

Solution focused brief therapy: school counselor approach



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Introduction to Solution Focused Brief Therapy

As a future school counselor, I know of the importance of making a connection with students and other clients as well as making sure that my clients are able to accomplish their goals as much as possible. In a school setting, you will have a caseload of hundreds of students, so it may not always be easy to see every student that needs to see you in a given day or for the length of time that they may need to see you for since they have to get to classes or the school day runs out of time. Over the past 50 years, there has been a shift towards a focus on what is going on in the lives of clients in between sessions when Steve de Shazer saw his clients were seeing results in their lives for the better, even though they may have been unrelated to the ultimate problem of what brought them to counseling in the first place; there was no emphasis on what actually brought them into the office so they were able to reflect on other aspects of their life (Sklare, 2014). This approach to counseling in my opinion is taking aspects from multiple traditional theorists and combining their ideas to shorten the length of sessions necessary to see change, as well as attempting to address concerns for multiple demographics and issues that clients may be dealing with.

Prior to working on this assignment, I had never heard of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), except when I won the book *Brief Counseling That Works* written by Gerald B. Sklare in class during one of Dr. Sheely-Moore's "Oprah moments". I am very fortunate and appreciative that I was given this book because it gave me a new perspective on counseling that I could use in my future career as a school counselor. This assignment and learning about <https://assignbuster.com/solution-focused-brief-therapy-school-counselor-approach/>

SFBT has also allowed me to further think about the traditional counseling theories that we are learning about in class to see what aspects of them are also evident in these newer theories. In turn, I have been able to realize that even though something may seem to be irrelevant since it was initially thought about anywhere from 50-100 years ago, it can still hold true to this day.

Appreciation for SFBT

I had never heard of this theory prior to receiving the book *Brief Counseling That Works* in class a few weeks ago. Immediately upon reading the first chapter only of this book, I realized that this theory is extremely flexible and can be utilized across various settings and with many different types of clients. Specifically, for my future career goal I looked at the use of solution-focused brief therapy through the lens of a school counselor. In my review of this approach, I found that the rules the founders created are a very useful guide for the counselor and a strength of this theory.

The three main rules that you have to follow when using this concept are: “ If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Fix It”, “ Once You Know What Works, Do More of It”, and “ If It Doesn’t Work, Don’t Do It Again. Do Something Different” (Sklare, 2014.). These rules break down for the counselor the main areas that they need to watch when in a session with a client. I viewed this as a strength and contribution of the theory because the rules are extremely straightforward and do not necessarily leave any room for interpretation. In order to be successful with this approach, the first rule details just as it reads: do not make an issue out of something that your client is not presenting as a

problem because that would only complicate something else that was working for them before the session. I feel that this a very important thing to note in any counseling session, but when you are trying to focus on finding solutions and you only have a small amount of time to do so, you cannot waste time focusing on things that are not a problem for your client. The other two rules are also very relevant to counseling overall, but particularly with this approach. When you are working with your client and goals are beginning to be established, they are going to begin attempting to achieve their goals and then tell you how they are working for them in subsequent sessions. If something they did worked, as a counselor you should realize and encourage your client to continue doing more of that in order to continue achieving their goals in the future. On the other hand, if something was attempted but did not accomplish the goal that they had set forth, then it is imperative that you work with your client to find a different solution that will help them more so than what had failed. To present these three brief but crucial statements as the rules set forth when using SFBT is a serious strength of the theory in my opinion.

Another major strength of this theory that also addresses how this theory would work with culturally diverse students is the fact that solution-focused brief therapy is exactly that: focused on solutions. When discussing the traditional theories in class throughout the semester, one of the biggest things that we talk about with all of the approaches is the multicultural considerations. From day one of my time in the counseling program, I have heard that every counselor must check their biases in order to be successful as a counselor. What is great about this approach is that it is not at all about

the counselor, but everything is through the lens and view of the client. There is no time or necessity for the counselor to have anything be representative of their view or opinion when utilizing SFBT since the client is the one who has the power to find the solutions they want and implement change. When working with different cultures, there are some beliefs that counseling is taboo and that you should not talk about any of your problems with anyone outside of your family. This has been seen with our analysis of Antonio throughout the semester. Antonio self-disclosed that his family did not support speaking with anyone about what is bothering you except within their family. What is good about solution-focused brief therapy is that the entire concept is to look at the strengths and solutions versus the weaknesses and problems. That being said, there should be no issues pertaining to discussing problems outside of your family since the discussion being had between counselor and student is that of solutions and not problems. Additionally, on the topic of working with diverse clients and the multicultural considerations associated with this theory, I believe that solution-focused brief therapy is a very inclusive and welcoming theory to use with clients and students from all backgrounds. The common concerns that are associated with working with students from different cultures are not relevant to this theory since everything in a session is from the client's point of view, in their words, and in their control with the counselor essentially as a mediator and listener to help produce solutions.

