



Solution-Focused Therapy with Children

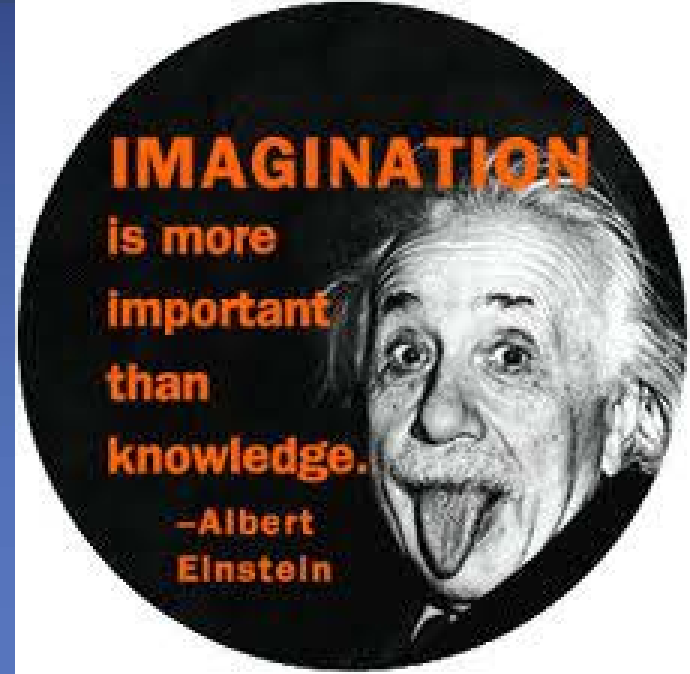
A Natural Fit!

Spinning Straw into Gold

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Einstein: Early SFBT



We cannot solve our problems with the
same thinking we used when we created
them! Albert Einstein

Solution Work with Children

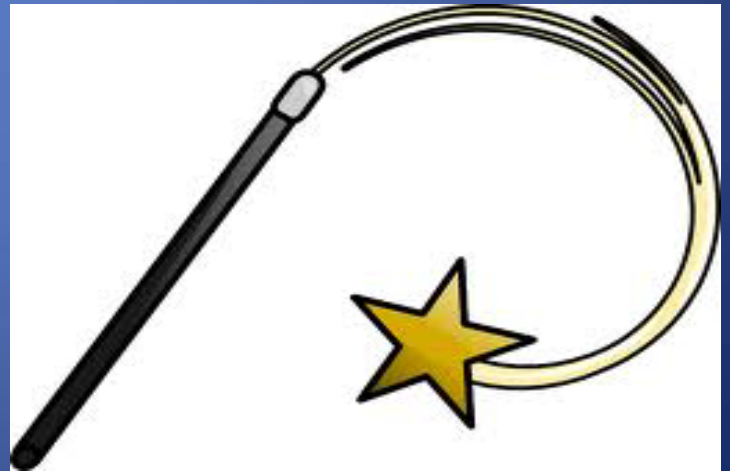
- Similar to the posture we hold towards the adult: taking a collaborative stance, assuming competency and good intentions, seeing the child as an expert of his/her life, taking a not knowing posture and allowing the client to generate their own solution as much as possible.

The Difference

- Lies in deciding which tools to use and how to make them fit the child's needs.
- “When teaching children to play violin, one uses a smaller violin to fit their small hands, short arms and so on.” Berg and Dolan
- Listen and learn how unique each child is!
- Is in becoming creative!

CHALLENGE

- Connecting with children requires a shift in the typical adult way of being!



Starting Points

- You have to listen, treat what they say seriously and convey that what they say is important!
- You need to make a creative leap of the imagination to enter the child's world.
- Everything is bigger and exaggerated.
- Importance of celebration.

Children do not like to talk about problems!

- “The therapist’s role is to make the child’s strengths, competencies, and abilities more evident to the child and to the involved adults.” Berg and Steiner
- Children can come up with very personal and childlike solutions that work for them.
- Listen carefully!

Start with Problem Free Talk!

- Competence talk
- Strengths talk
- “What is Mandy good at?”
- “What are you proud about?”
- “What does it take to be good at this?”
- “Who knows this about you?”

Be transparent

- First I want to get to know you, find out what you like to do and what you are good at.
- Secondly, what you would like to have changed in your life and what your parents would like to see different.
- Third, I will take a break and think about all the good things you are going to tell me.

