

Model selection and role-play: family therapy theories and methods



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Abstract

This paper will give a brief comparison and contrast of solution focus and strategic approach discussing roles and social implications of modern and postmodern. The paper will discuss several points of interest including a synopsis of the Idris and Jill's family.

Solution-Focused will explore the family's issues finding a quicker resolution of problems. Strategic family therapy will show a combination of techniques that will be able to assist in giving the family common ground that works for the family. The need for improving the family dynamics.

Case Study

In my case study there are 2 loving parents Idris and Jill who have been co-parenting since their son Treer was two years old, both want the best life for their son. Treer's primary placement is with Jill in California. When Treer was 2 Jill and Idris had a court agreement of how visitation was going to be established. Now that Treer is 13 the dynamics of everyone's life has changed. Jill is newly married with a new baby. Idris is also married with two other sons. Things have been challenging for a while but know Treer is at the age where his life is affected from going back and forth between both parents. Jill feels the need to revisit the original agreement.

Idris on the other hand feels as though things are good the way they are. Idris financially carries the bulk of the traveling expenses for their son for all school breaks, half of the summers, Presidents' Day and every other

Christmas, unless Jill makes changes and then she must provide all travel expenses.

Compare and Contrast

This is the idea behind Solution-Focused Therapy: it is often more important to find solutions than it is to analyze the problem in detail. In this case, the approach works with the family to reach an agreement that works with both parents and Treer's schedules. Instead of understanding and explaining why the parents are changing the previous agreement. Of course, it is important to address Treer's school and other activities to ensure academically his grades aren't affected and eliminating his unnecessary stress. Whereas with Strategic brief therapy praises the both parents for coming back to therapy even though Idris is the one who didn't see the need to attend in the first place. Helping Both parents look at the progress that has been made during the sessions compromising both views.

The approach shows both parents that they're able to talk with each other while listening instead of talking at each other and arguing. The therapist lets the family know that there will still be times that each of their emotions will still run high, but they will listen to each other before jumping to conclusions. Jill and Idris are shown ways to compromise and draw out each of their strengths in communicating better, while understanding the events that led up to them disagreeing on Treer's visitation with his father now searching for the solution that allowed them to comprise reaching common ground without utilizing the courts this time Horigian, Anderson & Szapocznik, 2016).

Role Play with Strategic Brief Therapy

Utilizing strategic therapy seeks to find the parents problem in both Jill's and Idris terms probing how they understand the problem using framing, scaling and miracle questions (Family Solutions Institute, 2015.) Strategically obtaining a clear picture of the problem in the family dynamics and an accurate view of what the interaction of their sequences of communication is and what's needed to maintain common ground while alleviating arguing between both parents. According to Becvar & Becvar, (2013) motivational interviewing utilizes strategic therapy techniques to point out and refine maladaptive family interactions seeking a positive way for Jill and Idris to act toward each other.

Therapist: Well umm what brings you two to seek therapy?

Jill: Well to be honest both of our family dynamics has changed over the years and we are no longer able to reach common ground with visitation scheduling with our son.

Therapist: Idris what do you think is the underlining issue?

Idris: Idris pauses a minute" Jill is partly correct, Jill feels as though we need to go back to the courts to address how I get to spend time with Treer instead of trying to figure it out ourselves.

Therapist: Jill is this accurate to say that you feel more comfortable with having a more formalized agreement instead of you both coming up with a verbal compromise.

Jill: yes

Therapist: Can you explain why you feel the courts is a better option?

Jill: Well to be honest when Treer was two we split and argued all the time about visitation and couldn't reach a compromise, with the courts we argued less and we both were forced to compromise. Also, since Treer has gotten older his academics have gotten more intense and his social responsibilities has begun to grow the traveling has begun to affect him emotionally, physically and academically.

Therapist: Idris can you agree with Jill that when Treer was two it was very frustrating to talk to each other?

