

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) Intake Interview

I. To begin interview:

Tell me, how can I be helpful to you today?

Or, What would you find helpful to talk about today?

- Allow client to explain their presenting problems/concerns.
- Try to highlight or make a mental note of any exceptions to the client's problems/concerns – when is the problem not a problem or less of a problem.
- Try to avoid asking questions about the details of the problem, such as the nature or etiology of the problem.

II. Pre-Treatment Change Question:

Many times people notice in between the time they make the appointment for counseling and attending the first intake session that things have already changed for the better. What have you noticed about your situation?

- If the client responds with positive changes that occurred during this time, follow up by asking – **Do these changes relate to the reason why you have come to counseling?**
- **Are these changes that you would like to see happen more frequently in your life?**
- **What did you do to help bring about these changes?**

III. Complimenting:

How is it that you decided it was important for you to make this appointment and follow through with showing up and participating? What does that say about you as a person?

- Allowing the client to reflect upon the importance of coming to counseling and any positive compliments that she/he might pay herself/himself.
- Listen for any particular strengths/resources.

IV. Miracle Question:

Now I am going to ask you a strange question (pause)... Suppose that you are sleeping tonight and while you are sleeping, a MIRACLE happens. The miracle is that the problems that have brought you here have been SOLVED. However, because you were sleeping you were unaware this miracle happened. So, when you wake up tomorrow morning, what will be different that will tell you that this miracle has happened, and the problems have been solved? (cont...next page)

- Ask client to comment on specific things he/she will be doing differently after the miracle has happened.
- Encourage client to provide further details by saying, **“What else will be different.”**
- Ask client, **“What will your (spouse, partner, friend) notice different about you following this miracle?”**
- Encourage client to tell you what they will be doing instead of what they won’t be doing.
- Try to establish tangible, behavioral, and achievable goals for therapy.

V. Exception Question:

Could you tell me about any times in the last couple of weeks when the problem did not happen, or at least, was a little less severe? Maybe some times when at least some of what you described after the miracle was actually occurring for you?

- If client identifies an exception, then ask for details about it. Ask client, **what is different about those times when the exception is occurring?**
- Ask questions about who, what, when, and where when exploring these exceptions.
- Listen for any client strengths/resources.

Coping Question:

- If a client is unable to identify a recent or past exception, then ask, **how is it that you have been able to cope and keep this problem from getting any worse than it already is?**
- Encourage client to do more of what works.

VI. Scaling Question:

In regard to your motivation to solve this problem, where would you say you are on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is the highest level of motivation and 0 is the lowest level of motivation, where would you say you are right now?

- **What do you think would need to happen to help you move one number closer to 10 (for example from a 5 to a 6)?**
- Encourage client to do more of those things he/she thinks would increase their level of motivation.

VII. To end interview:

Recap with client the strengths/resources that they mentioned during the interview, or some of the strengths/resources you think they hold. Compliment the client on using their strengths/resources. Mention the utility of these strengths/resources in working toward their desired goals.

- **Are there any other strengths or resources that you have that we have not talked about?**