



## Solution Focused Therapy

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### What is Solution Focused therapy?

**Solution Focused Therapy** approaches client difficulties by finding solutions to problems rather than emphasising the causes of problems. Causes do not matter and are not discussed. Emphasis lies on choosing goals and the actions required to reach them. To help clients, counsellors ask them to think of times when their problems did not occur or were less severe. Clients are encouraged to re-create situations conducive to the desired outcomes.

From the clients' own appraisal of the situation, actions required to build solutions are chosen. Clients are seen as competent, and as having the solutions to their problems within themselves. It is the task of the therapist to help clients find and use them.

**Solution Focused Therapy** also referred to as **brief therapy** aims to reach conclusion by moving directly to solutions rather than investigating problems or causes. It begins by the therapist asking the client what he wants to achieve. Goals – often referred to as 'well-formed goals' are chosen. The client determines what these goals are. It is important that they are clear and achievable. The **SMART** model is ideal here (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound).

One way to ask a client about his goals is by asking the **miracle question**. The miracle question goes something like this: 'If you woke up tomorrow and by some miracle that occurred during the night, your problem was solved, how would you know, what would be different?' Scaling questions (giving a rating out of 10) reveal differences in how things are now and how the client wants them to be.

### Finding Solutions

Once goals are chosen, therapists ask clients what they have tried so far. This builds a picture of the situation and what has not worked. The client will then be asked about 'exceptions' – times when something did work, the problem did not occur, or was less acute. It is taken for granted that the client has not always been in his present difficulty. There has been some kind of 'deterioration' from the norm that has brought him to counselling.

What has been different in the past when either the difficulties did not occur or the client was better able to handle them? By exploring exceptions, the counsellor gain insight into what it is that enabled the client to achieve her goals previously but that is not present now. The remaining task then is help the client move closer to the previously successful situation.

For example, if a client is having trouble disciplining her children, she may be asked to describe what happens when things go wrong. Perhaps the children refuse or are reluctant to do their homework. Exploration shows that they are more cooperative about homework when the client is happy and relaxed when she greets them, rather than tense and uptight.

Further investigation shows that she is tense and uptight when overtired. The solution is to leave inessential chores and instead have sufficient rest. This creates the situation in which the client's goal is achievable – the children do their homework willingly and cooperatively. By exploring exceptions with the client and the conditions required to achieve their goals, counsellors show their clients that they already had the solutions within themselves.

If you would like to know more, or to make an appointment to discuss your problems and goals, please contact us via the details below.

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