Idris: Yes

Therapist: How about now, have you seen changes with Treer when he visits you?

Idris: Well he is a growing boy and everything about him is changing as his father I keep open communication with him because I live so far away, and our time is short. With his education me and my wife support Jill and Treer on all his school endeavors. There are times when he does visit and have several assignments that need to be completed. We sit down with him after he unwinds from the traveling and make sure he completes, if help is needed we are productive in assisting.

Jill: I agree that since I have primary placement his time with his father is short, but there are times when Treer gets home he does say to me that he

doesn't want to go back the next time and if he can wait for the following scheduled to visit his dad because of an event or a social engagement he wants to attend. Also, when Treer comes back on Monday's and still must go to school I have gotten reports from his teacher that he has been falling asleep and that's not acceptable.

Idris: Jill has mentioned this to me but when I talk to Treer about visiting he always says and seems to be excited and looking forward to the next time. I do realize the stress it can have with traveling especially with traveling as an adult traveling does take a toll.

According to Szapocznik, Zarate, Duff & Muir, 2013 posited a passage from Jay Haley " therapy is strategic if the therapist formulates what is occurring between the couple designing their own method to the reported problem.

Role Play with Solution-Focused

The therapist using solution-focused brief therapy focuses on defining goals showing both parents that they can compromise and find a solution (Becvar & Becvar, 2013). This form of questioning has prompted the shift toward positive thinking, being able to identify the intended goals(Becvar & Becvar, 2013). Which allow both parents to sit down being able to communicate their concerns having a better understanding and to be on the same page for Treer.

Therapist: What led you to decide on professional counseling?

Idris: My time that is spend with my son is precious but dissipating, Jill wants to change the days that Treer comes to visit Delaware and feels as though
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where not able to meet in the middle. I already miss a whole lot of his life not living close to him.

Therapist: Jill what is your reason for seeking professional counseling?

Jill: Idris is about right, but Idris's time is not being taken away. I feel that we need to discuss maybe altering the times that Treer does visit. Only because he is getting older his academics are more rigorous and at times he does complain that he's missing social gatherings at home that he wants to engage in.

Idris: "tone in voice changes to being frustrated" Well whenever I talk to Treer he always seems to be upbeat and excited to the next visit. I talk to him all the time on FaceTime and Skype and no time have I seen any indication that he wants a change.

Jill: To be honest when I know that Treer is going to be talking to his dad I always tell him to perk up and look alive.

Idris: Can't be, because there are times when Jill is not even off work yet and me and Treer have a great conversation. Me and my wife are invested in his education as well, so we talk with the teachers all the time informing them of Treer's travels to our home and the need to get assignments in advance if necessary. Also, the nights that he has school the next morning we make sure to get him to bed before 10: 00pm. So what Jill is saying doesn't seem accurate.

Jill: I know that you both are invested in Treer's education and I'm sure you get him to bed at a reasonable time, but he said he was tired because he had to get up at 3am to catch his flight.

Idris: If Treer is missing one day of school had him off for the entire week, it maybe that Treer is goofing off then I really need to have a discussion with him as well as the teacher.

Therapist: Ok, umm ok, let's investigate finding a solution to the presenting problem. Jill you state that Treer's academics are affected as well as physically and socially. What do you think can help? What are your thoughts?

Jill: I am concerned about Treer traveling and going straight to school since the work is more rigorous now. I understand that he only comes to your home once a month, but that does not have to be the case during some months. I have proposed to Idris for the past two years that we sit down and talk about moments like this because I prefer to be proactive and have a plan rather than going back and forth as things occur. So, I suggest we just go back to the drawing board and have a sit-down mediation again. The last agreement was almost 10 years ago and as he gets older, school gets rigorous, sports become tricky and life happens. This is something that is new to both of us, so I just rather sit down and figure things out to be proactive. So, I think mediation is our best hope in compromising if therapy doesn't help. I really had rather went straight to mediation instead of coming to counseling as I'm also a therapist and it just doesn't work for me the courts are more suitable for a situation like ours. In attending these sessions,

I had to realize it's not about me it's about Treer and continuing his connection with his dad.

