Solution-Focused Therapy

Life Philosophy, School of Thought, Goals, Techniques & Theoretical Orientation

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Life Philosophy

Although I believe that nature and nurture play an equally important role in someone’s life, I also believe that what that person makes out of their situation is more important than the situation itself. Every person is faced with difficult times and easy times. They are faced with hard decisions to make and then they must live with the consequences of those decisions, whether they are positive or negative. Everyone is faced with difficult times and joyous, easy times. Despite all of these considerations, I believe that people can make their life into anything they desire.

Throughout my lifetime, I have been faced with many difficult situations and difficult choices. I grew up with a single mother. My parents divorced when I was two years old and I saw my father two times between the age of 2 and 13. I didn’t have a close relationship with my father. My mother worked two-three jobs at any one time, so I started taking care of my little brother and my schizophrenic grandmother from a very young age. We moved constantly and I was regularly attending new schools. My mom married her 2nd and 3rd husband, each of which was physically abusive and emotionally abusive respectively. We were homeless for 6 months; we lived in a car and took showers at my mom’s job. My grandfather molested me when I was in 8th grade. I found my own faith when I was 12 years old and moved out of my mother’s house when I was 15. I have been dealt a bad hand of cards.

Even though I have faced many difficult and impossible situations throughout my lifetime, I have never let them tear me down. I have always tried to do better and be a better person. I have allowed my faith to guide my decisions and the direction of my life.
I met my husband when I was 16 years old. His family has been a lifesaver to me. We have been together for 8 years and married for 2 years. I have always tried to focus on where I want to go and create goals to get there. Instead of letting the past problems weigh me down, I have tried to look towards the future. I believe that instead of focusing on the past or current problems, people would be much happier and well-adjusted if they were constantly working toward a future-oriented solution.

While I was in my undergraduate education, I found myself drawn to the world of Special Education. I had a passion for helping all students achieve. I loved working closely with school faculty, students and families to help them be successful in school and post-life. I discovered an intense personal drive to help students with significant disabilities develop skills to help them live as independently a life as possible. I taught functional lifeskills before deciding to continue my education in graduate school. I loved working with families. I loved getting to know them on a personal level and loving them, although I did not always agree with their decisions.

As a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP), I hope to work closely with students and families on a daily basis. I hope to help facilitate self-empowerment and self-advocacy skills in my students. I hope to build coping skills and other skills that will help them be successful in school and in life. As a military wife, I will have the unique opportunity to be placed in communities with a very high volume of military dependents. Children of military families face a very unique set of circumstances and challenges, including grief, separation and loss. I hope to be a very valued resource for children and families throughout the portions of this lifestyle that can be very difficult.
School of Thought

Solution-focused therapy appealed to me almost immediately because of my background and personal beliefs. It is very practical and future-oriented, which fits nicely with my personality as I am constantly looking to better myself and believe that all people have the capacity to change. It has the capacity to make a big difference in a short amount of time. The skills learned throughout solution-focused therapy, however brief, will serve the individual throughout his or her lifetime. They are skills that can be applied to any area of life and to almost any situation.

Change is inevitable and constantly evolving. Solution-focused therapy operates on the premise that change is always occurring and that all people have the ability to change once they realize a need for change (Calley, 2014). I think that counselors and therapists should form partnerships when working with clients. I believe that people are more willing to change and accept suggestions from people whom they have built positive rapport and a working relationship with. That is another reason why I am drawn to this type of therapy. This therapy uses a “collaborative partnership” in which the counselor is utilized as a consultant and the client is the expert on his or her own life (Calley, 2014). Change happens more readily is adjustment to that change is accepted more readily when people work together instead of separately.

Solution-focused therapy is also very positive and future-oriented. It is easy to wallow in self-pity and feelings of helplessness. It is important to remain positive and looking toward a better future in order to be a well-adjusted, overall happy person. According to Assumptions, Solution-focused therapy requires the counselor to help the
client define goals, look for exceptions to problems, to provide a “positive reframe of client’s behavior.” The counselor focuses in on the positive solution, on actions, the future, strengths and resources while utilizing an array of questioning strategies as tools for change (2014). I believe that all of these characteristics work together to create the best possible therapy situations for clients in order to help them build skills that will last a lifetime.

As a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP), I will have the opportunity to work closely with military members and their families since I am a military wife. Weiss (2010) states that:

A solution-focused model is compatible with the principles of the military culture. The emphasis on solutions rather than problems encapsulates the military’s primary tenets of courage, unity, and mental and physical strength. […] Solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) has been shown to be an effective therapeutic approach with military families and children (particularly in the school settings; Sklare, 2005; cited in Hall, 2008). Sklare describes SFBT as espousing the following tenets: An emphasis on client’s successes; viewing the client as his or her own expert; every problem having an identifiable exception that can be transformed into a solution; small steps needing to be encouraged and recognized, as these create a ripple effect setting off chain reactions (p. 219). The author adds that a solution-focused approach is a perfect fit in working with a diverse group, such as the military culture, because it uses the client’s language, experiences,
frame of reference, and seeks solutions that take the military context into account.