Crucial to find out clients' resources and strengths!

- What do they do for fun, hobbies, skills, abilities, strengths and virtues





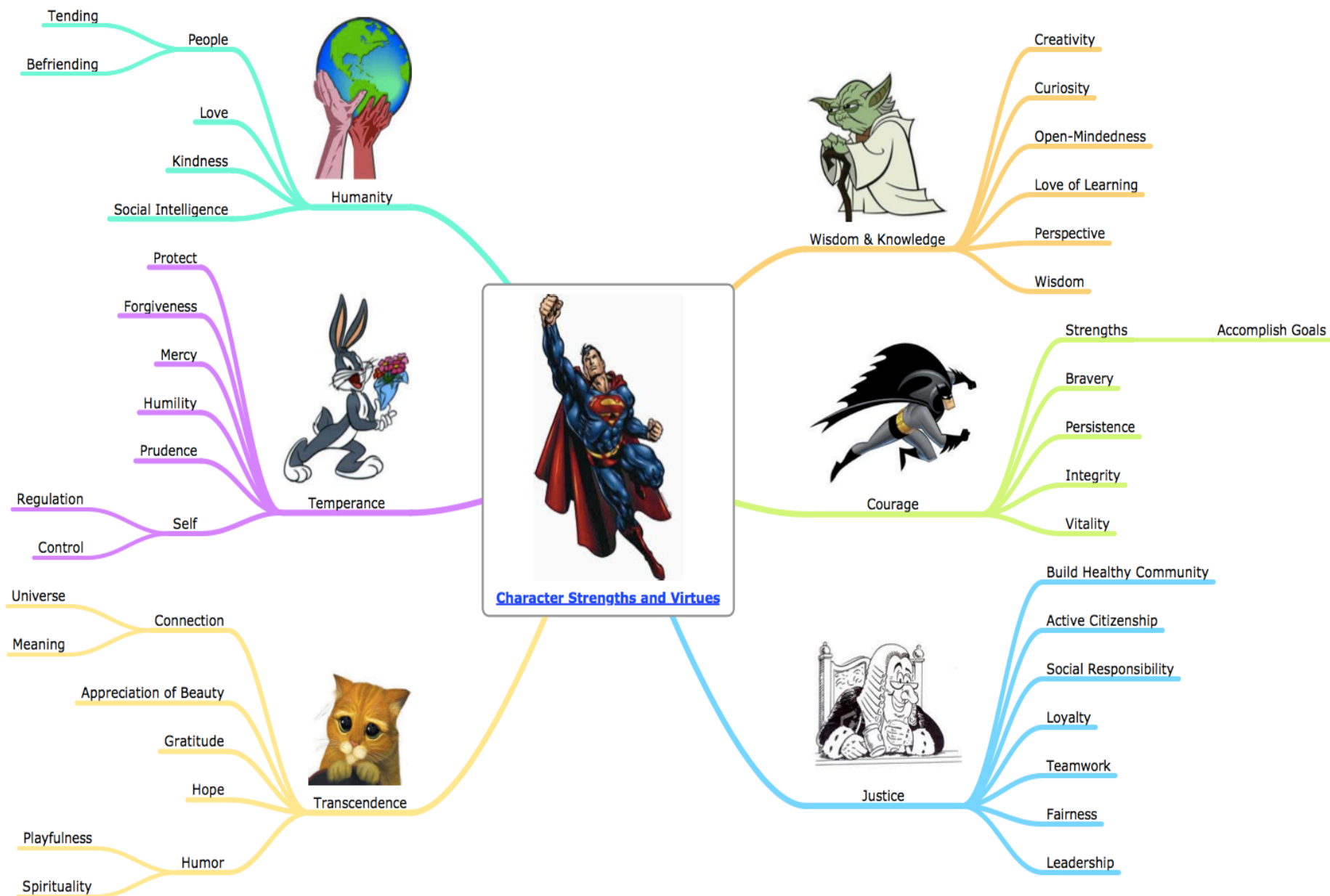
What are they good at?

Spend time on this! Find out what
they are good at!!



Character Strengths and Virtues

- Seligman and Peterson spent two years researching character strengths and virtues!
- The antidote to the DSM
- You must have had a good reason!



A shift in how we think about Strengths!!