Therapist: Ok Idris you state that you are mindful of Treer's academics and his physical and social engagements which you are productively involved even though you are far away. You feel as though you already miss a lot. Does this seem accurate Idris? What are your thoughts and what do you think will work?

Idris: I don't see the purpose of mediation if we are able to communicate appropriately and compromise our differences. It has always been set that Treer comes here for the summer and holidays during the school year. This is the results of Jill relocating to East Haven, CT.

Jill: At times we are not able to actively communicate and compromise our differences. I have asked if we can meet on our own and be proactive about things on numerous occasions. It is not just missing school, it is being proactive as he gets older, sports and weekends etc. Treer has been coming there for Summers and holidays since he started school, but our initial agreement was 9 years ago, and it says nothing about three-day weekends because when that agreement was solidified he was not even in school he was 2. There is a huge difference in a 2-year-old schedule and a 11/12-year-old schedule. I think it's sad that you are refusing to sit down and talk whether its mediation or not, and since we only really talk when there is an issue, sometimes its reactive and not proactive. As he gets older and more involved in school activities, has a school project, test, sports, etc., I am

hoping that there is a little more flexibility and he may not always come on a specific rigid schedule, but still during that month.

Therapist: Well Jill and Idris the purpose of a sit down is so you both can have a better understanding and be on the same page for Treer. In the past It seems you both have been reluctant to mediate and talk and plain verbal conversations haven't gone well. which in my opinion doesn't make sense? Moving forward if Treer has a school issue, test or project and needs to come there on a Friday, Jill do you mind paying for an occasional flight from time to time, if that means he is in school. Since Idris generally doesn't purchase flights on Fridays because it is costly and the busiest day to travel.

Jill: I don't mind at all since the revision is on my side.

Idris: I appreciate the comprise in the future if we have any other challenges I feel as though sessions like this is beneficial to me you and Treer going forward. I feel like we have made great progress and hope that our communication will continue to grow Jill.

Jill: I agree and my reluctance to attend therapy has changed, I also appreciate this time and the progress we both have made. I am open to having sessions like this should it be needed. It is my hope however that this has taught us a more effective way of communicating.

In the first initial session the therapist focuses on has brought Jill and Idris to counseling asking open-ended solution-oriented questions that has allowed both parents to discuss their conceptualization of the problem leading the conversations therapeutically (Connie, 2013). According to Sommers-

Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan & ProQuest Ebooks., 2015; 2012;) convey that when the conversations began to escalate the therapist jumped in pointing out the touchy areas and addressing them during the session, particularly if dangerous behaviors could've been a factor between Jill and Idris.

Throughout the sessions the therapist allowed the parents to lead in most of the sessions adding word choices building a positive connection avoiding negative feelings in the therapist and client relationship(Sommers-Flanagan).

Conclusion

In this case study it is hoped that this assignment has compared the specific criteria of strategic and solution focused therapy approach giving a deep understanding of how the therapist help facilitate the problem of the family. Attempting to allow insight and understanding in my own future practice. In the assignment being able to map out Jill's and Idris's actual orientation of the underlying issues observing communication sequences between the two, which one talks to whom, in what order eliminating the frustrations and arguing that they had in the past. According to Connie, 2013 therapist should attempt to facilitate questions such as, " What will work in stabilizing the family?" and, " What is the primary reason the problem exists?"

According to Becvar & Becvar, 2013 posit that being able to identify what interventions that prove useful in the case scenario, providing a range of skills to assist the family using scaling and miracle questioning techniques to offer maladaptive nature toward the presenting problems that arise in families. SFT is an effective approach utilized by therapist to motivate positive change that is evidenced based (Clarke, 2014).

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