

# Solution-focused brief therapy and its application in vocational college students' psychological counseling

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**Abstract:** Mental health education in higher vocational and technical schools started late, hardware facilities are weak and teachers are limited, while higher vocational students are at the age of youth, which is the period of more psychological confusion. This article will introduce Solution-focused brief therapy and its applicability in higher vocational and technical schools.

**Keywords:** Solution-focused brief therapy; Higher vocational and technical schools; Mental health education;

Higher vocational students are in their youthful years, which is a critical period for personality formation and independent development, and also a period with the most intense physiological and psychological changes and more psychological confusion. Most of the students in higher vocational schools have no choice but to study in higher vocational schools because their scores in the college entrance examination do not reach the score line of bachelor's degree. Under the influence of "score-only" theory, they have more problems in self-confidence, interpersonal communication and learning ability. Most of the students who come to the counseling room are eager to find solutions to their problems, and they usually think and hope that a counseling session with the mental health teacher will solve their current problems .

However, mental health education in higher vocational and technical schools started late, hardware conditions are weak, and teachers are limited, so they cannot provide students with multiple and long counseling sessions like professional hospitals can. In addition, mental health teachers in higher vocational and technical schools will face few opportunities for professional technical training and supervision cannot be implemented, resulting in a large gap between mental health teachers' counseling techniques and the actual requirements of problem solving for higher vocational students, and there is an urgent need to find efficient and effective counseling methods that are applicable to higher vocational and technical school students.

Solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) was developed by Steve de Shazer (1940-2005) and his wife, Insoo Kim Berg (1934-2007). It is a short-course counseling technique that focuses on finding solutions to problems as a psychotherapeutic technique . SFBT is short in time and widely used, and is popular among counseling practitioners and has become one of the core techniques of crisis intervention. In this paper, we will introduce the theory and techniques of Solution-focused brief therapy and explore its applicability and advantages in higher vocational and technical schools.

## 1. Important perspectives on Solution-focused brief therapy

### 1.1 Problems are the result of constructs

This view is influenced by Constructivism, where each person's subjective world is constructed according to his or her beliefs, and the meaning of things themselves is constructed. "The problem itself is not the problem, how to interpret or look at the problem is the problem; the problem itself is not the problem, the proper or improper way to solve the problem is the key to the problem". Different perspectives of looking at the problem will bring different results, and the focus is to help the person to make a positive interpretation that will help to achieve his goals.

### 1.2 Focusing on the positive and positive aspects

This perspective, influenced by Positive Psychology, advocates a positive approach to a new interpretation of human psychological phenomena and psychological problems, and in this way stimulates certain actual or potential positive qualities and positive strengths inherent in each person himself or herself, thus leading to better and happier personal development. Mental health teachers should pay more attention to students' own strengths and resources, believe that each student is an expert in his or her own problem solving, and achieve problem solving by guiding students to continuously tap into their own resources .

### 1.3 Focus on problem solving rather than causes

"Not finding the cause of the problem does not necessarily mean that the problem cannot be solved, and finding the cause of the problem does not necessarily mean that the problem can be solved." In the counseling process, the reasons that students find may be constructed, so it is important to find solutions. It is important to change from "talking about the problem and creating the problem" to "talking about the solution and creating the solution".

### 1.4 The student is the expert in solving his or her own problems

The power, resources, and methods to solve problems lie in the student themselves, which is the embodiment of counseling's "helping people to help themselves".

### 1.5 Small changes lead to big changes

Solution-focused brief therapy emphasizes focusing on small changes in the student. Sometimes a small change in the student can trigger a series of healing effects that we cannot imagine.

From the perspective of the theory of SFBT, it is a revolution in counseling methods and is fundamentally different from traditional counseling methods, which emphasize "focusing on causes, negativity, the past, and considering the student as weak", while SFBT

emphasizes "focusing on solutions, positivity, and the future, and considering the student as an expert with power".

## 2 Advantages of using Solution-focused brief therapy in higher vocational and technical schools

### 2.1 Easy to learn and can solve students' problems in a short time

Since the author has been engaged in mental health education in higher vocational and technical schools for 3 years, I have observed that most of the students who come to counseling are due to developmental psychological problems, such as interpersonal communication, academic stress, frustrated love, and future confusion. These problems are less involved in deep analysis and are more suitable for the use of SFBT methods to solve problems efficiently with minimum time, usually only 2-3 sessions are needed to solve them, and some students can even solve their problems in 1 session .

### 2.2 Promoting the development of students' self-confidence in higher vocational and technical schools

Solution-focused brief therapy emphasizes that students are experts in solving their own problems, that they have the resources and abilities to solve problems, and that they have their own strengths. The use of appreciation techniques and response questioning techniques create an optimistic and positive counseling atmosphere and affirm students' positive qualities, which can fully enhance students' self-confidence in view of the psychological characteristics of young people who are susceptible to positive reinforcement.

### 2.3 Focusing on problem solving and expanding the problem-solving mindset

Solution-focused brief therapy focuses on problem solving rather than the problem itself, and focuses on the student's desired future rather than past problems or present conflicts, which is more conducive to achieving constructive change .Its method encourages students to actively look for resources and solutions to problems and tap into their own strengths by shifting their thinking from self-blame to appreciation, from negative to positive, from disappointment and complaint to goal action, etc. through charming questions, rather than being afraid and denying themselves because they see problems, and fosters a positive thinking pattern of analyzing and solving problems.

