Solution-Focused Brief Therapy

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed as a seminar to provide students with advanced practice skills in solution-focused brief therapy. The content will include the history of the SFBT approach within the framework of systems and cognitive approaches, research related to the approach with different populations, as well as heavy emphasis on skill development and practice.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:
1. Compare strengths-based and deficit-based approaches to working with clients, and learn to assess strengths in diverse clients.
2. Demonstrate understanding of similarities and differences among strengths-based theories and critically assess their theoretical perspectives and appropriate applications.
3. Integrate and demonstrate the application of procedures, techniques, and methods of SFBT that reflect best practices for problem areas or helping diverse client groups.
4. Understand and integrate research information on the effectiveness of SFBT within an evidence-based framework.
5. Understand and integrate research information on effectiveness of empirically based practice for SFBT on problems frequently seen in practice such as: chemical dependency, child maltreatment, and childhood behavioral problems.
6. Demonstrate skills in applying SFBT interventions with families of diverse culture, socioeconomic background, race, sexual orientation, and ability.

III. TEACHING METHODS

This class provides opportunities for both theory and skill development. SFBT will be presented online this semester through a combination of lectures, demonstrations of the practice interventions in each component skill, experiential skill-building exercises from CD, role playing, video-tapes of SFBT, and discussions about the model and behavioral skills.
IV. REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

A. Required
   3. Online Readings & Videos: Additional readings/videos are available on Canvas.

B. Supplemental
   • Online Readings & Videos: Additional readings/videos are available on Canvas.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Group Modeling of SFBT Components (20% of your grade): The class will divide into four groups for studying and preparing short video demo that models one of the component parts of SFBT. Each group’s goal is to experientially model the basic intervention practices of SFBT in a client(s)/counselor format and then lead a discussion group about the component skill. The modeling is to be captured on video and shown in class before the group discussion. The components to be modeled will match the classes related to the practice components of SFBT, including 1) building an alliance; 2) exploring exceptions; 3) asking the miracle question; 4) self-anchored scaling; and 5) complements, summation messages and goaling. The groups will uploaded their video demo onto Canvas by Monday morning so students can review them before the class on Tuesday. They will be shown on the dates corresponding to these topics on the class schedule.
   • All group members will be assigned the same grade for the video demos and group discussion, so group members should all take equal responsibility for the assignment. (If all members of the group are not sharing the burden of the work, please notify the professor).

B. Analysis of SFBT Videotapes (20% of your grade): During the semester students must view two Videos of SFBT master therapists and complete video analysis forms (found on Canvas). Students answer the questions and reflections on the form and turn in the responses by the due dates. The analysis of the master therapist’s style, technique and your analysis and personal reflections on the therapist’s work with clients is an important assignment that allows you to use critical thinking skills in observing a master practitioner. Links to the available videos can be found on Canvass or available through a link to ‘Alexander Street’ through UT Direct.

C. Essay Exam: (20% of your grade): There will be an essay exam based on the readings, lectures, and discussions. The exam will be available on Canvas on the test date and due one week later as a fully referenced paper copy turned in at the beginning of class. Make-up exams are not given unless there are unusual extenuating circumstances.
• My intent in giving an essay exam is for students to demonstrate a cognitive understanding and integration of the readings, class discussion, and activities. A goal of graduate education is to integrate and apply your education in a written fashion.

D. **Video Demonstration of SFBT (25% of your grade):** Each student must turn in a video demonstration of a solution-focused counseling session they have conducted. The video must include all the parts of a solution-focused counseling session as they are elucidated in the SFT Treatment Manual, Version 2. Students are free to use peers, friends, or other volunteers who know little about SFBT as their “interviewees” with the understanding that the participant is aware that the tape is being turned in as an assignment, that their participation is NOT confidential, and that the tape may be used (with their permission) as a teaching instrument in the future. More details about this assignment will be given in class. Due dates for this assignment will be staggered throughout the semester based on the student’s schedule so that the professor is able to grade them over the course of the semester.

E. **Class Participation (15% of your grade):** This course is practice related. Each class includes “Group Discussion Activities” and/or “Skill-building Exercises” as opportunities for students to practice what they are learning and to risk making mistakes in the safety of a learning environment. There are opportunities for students to use their own family history and life experiences in these activities: therefore, the confidentiality requirements listed on page 3 are to be observed closely. In this class we are all learners and teachers!

