

SOLUTION-ORIENTED COUNSELLING: AN OUTLINE FOR INTERVENTION

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Solution-Oriented Counselling is an eclectic extension of a solution-focused approach to foster a sustainable and enjoyable life of purpose, passion, and precision.

At the initial point of the consultation we engage our clients in a collaborative understanding and co-construction. Presenting problems are redefined as having a more limited scope of influence, over which clients can exercise increasing containment and management mastery. Thus, these dilemmas are now regarded as solvable with the installation of hope.

Systemic elements and feedback loops are recognized as part of the context in which the problem is embedded. In a process of management by exception, we work from the assumption of latent skills and abilities that are likely held back from application by some forms of constraint. Such constraints could be in the perceived roles or rules of the interpersonal context, or the rules of intrapsychic assumptions about life and their ability to change it. In this method, we often use Ericksonian pattern interventions and the reappraisal formats of Cognitive Behavior Therapy, thus rendering rigid rules in forms that are more flexible and adaptive.

Metaphors about patterns of possibility are introduced. Often we help the client generate islands of security in a flood sea of chaos. As security and competence expand, the flood waters recede. Positive imagery and future projection motivate clients to take the crucial initial steps toward solutions that work. Small progressive movements are ratified and reinforced as emerging new ways to deal with old situations. Incremental first-order change within the context often transforms into second-order quantum qualitative changes of state that redefine the client's paradigm of understanding.

As presenting problems are resolved, we assist the client by interventions to promote relapse prevention in specific and related contexts, and to generalize the positive understandings and skill development that emanated from the process.

At this point the client is further invited to apply this approach in an expanded scope of life development and enhanced enjoyment of living. The focus of collaboration now may shift beyond the alleviation of suffering, to principles of the attainment of happiness. (Sometimes new clients arrive at this point of a wish for expansion of functioning as a goal for coaching). We will typically elaborate the principles of Positive Psychology, especially the construction and expansion of states of Flow and

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engagement. Perhaps clients may want to pursue the development of a focused and meaningful life through the design of a personal mission statement employing their signature strengths in pursuing their life purpose.

The personal mission statement typically includes an identity statement of 2 or 3 sentences. Then we list core values, the virtues you want to validate in your life. Next we list signature strengths that you want to develop and enjoy even more fully than currently. Then comes a list of operating principles, showing how you typically would want to approach any project in living. Next we list favorite roles. Finally, we proceed with an outline of major life goals, with sub-goals of steps or objectives to be achieved in the next 2–year plan. We plan the work; then we work the plan.

The next phase of consultation is the co-construction of a precision plan designed to promote meaning and passion toward attractive life goals. The coaching process supports the implementation of this provisional plan, allowing for changes along the way to accommodate shifts in balance and focus as needs arise. The methods used in the counseling and coaching are isomorphs or parallels to the method of solution-focused therapy, and are more oriented to the development of a full and enjoyable life in a broader sense. We are not merely helping the client to get unstuck using conflict into confluence, we are assisting the client in discovering how to glide through the flow of living with focus, spirit, and passion.

This process is not just a method for human doings, it is an approach for human beings. Thus we also encourage the helpful principles of mindfulness, acceptance, peace, non-attachment to desire, humor, compassion, and transpersonal connectedness that can form a platform for the further development and enjoyment of spirituality.
