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Using the solution focused approach in school counselling

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Abstract

Schools are social institutions that great deal of children and young people who different socio-economic, cultural background has come together with the aim of education and training. One of the main functions of school is to help children/young people to improve social behaviours that compatible with their personality and environment by interfering the interaction points with their environment. School counsellors (social worker and expert of psychological counselling and guidance) may not provide sufficient and qualified service because of the fact that they have to work with a lot of student in their employment period. Short-termed and more inclusived work is important for cancellers to enhance their functionality in schools. So, it is considered that the solution focused approach may be useful for counsellors and students. In this study, using of the solution focused approach in school counselling will be discussed.

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1.   Historical Background of Solution Focused Approach

The solution focused counselling which often referred as "brief counselling" is a type of counselling that focuses on present and future rather than on past experiences. It's the only thing to deal with any desired solutions about the client' problem. This approach was brought up by Steve de Shazer who is a social worker and Insoo Kim Berg (de Shazer's wife) and developed by a team including Eve Lipchik, Jim Derks, Elam Nunnally, Don Norum and Marilyn LaCourt in 1970's (Macdonald, 2007; Lipchik et al. 2012: Bachhaus, 2011). Many aspects of the approach had been used in psychodynamic theories, behaviour therapies, systems theory and so on. The virtue of the approach is the emphasis of solutions (Hoyt, 2008). The solution focused approach has evolved out of brief therapies which focus on change. And the client is the heart of changing process.

Hoyt (2008) and Macdonald (2007) highlight to respects the clients' resources, abilities and motivation, and are directed toward building solutions rather than increasing insight about one's situation. Solution focused approach's core elements are a non-expert stance; an emphasis on the client's language; the requirement that the number of sessions is kept to the minimum necessary; the value of making changes slowly; and the recognition that the problem and the solution are not connected (Macdonald, 2007). Besides, it's important to focus on client's strengths and having the capability to be self-directed at changing (Lehman et al. 2012).

2.   Assumptions of Solution Focused Approach

There are some assumptions which solution focused approach based on. It's necessary to talk about the solution focused approach's tenets before explain what the assumptions are. Solution focused approach's have 3 basic tenets.

The first one is "do not fix it if it's not broken". Solution focused approach does not look for underlying issues or see the presenting problem as only the tip of the iceberg (O'Connel, 2003; Connie, 2009). The only thing the helper needs to deal with is the defined problem by the client. The second one is "find out what works and keep doing it" (Sklare, 2013). Counselling process gives chances to the client and the helper to know what works. It's not the best way to focus on failures or the things not working to solve a problem. It's important to bring the clients realize there are times that the problems do not exist. Encouraging the clients is important in this case. And the last tenet is "if it's not working, stop doing it and do something different". According to de Shazer (1994; cited in Quick, 2008) if a client keeps doing the same thing that is not working which is the exact definition of problem. So it is important to find different ways to achieve the required amendment. These tenets make the intervention process more clear.

There are some assumptions which based on the tenets as mentioned above. According to Quick (2008), Sklare (2013), Lipchik (2011) These are:

- "Every single client is unique

- The clients have strengths and resources to handle with her/his own problems,

- Nothing is just negative. There are times that the problem does not exist,

- Minimal changes bring major changes,

- Talking about solutions rather than problems pave the way,

- There is always two sides of a situation, it depends on where you look from,

- Solution focused counselling may takes a long time,

- Emotions are a part of the problems as well as the solutions,

- Using the client's words makes the process more understandable for the client,

- The client's negative definitions should altered with the positive ones,

- Change is inevitable, there is no resistance,

- The past can't inalterable, so the client should focus on present and future."

The solutions focused approach was founded on these assumptions. And it's approved that acting with these assumptions will create better results in the counselling process.

3. Using the Solution Focused Approach in School Setting

Schools are social institutions that great deal of children and young people who different socio-economic, cultural background has come together with the aim of education and training. One of the main functions of school is to help children/young people to improve social behaviours that compatible with their personality and environment by interfering the interaction points with their environment.

