

Solution Focused Brief Therapy: An Evidenced-Based Approach to Create Rapid, Sustainable Change with Any Client

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Greetings.....

- A BRIEF word about today's training
- A little bit about me
 - How I fell in love with this approach
 - Mentored by Chris Iveson, Harvey Ratner, Evan George, Bill O'Hanlon and Linda Metcalf
 - BRIEF International

“People think better throughout the meeting if the very first thing they do is to say something true and positive about their work or how the work of the group is going.”

Nancy Kline

Time to think

It's Simple

- SFBT is about 2 things.....
- You just have to know how to ask the next question
- Curiosity and “not nosey”

2 Basic Skills

We have had these skills since childhood.

1. Each person must take their turn, this creates equality of contribution.
2. Each contribution builds on what was last said.

Invitations

- Solution focus is a question based process. The worker asks questions.
- These are not questions that have to be answered out loud. The questions can do their work just as well if the user just thinks quietly about the questions and reflects on her/his answer.
- Questions in this approach need to be thought of as invitations and the normal rules of inviting apply.
- The worker should not try to 'get' the client/couple to do anything. If the worker is trying to 'get' something to happen then the usual rules of force/oppression also apply.

The SF Approach

- If it is not broken, don't fix it
- If something is found to be working, do more of it
- The language of solution development is different than that needed to describe a problem
- No problems happen all of the time, there are always exceptions
- The future is creatable.

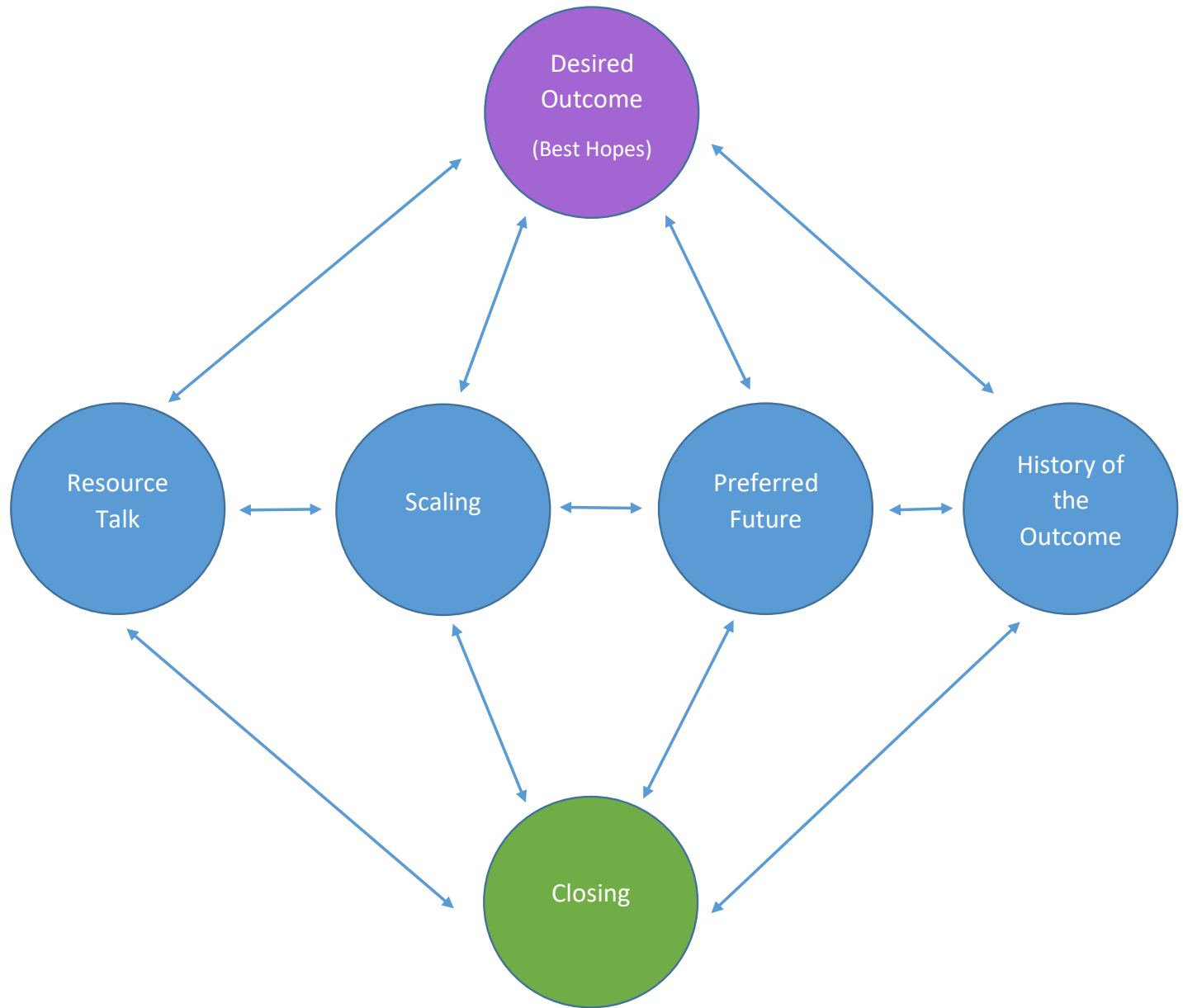
Principles for SF with Couples

- Every couple comes from a successful past
- Connect with the couple, not just the individuals that make up the couple
- Direct each question to both members of the couple
- The beauty is in the details, so do what we always do when we see something beautiful. Focus on them!
- Carefully select which part of the couple's answers to be curious about
- Use the couples *EXACT* language

Desired Outcome

Description

Closing



Two Simple Rules

- The interviewer is %100 responsible for asking questions that produce useful answers.
- The couple takes ALL of the credit for each and every useful answer.