An additional strength of this approach to counseling is that one of the major considerations for a counselor is to always remember that your client is going to be the most knowledgeable person about themselves (Sklare,

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2014). As we learn in our classes so far in the program, we are not supposed to give advice to our clients but rather help them to realize what is the most beneficial support for them. With this theory, it can only further that core belief since everything is coming from the client's point of view and in their words. As the counselor when utilizing solution-focused brief therapy, I believe that it is imperative to just listen and of course express empathy to your students, but to let your student lead themselves in the direction of the goal that they want to achieve or the solution to a problem that they are experiencing. Through questioning and listening to everything that your client has to say, you will be able to work with them to come up with positive goals and change that they want to see through something that they want to do and not something they would not like to do (Sklare, 2014). Students will better be able to realize where they want to see change in their life if they are able to think through everything on their own since they know themselves better than you as the counselor could ever know them.

Of course, with any theory in counseling there are going to be some limitations and instances where using the particular theory would not work well or be effective. Of course, there are certain students and clients that will not want to be told that what they are doing is not going to necessarily help them see change in their life or that they need to do something different. They might feel that what you are telling them as a counselor is that you want to fix their behaviors or whatever problem they may have. In addition, as many of the traditional theories that we have already learned about this semester have explained, with SFBT someone who has recently experienced trauma or loss will not benefit.

I believe that an argument can be made that a limitation for this theory would be that it is present and future focused, with no aspect of the theory allowing for focus on past experiences or insight. We have conceptualized many theories throughout the semester up to this point, and a majority of them were focused on reflecting on past experiences to see where a problem originated to then help the client learn where they got mixed up. This theory is in a sense ignoring the past experiences of clients with one small instance where they are considered. Every problem that a client is going through will affect them for some period of time, but they are not constantly plagued with a problem. These exceptions in time when their problems are not evident are the only times that SFBT allows the client to focus on past experiences (Sklare, 2014). When utilizing SFBT and disregarding past experiences to focus on the solutions to what is currently happening as well as where the client wants to end up in the future, there is a disconnect with every aspect of the client's life that got them to the point they are at when they are in counseling that day.

In connection with the concept of focusing on the present by utilizing solution-focused brief therapy, there is a strong connection with Gestalt therapy, as popularized by Fritz Perls. When we were learning about Gestalt this semester, my group was assigned the theory to use for our group presentation. Researching the theory, we discussed the fact that Gestalt mainly focused on the present and what the current life of the client is. Obviously, that is an immediate connection to solution-focused brief therapy since there is a lack of focus on the past experiences of the client and even less emphasis on insight. In addition, though, a Gestalt counselor is not

heavily focused on being an integral part of the session but allows the client to do most of the work. Sklare details in the first chapter of his book *Brief Counseling That Works* a concept that is imperative to the use of SFBT that explains if your attention is focused on what is not working that you are going to continue to have problems (2014). For a Gestalt therapist, there is a constant refocusing to ensure that the client comes to the realization of what they are going through and who they are. This concept that was proposed by Sklare puts the same process that Gestalt therapists try to utilize with their clients into a more simplified phrasing. When watching Fritz Perls work with Gloria, he was very forward about telling her what she was doing that was in a way avoiding the actual issue, which is not exactly done with SFBT but the counselor is always trying to have the client focus on positive solutions to whatever is troubling them at the time. There are certainly other theories that you could connect solution-focused brief therapy to, such as person-centered/Rogsonian therapy, but I believe that SFBT shares a lot of similarities with Gestalt theory.

Conclusion

As a counselor in training, I have not yet been exposed to theories for long enough where I could formulate an opinion on what my theoretical framework will be once I am practicing. This chapter out of Gerald Sklare's book has helped me to see yet another theoretical basis to look for and use as part of my framework. The impact that this chapter has had on my development is that I now realize that when it comes to counseling with a large caseload, you may not always have the time you need and your client needs and deserves to fully delve into a problem they are working through. <https://assignbuster.com/solution-focused-brief-therapy-school-counselor-approach/>

Using an approach in a counseling session like solution-focused brief therapy can help your clients realize what their goals are to handle a problem, see what works and does not work, and be able to work through it with a solution figured out. There are some limitations to the theory as I mentioned earlier since the approach does not lend itself to any type of delving into the past, but there are some very strong points to this approach to counseling, especially looking at it in the view of a future school counselor.

References

- Sklare, G. B. (2014). *Brief counseling that works: A solution-focused therapy approach for school counselors and other mental health professionals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, a Sage Company.