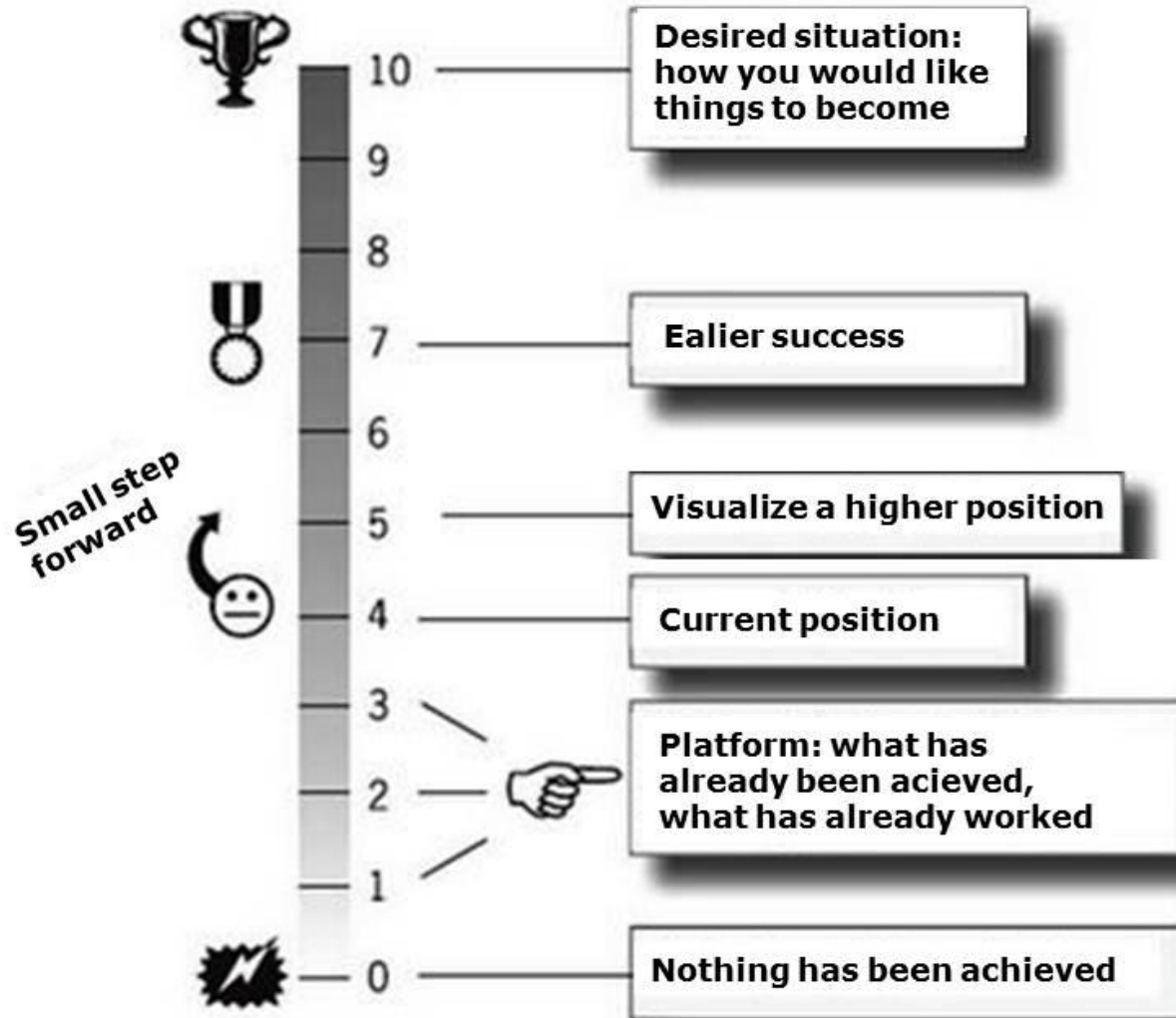
# Role Play: Miracle Question

- Work in pairs – choose role as counselor or student
  - *"Suppose tonight, while you slept, a miracle occurred. When you awake tomorrow, what would be some of the things you would notice that would tell you life had suddenly gotten better?"*



Tip: counselor stays with the question even if the client describes an "impossible" solution, such as a deceased person being alive, and acknowledges that wish and then asks "how would that make a difference in your life?"

# The Scaling Framework





# Scaling Questions

- What tells you that you are at a 6?
- What would it take for you to move 1 point higher?
- How long did it take for you to get to a 6?
- What do you need to do to keep your 6?
- How come it's not a -1?