(p. 398)

The military life presents it’s own unique set of benefits and challenges, many of which I am just becoming familiar with. There is a specific set of values and traditions that are upheld by all branches within the military community. Families are a very important and central part of this life (Weiss, 2010). By utilizing this therapy, I will have the opportunity to help students and families address the challenges and “problems” by finding solutions while looking through the lens of military culture.

Throughout my professional career, I will have the chance to work with many children that need varying levels of support and services. I believe that Solution-focused therapy is brief enough to keep children engaged. They will be able to learn skills that they can apply to any problem they may be experiencing and this will help them become healthy, well-adjusted citizens of their community.

**Goals and Techniques**

The primary goal of Solution-focused therapy is to look toward the future and create a positive solution-focused goal to provide the client with a propensity for change. The client and counselor work through a collaborative partnership; they work together as expert and consultant to identify exceptions to client’s problems in order to create a solution to work towards (Calley, 2014). Although not all techniques will be useful for every type of client, three techniques that are frequently used in this therapy and that I will consider using with my clients are questioning, compliments and tasks.
Solution-focused therapy often focuses on the client working toward a solution, questioning is often used as a valued therapy tool. Through questioning, the client is able to talk through a problem in order to find exceptions and is able to verbalize an ultimate end goal. The counselor is able to use exception-finding questions in order to get a good idea about what life was like before the problem existed and to see what the problem actually looks like to the client (Assumptions, 2014). By looking at a time where the problem did not exist for the client, the counselor is able to get a good idea about what needs to change in order to eradicate the problem. Another questioning technique that is frequently used in Solution-focused therapy is scaling questions. Scaling questions are very versatile and can be used by the counselor to assess a variety of things, such as client investment, progress in therapy, and client perception of the future solution (Assumptions, 2014). These questions are easy to give, easy to understand and easy to interpret. These would be especially helpful when working with young children. The third type of questioning that is frequently used in this type of therapy is the miracle question. The miracle requires the client to describe what their situation would look like if they woke up one morning to find their problem solved. They are asked to describe what that would look like and how their life would be different. This type of questioning allows the counselor to get a glimpse into what the client could view as a solution to the problem by talking about it in a different way (Assumptions, 2014). By using a variety of questions, the counselor is able to keep communication flowing openly and create a safe environment for the client.
Another technique that solution-focused counselors often utilize is positive compliments (Calley, 2014). By focusing on the strengths of each client, the counselor is able to empower the client to believe that he or she can change. This will be an especially useful tool to use when working with children. By using compliments and focusing on strengths, students can build confidence and self-esteem throughout therapy. This confidence will enable the client and student to focus on the solution rather than the problem.

By using tasks, the counselor is able to guide the client through smaller steps to progress monitor their success. This way, the client is not expected to change all at once. They are allowed to gradually ease into change instead of experiencing the shock of instant and complete immersion. The counselor and client could also try out different solutions through the use of tasks until they find one that seems to fit with the client’s lifestyle and preferences best. Tasks allow the client to apply their solutions to authentic, real-life situations in order to determine livability and help the client generalize the solution to all facets of their life. I can see the benefits and usefulness of the above three techniques and hope to utilize them with my own clients one day in a school setting.

View of Human Nature and Theoretical Orientation Comparison

When I started this course, I was not familiar with very many of the counseling theories. I was familiar with behavioralism because I used many of the concepts with my students. I was also slightly familiar with some of psychodynamics because most everyone has heard of Sigmund Freud. However, I had the opportunity to learn a lot of information regarding many useful theories.
One thing that remained the same throughout my pre and post-quiz results was that my Existential Humanist and Cognitive-Behavioral scores are still my highest ones. That doesn’t surprise me. One thing that was surprising is that my Psychodynamic and PostModern scores also rose. In the beginning, I received the highest percentage on two of the four categories. On my post-test, I scored pretty evenly across all four categories. I am surprised that my Solution-Focused score is not higher. I think that it is reasonable that all of my scores rose pretty evenly because I find that I can highly identify with one theory in each category. This would account for why I rose in all four categories. While I was taking this quiz, I found that I could understand what the questions were asking better as a result of all the knowledge I learned throughout the semester. I find that I can identify with and appreciate parts of all the theories. My scores reflect a greater understanding of my knowledge and appreciation of many of the theories.
References

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genogram: A solution-focused approach for resiliency building in service

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