Solution Focused Brief Therapy

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My Objectives

1. Provide some education about SFBT.

2. For you to leave here with some skills or interventions you can implement immediately.
Contextual therapies

Single-session Strategic
Solution focused

Learning therapies

Exposure
Cognitive restructuring

Relational therapies

Interpersonal therapy
Brief dynamic

Emphasis dimensions

Highly abbreviated
Highly circumscribed goals
Emphasis on the here and now
More directive

More extended
Broader goals
Emphasis on past and present
More exploratory
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1980s USA

Steve de Shazer & Insoo Kim Berg

Solution Behavior not Problem Behavior
**Solution:**
Near future oriented What is wanted?

**Focused:**
Directive but not directed

**Brief:**
Agreed upon and plan driven

**Therapy:**
Dialogue, engaged
Basic Tenets

It looks at the positive side of problems and what works.

*Water the flowers, not the weeds!*

*“Tend the garden”*

It can be used in a variety of settings with a variety of problems.
Basic Tenets cont.

Places emphasis on the future rather than the present or past.

All people are free to make choices.

Client’s are their own experts who know what is best for them.

The therapist accepts the client's view of reality, but remember “you cannot fix what is in your head with what is in your head”
To borrow some from Reality Therapy

What do you do when the patient’s reality is:

“maladaptive”, “irresponsible”, “abusive”

First, why are they in your office?

Irresponsible doesn’t equate to a negative personality characteristic

Substitute responsible for mental health, and irresponsible for mental illness.
Second, *responsibility* – the ability to fulfill one’s needs, and to do so in a way that does not deprive others of the ability to fulfill their needs

**Responsibility:**
- Builds self-worth
- Builds integrity
- Values others
How Brief a Therapy?

Aim for 5 sessions

45 mins each session

Rarely beyond 8 sessions

Sometimes 1 session is enough

Any improvements after 3 sessions?

Increase gap between sessions as time goes on
Plan of Care

Especially helpful with SFBT

Drives the treatment

Keeps the focus and direction

Is alive

Modify as needed

Assists with termination
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Assumptions

Uniqueness of the client
No problem happens all the time
Client is the expert-they choose the solution
What can "exceptions" tell us
Change is happening
The epiphany
Current actions are an asset
Goals direct change
Do more of what worked.
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**Guiding Principles**

Knowing the desired ending makes getting there easier

Problems cloud our view of future

Don’t lose sight of what you want

Clarify the solution
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Ask questions about... “the client’s life”

Client's story
Client's strengths
Client's resources
Client's exceptions
Relationships
Self-esteem issues
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Uses "Respectful Curiosity"
Requires client to see their preferred future

Begin steps to change “IMMEDIATELY”

First session goal?
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Sees change as a constant & natural entity

Help people identify things they wish to change

Utilize lists

Help people attend to what is currently happening

“Now” focused

Help people attend to what they want to continue happening (reinforce what is wanted)

Create a concrete version of their preferred future
Session Plan

START

1. Hopes
   - Yes: Exploration of preferred future: e.g. miracle question
   - No:
     1. Exceptions: times when the problem is less acute or aspects of life not so bad
        - Yes: Times when a preferred future already happens (e.g. scales)
        - No: Coping strategies: perseverance, not giving up hope, etc.
           - Yes: Next small step towards goal (e.g. scales again)
           - No:
             1. History of past successes, achievements, etc.
                - Yes: Compliments

FINISH
A Preferred Future

Therapist identifies times in current life that are close to the preferred future.

Focus on what is different on such occasions

Bring small successes to client’s awareness

Help client repeat successful things
Enabling the Preferred Future

Focus on...

a) Support to explore preferred future

b) Explore (when, where, with whom, how) bits of it already happen

Attainable and Explainable Solutions
Theoretical

Similar to Reality Therapy, the SFBT therapist is more involved and active in the therapy than the traditional therapist who offers guidance down the path of healing and health

Beware of “transference”
Need fulfillment is paramount in life success.

Need fulfillment drives most actions and behaviors.

Meeting our needs in a meaningful and realistic way:
  Define meaningful
  Define realistic
Core Needs:

1. Connection
   others who care, affirmation

2. Meaning
   significance, important

3. Assurance
   consistency
Core Needs cont.

4. Variety
   healthy, safe, calculated

5. Growth
   productivity, accomplishment

6. Impact
   contribution, adding to life
Prime Your Day:

1. Identify 3 things you are grateful for.  
   *Gratitude cancels out anger and fear*

2. Identify 3 things you will accomplish that will further your purpose or goals.

3. Set your emotional tone:  
   How will you respond to situations, frustrations, crises
Miracle Question
How the future may be
Helps establish goals
Ask slowly
Pay attention to NVCs
Give time to answer

Ignore "Don't knows“ and encourage an answer
Mind Jogging Questions

How long will give a child to learn to walk before you give up?

What is the key factor in your future?

At what point do you give up?
Self-defining Exercise

Tell me who you are without telling me what you have or what you can do!

I am…
Scaling Question
Identify differences for client
Usually range 0 - 10
Helps client identify resources
Helps identify preferred future

"How would you improve things by 1 point?"
"Where on the scale would you be if...?"
Coping Question

Identify client resources they don’t even acknowledge, generalize for them, interpret/clarify
Can be used even in most pessimistic situations

Genuine curiosity helps
Genuine admiration for client helps
Helps identify preferred future

Ensure client doesn't feel you're contradicting them

"Despite all the problems you still work. How do you do it?"
Problem-free Talk

Identify client resources helping them relax or be effective

Talk about mundane life or irrelevant experiences

All probes - leisure, friends, relaxing, conflict resolution

Can use strengths and resources to move forward

Ordinary achievements & Everyday responsibilities

“You describe you're successful at work dealing with conflicts. Could the skills be used at home with your child?”
Playful ideas: Time Machine

“If you had a time machine which time would you go to?”

“Flossie’s story”
Playful ideas:

Super sleuth
   Imagine you are a Solution Detective – you could invoke your favorite sleuth to find a solution to your problem, builds objectivity

Do something different for 5 minutes a day
   Doesn’t matter what it is (as long as legal and safe) – it is the regularity of the practice that is important.

Give someone a pleasant surprise

Practice random acts of kindness

The Compliments box
   A special box is set up in the home and members are encouraged to deposit compliments about each other.
**Internal Resources**

Helps clients attend to their resources, skills and abilities

Helps make a narrative of a competent individual

Empowers client in identifying their own strengths

Skills  
Qualities  
Beliefs  
Capacity  
Tenacity  
Strengths  
Sense of Humor
External Resources

Supportive Relationships

- Friends
- Spouse
- Faith
- Partners
- Social Organizations
- Family
- Workplace
Compliments

End sessions with a compliment of client abilities

Set tasks using those abilities

Focus on positive points

Ordinary achievements & responsibilities

“I can live for two months on a good compliment”

Mark Twain
Disadvantages of SFBT

Critics say it is too simplistic and does not have enough empirical research to support it.

It may be contraindicated with dependent clients.

It may not adequately address clients with serious mental issues.

It may not develop the counselor/client relationship in enough depth to be therapeutic.
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