There is wide range of problem in school settings like school violence, bullying, gang activity, interpersonal conflict, failing at the cources, conflict etc. "These settings can be places of solutions, strengths, and successes at the same time. There are numerous practical ways for school-based mental health professionals (school social workers, psychological counselling and guidance specialists, and school psychologists) to harness the solutions that are already happening in their schools" (Kelly et al., 2008). Using this method facilitates the changing process and improves the students' problem solving skills.

There are a lot of student at schools. It obstructs the possibilities of paying attention of the whole students. Intervention is limited because of lack of time, crowd of students and the other responsibilities which the helper need to carry out etc. Because of these reasons solution focused model is the best way to change the things that not working in limited time period and reach more students.

Self-determination is a basic right of individuals according to social work discipline. This approach looks out for one' interests. It is important for children and young people to learn live with own choices. This attitude helps clients to take responsibility about their own life.

This model is especially effective for school counselling because it doesn't require insight. The other point is the model' focus to conversations which orientate the students to positive behaviours (Sklare, 2013). It can help to enable children to change things (Milner & Bateman, 2011; Sklare, 2013). Starting where the clients are especially important. It keeps the client in present time. By the way behavioural change and problem solving come true easily.

4.   Techniques of Solution Focused Approach While Working With Children and Young People

There are several techniques which helper uses while working with children and young people. "The most well-known and popular solution-focused techniques: scaling questions, the past success question, the preferred future question, the platform question, the exception seeking question, reframing, indirect compliments, the miracle question, summarizing in the words of the client, the what-is-better question, normalizing, the usefulness question, the observation question, the perspective change question, the coping question, the continuation question, the prediction suggestion, leapfrogging, and mutualizing" (Visser, 2011). Some of these techniques are used in other counselling models too. But this model differs from the others with the way of using these techniques. The difference is the model' focus on solutions. Every one of them be in used for create positive change, strengthen the clients, improve the clients' problem solving skills and bring the clients to today and future. The thing is not the problems that should deal with but the solutions. And these techniques make easier

the problem solving process. Especially the facilitating questions. There are some examples about these questions below:

- scaling question: "Please give yourself a point about your situation between 1-10. What should you do to step up one point?"

- the past success question: "Have you ever been able to solve such a problem before?"

- the preferred future question: "How do you want your situation to become?"

- the platform question: "What has helped to bring you to your current position?"

- the exception seeking question: "How did you make that happen?"

- indirect compliments: "Wow, how did you achieve it?"

- the miracle question: "You went home and fall asleep. A miracle happened when you're sleeping and your problem is solved. But you don't know anything about it. How do you realize that your problem is solved when you wake up the next morning?"

- "the what is better "question: "Think about your situation. What is better now?"

- normalizing: "You are disappointed, I understand. It's normal to be disappointed right now."

- the usefulness question: "What was useful?"

- the observation question: "Could you, between now and our next conversation, which things are a bit better?

- the perspective change question: "How will other people notice things are better?"

- the coping question: "How did you manage to cope before you gave up?"

- the continuation question: "What happens in your situation that you want to continue to have happen?"

- the prediction suggestion: "Each night, before going to bed, predict whether or not you will succeed in ...."

- the overcoming the urge question: "Pay attention to what you do when you overcome the temptation or urge to fall back"

- the optimism question: "What are the small signs you see that indicate you will succeed in ....?" (Winbolt, 2011; Visser, 2011; Connie, 2011).

These questions make the process clear to create desired change. Asking the solution focused questions as mentioned above teaches the children and young people to build a healthy life.

5. Conclusion

Solution focused approach was developed by a social worker, so it has been using by social workers effectively for decades. It leads both social worker and client to focus solutions and it takes short-time. Because of these reasons this approach is favourable for some helpers including social workers. The thing of this study to

show it's such a useful approach while working with children and young people. People used to speak problematic way not the positive way. It's important to evoke the children and young people that there are times good behaviours occur. Using these techniques and by motivational intervention desired change can come true.

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