# Role Play: Scaling Question

- Work in pairs – choose role as counselor or student
  - *“Imagine a scale from 1 – 10. The 10 represents the desired situation, how you would like things to become. 0 represents a situation where nothing of the desired outcome has been achieved. Where are you now on this scale?”*
  - *“What would look different if you were 2 points higher on the scale?”*



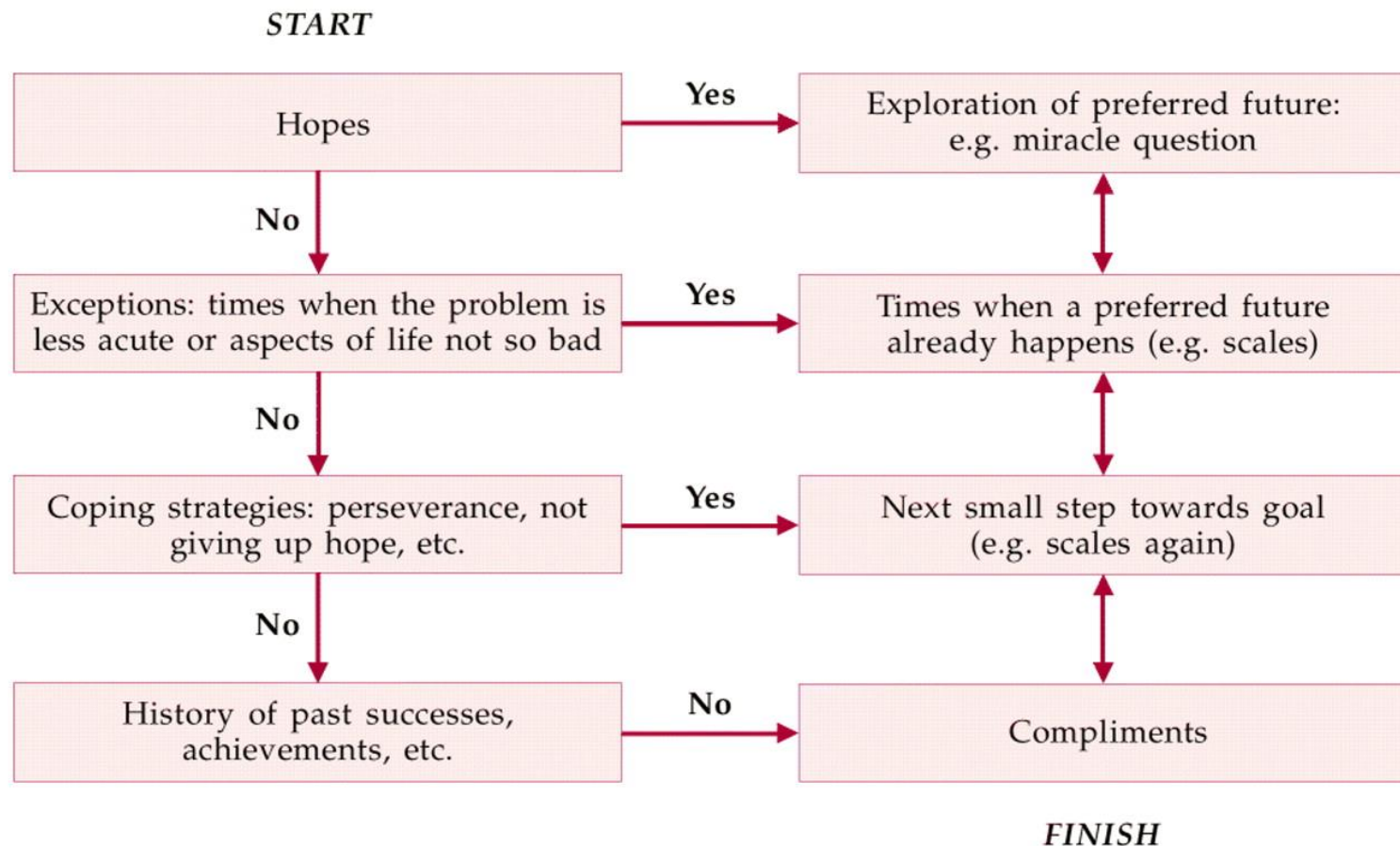
Tip: useful when there is not enough time to use the MQ and it is also in helping clients to assess their own situations, track their own progress, or evaluate how others might rate them on a scale of 0 to 10.

# Flagging The Minefield



- Identifying and overcoming obstacles to success
  - “Your plan sounds great. However, we both know that sometimes, something or some people may get in the way of your accomplishing what you intend to do. How do you think that could happen in your situation?”
  - “When that has happened in the past, what have you done that has worked to keep you on track?”
  - “What do you think you can do to not let these things get in your way?”

# The “flow” of a session







Questions? Comments?

Thank you for coming!

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