## 3. Solution-focused brief therapy and their applications

### 3.1 Appreciation Technique

In counseling, when a student recognizes that he or she has his or her own reasons for the current difficulties, has his or her own ideas for future changes, and has actually changed after a counseling session, the mental health teacher can use the approval technique to express recognition and appreciation to the student. You can say things like, "It's great that you recognize this," "I'm very happy about the progress you've made in this time," "It's great that you've come up with such a clever way of doing things. " etc. The praise technique is not only a powerful affirmation and support expressed to the student, but it also helps to create a positive and positive atmosphere and increases the student's motivation to accept the task and change. However, it is important to note that appreciation and praise must come from the heart, otherwise it can be off-putting to the student.

### 3.2 Normalization Techniques

The mental health teacher can normalize the student's emotions. As a normal person, the emotional reactions of most students are actually the normal emotional reactions of most people. When the student comes to counseling, he or she has negative emotions that need to be vented. After the student has vented his or her emotions, You can say things like, "I understand. The normalization technique provides generalized information to the student and reduces anxiety. However, it is important to avoid using this technique in a simplistic way that can cause the student to suffer from a lack of understanding.

### 3.3 Change the Inquiry Technique before Counseling

The student has made some efforts before coming into counseling, which is a pre-existing resource for the student, and the mental health teacher can remind the student to recognize his or her own strengths. The mental health teacher can ask, "What have you done to solve your problem before you came to counseling?" This helps the student discover that his or her efforts were meaningful and enhances the student's sense of control. But be careful to further guide the student to think about the effects of this approach and encourage the student to keep doing it, e.g., "What are the effects after you have done this?" SFBT believes that no one can do nothing in the face of difficulty, and that it is human nature to seek change and growth .

### 3.4 Response Questioning Techniques

The mental health teacher must believe in and acknowledge the student's ability to solve his or her own problems, e.g., "Have you encountered similar situations in the past and how did you cope at that time?" "What did you do to keep you going in the face of such a big difficulty?" "What else could you have done to make you feel a little better?" This technique is used to inspire students to think about solutions to problems by reminding them to identify small responses that they don't take for granted when they are faced with a difficult situation.

### 3.5 Goal Questioning Technique

In order to keep the student from getting stuck in a whirlwind of questions. You can say things like, "What changes do you hope to achieve through counseling?" "What are your goals for counseling?" "What kind of help do you need from me?" "What is the main problem you want to solve?" This technique can guide students to think in the direction of possible change.

### 3.6 Relationship Inquiry Technique

Every student has family and social resources behind them, but most students ignore their own resources when they are stuck in a problematic situation. The mental health teacher can ask "Who do you think of talking to if you are unhappy?" "When you change, who will

be the first to notice?" "If your best friend were to do this, what would he or she do?" . This technique can help students understand their social resources, while students can temporarily step away from their own position and try to see themselves from someone else's point of view.

### 3.7 One Small Step Technique

The snowball effect tells us that small changes can lead to big changes. In counseling, individual students' symptoms have been formed for a long time for many reasons, so it is not possible to solve the fundamental problem in one or two counseling sessions. The mental health teacher can ask, "If you want to make a change, what do you think is the first action you can take?" "If your problem is solved, what do you think would be the first change that would occur for you?" Small changes are half the battle, and small goals and successes can drive students' confidence and motivation to solve problems.

### 3.8 Miracle Questioning Technique

This is the most characteristic conversation technique of SFBT. It can be used when students feel that their problems are unsolvable, have no hope for them, or are unsure of their counseling goals, to give them the belief that their lives can be changed. One is to use magic wand questions, such as "If you were given a magic wand that could do anything and your self-evaluation would change in a positive way after you had it, what kind of change would you most like to see?" The second is to use crystal ball questions, such as "If there was a magic crystal ball in front of you and you could see your bright future through it, guess what you would see?" The mental health teacher should remain patient and allow the student enough time to shift from focusing on the problem to finding a solution, and to shift the focus to imagining and expecting the future.

### 3.9 Exceptional Questioning Techniques

"Exceptions" are moments that are not very important, and the meaning of finding "exceptions" is an empowerment in itself, and finding "exceptions" is the key to problem solving . The mental health teacher can ask, "You say you are always unable to quietly study, but have you ever been able to quietly study, and how did you do it at that time?" This technique leads the student to discover what he has done effectively in the past, to realize that he can make a difference now, and to think about solutions.

Solution-focused brief therapy does not take time to pursue the cause of the problem, but focuses only on while the problem is being solved, although short and efficient, and can alleviate the situation where the supply of counseling in higher vocational and technical schools exceeds the demand. However, it is worth noting that SFBT focuses on the solution of students' current real-life problems and does not target problems that have a longer formation period due to emotional problems, personality factors, family factors, etc. Therefore, when students are in strong emotional distress or need to promote individual personality development and other problems of a different nature, the mental health teacher needs to work with the use of other counseling techniques in a targeted manner.

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