

Solution focused brief therapy

What is it?

As the name suggests, SFBT is directed by goals and solutions instead of past problems.

SFBT therapy focuses on realistic goals in a way that is positive and hopeful, yet concise. It assumes service users have an idea about what changes would improve their lives, but they need assistance orchestrating the details and pursuing them.

Techniques of SFBT

Most SFBT service users already have significant experience solving problems. Thus, they also have at least a vague idea of how to fix their current situations. SFBT mental health practitioners use specific questions to uncover potential solutions. Some of these techniques are listed below.

Searching For Exceptions

One way to help service users sort through potential solutions is to find exceptions in their situations. Practitioners help service users visualise what is different about their experiences, and they assist the patients in understanding why the issue is worse. This approach can often lead to a solution.

A Focus On Present And Future

SFBT focuses on solutions because most service users believe that solving the problem is more important than understanding why it happened. Practitioners steer the meetings toward future goals and what steps are needed to make progress.

Complimenting Achievements

Validation is key to SFBT. Practitioners encourage additional progress by recognising the steps service users have been taken. This encourages them by illustrating their achievements, but it also demonstrates that the practitioner is listening and is invested in the service user's success.

Many practitioners offer such compliments in the form of appreciative questions, like “How did you do that?” This approach invites self-complimenting from the service user in the form of a proud or happy answer.

Miracle Questions

This is an involved method of solution building. It begins by presenting a “miracle” situation to the service user and then gradually connecting realistic small steps they can take toward the end goal. The miracle question approach can help patients realize the true distance between their ideal situations and current conditions.

Scaling Questions

Scaling questions work like miracle questions but are less involved. These questions invite numerical ratings, such as, “How would this person rate this aspect of you?” This format makes it easy for patients to track their progress.

Consultation Breaks

Another facet of SFBT is the consultation break. Traditionally, practitioners stop in the second half of the session to truly evaluate what the service user said. In many cases this is done in a team setting instead of by one practitioner. This break offers direction for the practitioner, who can then approach the patient with a fine-tuned therapeutic message.