A Contracting Process

- Starts with the end in mind
- Provide us with a provisional contract for the work.

Qualities of a good Best Hopes

- Establishes a client/couple-led contract
- Looks forward
- Assumes the client/couple has a good reason for being there
- Thus, they are motivated
- Takes the client/couple seriously
- Does not require a problem description (or even it's recognition)
- About the presence of something

Best Hopes Questions

What are your best hopes.....

- from this session
 - from this meeting
 - from our work together
 - from...
-
- Nothing else is done until this question is answered

Best Hopes Answers with couples

Must be....

- The same as their partner's or.....
- Be able to co-exist with their partner's response.
- Concrete and observable

Don't save your clients

- Let the question do the work.
- Often times this is a question people have not thought about.
- Trust that they can answer, even if it is tough for them.
- Let the client do the work.

Challenging responses

- “I don’t know”
- “I don’t really want to be here”
- “We are just here so that we can tell our children we tried everything”
- He/She does not love me anymore

Resource Talk

- Allows the therapist to maintain a REAL connection with the client/couple
- Breaks the “problem talk” pattern
- Occurs early on in the conversation

Focusing on problems leads us to the past . . .
focusing on problems leads to blame, excuses
and justifications. It's complicated and slow and
often drains our mental energy. Focusing on
solutions, however, immediately creates energy
in our minds.

David Rock

Tasks During Problem Free Talk

Listen for...

- Signs of strength
- Evidence of resource
- Evidence of past success
- Further details for what the client wants
- Details of life before or without the problem

If you do not ask about exceptions and successes, the client will not tell you. After all, what they are concerned about is the problem which drove them to seeking therapy.

Steve de Shazer

Honeymoon Talk

- Starts with the beginning of the couples positive feelings towards one another
- Allows the members of the couple to take credit for those early positive feelings
- Based on actions and observations

Tasks During Honeymoon Talk

Elicit details related to....

- their love story
- what made them build a relationship
- what was right between them at the start
- Further details for what the client wants
- Details of life before or without the problem

What's Already Working

- **Instances**
 - Elements of hoped for future in place
 - Elements of hoped for future subsequently put in place
- **Exceptions**
 - Times when the problem does not happen
 - Times when the problem happens less
 - Times when the problem happens with less intensity
 - Times when the problem lasts less long
 - Times when you resist the urge to . . .
- **Survival & coping**
 - Getting through, getting by, keeping going

Exceptions

- Times when the couple “forgets” that they have a problem.
- By focusing on what they do instead of obeying the problem, clues to success begin to appear.
- Exploring and amplifying these times can lead to more of these times.

Preferred Future

- Concrete and observable
- Mathematically positive
- Future focused
- Realistic (even if unlikely)
- Requires effort
- Recognized as having a desirable impact on others
- Detailed (can never have too many details)

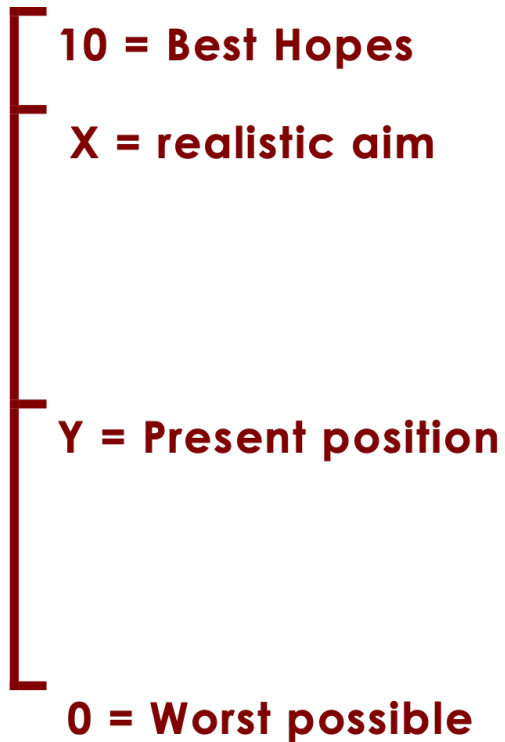
Preferred Future (cont.)

- The realization of the client/couple's best hopes from the work
- The task is to help client/couple consider and describe what their lives would be like, in specific detail.
- The more details, the more clear the picture. Thus the more likely the client/couple is to make changes in their lives.
- Involves other perspectives

SF Scales

- Used after a well developed preferred future is accomplished.
- Must have four points
 - A goal, 10
 - The least desired, 0
 - Where are you presently?
 - Where would you like to be?

Scale example



What difference would that make?

So what difference would it make if your best hopes actually occurred?

– What difference would it make for others?

- Explores meaning (has a deepening effect)
- Encourages the couple to explore potential changes
- Realistic, feasible, and worthwhile
- Requires no understanding by the therapist!

Feedback/Suggestions

- A summary of the conversation using the client/couple's own language
- True, backed up by factual observations
- Significant to the client/couple
- Suggestions are usually just simply noticing changes (don't get clever)

Follow Up

- Review signs of progress
What has been better?
- Amplify
How did you do that? What did each of you contribute?
- Scale
After such a week, where would you say you are on the scale presently?
- Establish a destination for this conversation
What are your best hopes?
- Future focused questions
If those best hopes became a reality, what would you notice? What else? What else? What else?.....
- Feedback/Suggestion
Do you suppose in the upcoming days and weeks you could continue to notice further progress?

If things are worse

The client has done something to make things worse

- What have you done to stop it being even worse than it is?
What else?
- What things have you managed to keep in place despite some things worsening?
- How did you manage to keep these in place?
- If this was just a blip what would you be noticing tomorrow that told you you were still on track?

Summary

- What did you learn?
- What else?
- What else?

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