- Strengths as skills of living
- Strengths as verbs “How do you do kindness?”
- What intentions, values and beliefs, hopes and dreams support their strengths?
- Building identity



Neuroscience

- Advances in neuroscience demonstrate that higher cortical functions required for complex learning shut down when an individual is experiencing defensiveness, fear or anger (Siegel, 1999; Bluestein, 2008).
- Optimal learning environment - 3 experiences occur simultaneously:
 - 1. a positive emotion
 - 2. exposure to personally relevant information
 - 3. interest, excitement or curiosity

Problems and Neural pathways

(Beaudoin, 2010)

- Unpleasant memories are among the fastest and most powerful memories to be encoded in the brain.
- What makes change difficult?
 1. The neural pathway for the problem is dense and fast.
 2. The neural pathway for the problem is connected to a sense of identity through time.

OR....

- 3. The neural pathway for the new behavior is weak and thin.
- 4. The neural pathway for the new behavior is either not meaningful enough or lacks connections with other meaningful memories.



Exceptions: Sorting the wheat from the Chaff!

- Find out when the problem doesn't happen!
- How come?
- How did you do that?
- Tell me about the time the problem did not interfere? Was not so big? You didn't let the problem take over?
- Who noticed?
- What else was different?
- What else?

Exceptions: The Bread and Butter of SFT

- Exceptions to the problem
- What is different when the exceptions take place
- How did they get that to happen?
- How does it make their day go differently?
- Who else noticed?

Exceptions:

- Hugely important!!
- When is the problem not happening or less severe?
- How come?
- What are they doing differently those times?
- Wow!



Go Slow!

- Stay Curious!
- Slice it thin!!
- Listen with a constructive ear!
- Compliment.
- Pan for Gold!



Mapping the Territory: Scaling!

- On a scale of 1 to 10!
- Use the room to scale.
- Use blocks
- Make happy faces
- Wow! How come you are not a 2? What do you need to do to go up to a 4?
- Draw it?
- How else can you scale??

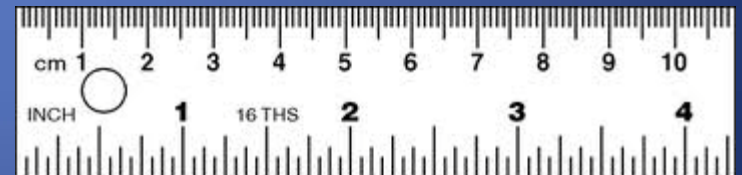
Scaling questions: Make numbers talk!

- Are helpful because they allow the client the opportunity to track their own progress.
- You can scale many things! Hope, motivation, progress
- Provides opportunity to discuss what will be different



You can scale many things!

- The problem
- Hopefulness
- The desired outcome
- Motivation
- Different areas of their lives



What dreams may come!

The Miracle Question

- Magic wand
- Suppose a miracle happened
- 3 wishes
- Crystal ball
- Magic door
- A genie in a bottle
- What would you be doing? What would your parents be doing? What else?

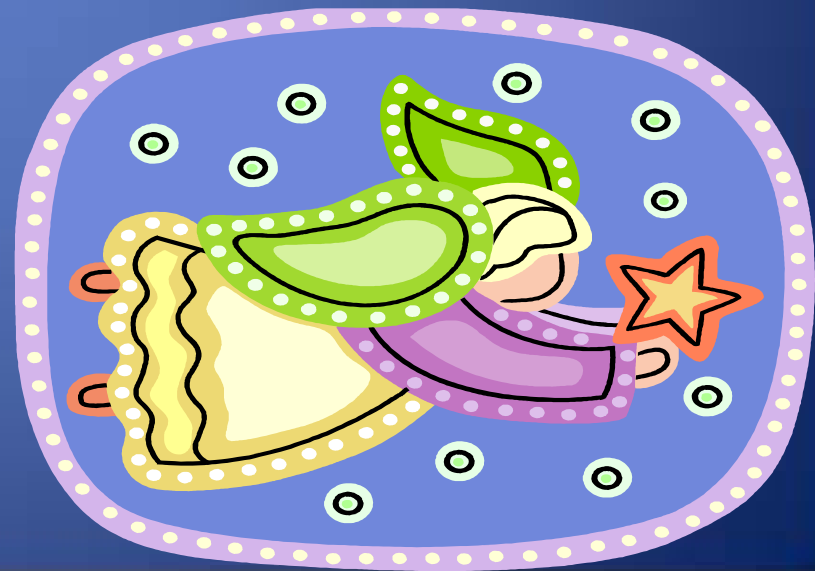


The Miracle Question:

- “I want to ask you a strange question. Suppose that while you are sleeping tonight and the entire house is quiet, a miracle happens. The miracle is that the problem which brought you here is solved. However, because you are sleeping, you don’t know that the miracle has happened.

