

STUDENTS' CORNER

by Insoo Kim Berg

Background Information

I am frequently asked by some of you to assist in writing your papers on Solution-Focused

The model, which began as a clinical model in an outpatient setting, has since been adapted and

Which felt more cooperative? Which would you prefer as a client? What would the group say were the differences between the two interviews? Which conversation was more empowering? If you were a client which conversation would you prefer? Then ask the interviewer the same questions. Which felt better? Which felt collaborative? How was your reaction to your client different in the two dialogues?

7. Summarize the differences you have heard from the group and point out that the later questions were from SFBT and it is an example of how different interviewing can be. You have just described and demonstrated exceptions to problems. The entire exercise can take 20 - 30 minutes.

8. The first conversation usually comes from the expert position of a practitioner who must “assess” the client who has this or that kind of problem. Which way would you like to practice?

Exceptions to Problem:

The above exercise not only points out the differences between two paradigms but also the basic assumptions we make about the people we work with. Listening for exceptions takes lots of training because in everyday life, we tend to pay more attention to problems than to solutions or small successes. SFBT contends that all problem

You can use scaling questions to ask about a variety of issues and concerns such as: safety issues, how hopeful, how determined, confidence, desire, sadness, proud, and host of other topics that will help the client to decide his/her own appraisal of situations.

Coping Questions:

You have been through a lot the last couple of month. How in the world have you coped with so much, while going to school (holding down your job, taking care of the children, getting up in the morning, etc. that the client is actually doing)?

What do you suppose your best friends (family, daughter, co-workers, etc.) would say how you've been doing it?

How did you know that “keeping low” was the best way to cope with such a “terribly oppressive” situation you were in? What did you know about your job that told you that it was the best policy to keep your job until you saved enough money?

When you are so depressed, like you are describing, how do you manage to keep doing all these things you've been doing? It is amazing.

The above questions and variations on the above questions convey to your client that you are “admiring” your client while commiserating at the same time at the persistence and strength he/she shows by keep “hanging in there” in spite of what he/she considers to be an overwhelming task. By answering these and other similar strength discovering questions, the client him/herself explains their strong motivation, determination, and will to “make it.”

Miracle Question

This question requires the biggest departure for most clinicians trained in traditional therapy models because it sounds “nonscientific” and they are afraid they may sound foolish to the client by asking such question. However, this question has been used thousands and thousands of times all over the world, and experienced clinicians believe this is one of the most useful questions because it helps the client paint a detailed picture of his/her desirable state of life - thus describing their goal for the contact or their view of what will make their life a little bit better off. There are numerous descriptions of this question and its application in every conceivable human interaction that I will not go into the details of this useful question, but suffice it to say that these questions have been used in all sort of settings and variety of clinical and non-clinical population. For further information on this question, see the column written by Steve de Shazer on this website.

Conclusion

I hope this bulletin titled For Students Only is useful to you. This information is designed to be a supplement to your reading and also the classroom lectures from your professors and instructors. Please feel free to adapt and change to suit your needs and the time limits of your ... (website abruptly ended here....)