Miracle Question continued

- So, when you wake up tomorrow morning, what will be different that will tell you that a miracle has happened and the problem which brought you here is solved?”



The Miracle Question:

- Gives clients permission to think about an unlimited range of possibilities
- Question has a future focus
- We can ask what is happening a little right now!



Thinking Break!

Feedback

- 5 to 7 minutes
- What stands out about the meeting?
- About the parents? The child?
- What useful info and resources did I hear or observe?
- What are the child and parents capable of doing that we can build on?

More Feedback...

- What do the child and parent want from this contact?
- What other resources does the child need from his/her environment?
- What unique strengths or information about this child or family did I notice that could become a building block toward their goals?

Prescriptions for change

- Change the doing of the situation that is perceived as problematic
- Change the viewing
- Evoke resources, solutions and strengths



Organizing Your Reflections

1. Compliment: point out positive observations.
2. Bridging statement: Explanation for what the next step might be and a rationale for the suggestions that you will offer.
3. Suggestions for Tasks?
 - Do more of what works
 - Do something different
 - Observe

More Helpful Skills:

- Use client's key words and metaphors
- Good reasons: 'You must have had a good reason to...'
- Suppose, different, instead
- Experiment, think, notice, try



Huge Importance of PLAY

- Jenga
- Board games: snakes and ladders
- Role play
- Inventing games
- Writing letters
- *Everything has a purpose and it may have nothing to do with the 'problem'.*

Solution-Focused Activities

Drawing Pictures:

1. What they do well
2. Favorite places, animals, best friend
3. What they want to be when they grow up
4. What is important to them
5. When everything is okay in their lives
6. An animal that makes them happy
7. The day after the fairy godmother comes and waves her magic wand (or a 10 on the scale)

Solution-Focused Activities

- Solution-building cartoons: 6 panels
- Family picture making
- Scribble game
- Power hands
- Most Wanted Person
- Hot and Cold (looking for objects)
- Simon says
- Let the fingers look

More

- Reading by touch
- Backgammon (protection)
- Chess or checkers
- The success tower
- Moving around the rope
- Flip a coin
- Experiment/ Surprise your parents and see if they can guess
- Pretend the miracle happened.

Activities for Parents

- Hit List: put paper on display and record all the good things the child did
- `What goes well' : Parents put marbles in the jar for positives they have noticed. When jar is full they do something fun together (Non material).
- Acting instead of reacting
- Academy Award Acting

DSD

Do Something Different

- Avoid nagging DSD: sing the reminder, write it on a flashcard.
- Parent pretends the miracle has already happened
- Surprise hug or other surprises such as notes (pattern interruption)
- Magic 5 minutes
- Power games: arm wrestling, shooting baskets
- Responsibility giving
- The wonder bag surprise: 5 wishes each put them in a bag!

Visualization

- Visualize movies of success: get lots of details, what do they see, what do they hear, what do they smell, what do they feel, etc.
- Little trances and anchors
- Tighten your muscles
- Magic rubbing thumb and finger
- Writing letters to our Clients: magical...



The word "FAITH" is written in a highly decorative, blackletter-style font. The letters are ornate with flourishes, particularly on the 'F' and 'H'. The word is centered within a white square.

No one changes from a position of being negatively construed!

SFT requires us to have faith in our clients and ourselves!



Stay Curious

- Go slow
- Listen with a constructive ear
- Use a magnifying lens to look for strengths and resources
- Play!



Suggested Readings:

- *Becoming solution-focused in Brief Therapy*, Walter & Peller
- *Solution-focused therapy with children*, M. Selekman
- *Beyond Technique*, Eve Lipchik
- *Interviewing for solutions*, DE Jong & I. Kim Berg
- *In search of solutions*, B. O'Hanlon & Weiner-Davis
- *Keys to solutions in brief therapy*, De Shazer
- *Solution-focused brief therapy*, Pichot & Dolan
- *Solution Work with Children*, Berg and Steiner
- *Becoming a solution detective*, Sharry, Madden, & Darmody