• Class participation includes active involvement in discussions about ideas gleaned from the readings; asking questions about readings, activities, and learning SFBT best practices, and demonstrating curiosity about SFBT practice. Student’s Class participation is graded based on a combination of student self-report and the professor’s observations.

**Grading Breakdown**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Point Values</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modeling of SFBT</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of SFBT Video</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video Demonstration of SFBT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**VI. GRADES**

- 94.0 and Above          A
- 90.0 to 93.999           A-
- 87.0 to 89.999           B+
- 84.0 to 86.999           B
- 80.0 to 83.999           B-
VII. CLASS POLICIES

A. Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to read the assigned readings (some students use study groups), attend each class meeting, contribute to class discussions, and participate in skill-building exercises. Failure to attend class regularly (missing more than two class sessions) may result in a lower grade for the course at the professor’s discretion. As soon as students know that they will not be able to attend class, they should e-mail or call (text) the professor. I respect student’s observance of religious holy days. If you must miss class to observe a religious holy day please let me know as soon as you know you will be absent. See section VI for grading details.

B. Student’s Study Hours Estimates: Students enrolled in this 3 hour class should expect to spend two to three hours preparing for each hour spent in class per week (including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing for group assignments or exams, and reviewing online content like videotapes).

C. No late assignments are accepted except in extreme emergencies and then only with advance permission from the professor. If students are in an emergency situation they should immediately contact the professor and negotiate a new due date. All late assignments will be assessed point penalties at a rate of 5 points a day.

D. Grading Philosophy: The grade for the course will be based on the student’s ability to demonstrate knowledge and methods from the evidenced-based model of solution-focused therapy and effective interventions for finding solutions. I grade on a perspective of strengths, reinforcing what the student has done right in practicing SFBT, not in a review of their deficits in using SFBT.

E. This is a Professional Practice class and each student is expected to demonstrate behavior that meets the criteria of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and meets the standards for professional practice of social work. Class attendance, participation, promptness in completing assignments, writing clearly and concisely are considered when assigning the grade.

F. Explanation of Course Grades: My goal is for industrious and motivated students to stand out for their excellence and for above average students to recognize that their work could have been more impressive with more effort. I want students to expand their knowledge base beyond the practice level they bring to the class. I consider that grades should be viewed as a measure of understanding, integrating, and applying the course materials. I start the semester imagining that the all graduate students are “B”
students and it is up to students to work their way up from there. To quote Sue Miller, “I do not give grades; I record students’ achievements! Students earn grades.” 1 Point values in my grading scheme are awarded based on what the student has gotten “right” in the assignment, not what they have missed or gotten “wrong”.

VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HONOR CODE. The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

DOCUMENTED DISABILITY STATEMENT. Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM. The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another’s opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

UNANTICIPATED DISTRESS. Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students’ participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at https://cmhc.utexas.edu/.

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POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION. Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.

Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students’ social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including any information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in any way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

POLICY ON SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/.

SHARING OF COURSE MATERIALS IS PROHIBITED. No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials
found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

**USE OF COURSE MATERIALS.** The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

**CLASSROOM CONFIDENTIALITY.** Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

**CLASS RECORDINGS.** Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

**USE OF E-MAIL FOR OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO STUDENTS.** Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible for keeping the university informed about a change of e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at [http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php](http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php).

**RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS.** By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, examination, work assignment, or project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**TITLE IX REPORTING.** In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct on the basis of sex [https://titleix.utexas.edu/](https://titleix.utexas.edu/). Faculty, field instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in
their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at https://titleix.utexas.edu/.

CAMPUS CARRY POLICY. The University’s policy on concealed firearms may be found here: https://campuscarry.utexas.edu. You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School’s website.

SAFETY. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

BEHAVIOR CONCERNS ADVICE LINE (BCAL). If students have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. This service is provided through a partnership between the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY. Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

COVID CAVEATS. To help keep everyone at UT and in our community safe, it is critical that students report COVID-19 symptoms and testing, regardless of test results, to University Health Services, and faculty and staff report to the HealthPoint Occupational Health Program (OHP) as soon as possible. Please see this link to understand what needs to be reported. In addition, to help understand what to do if a fellow student in the class (or the instructor or TA) tests positive for COVID, see this University Health Services link.
# IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is intended as a guide: the professor reserves the right to shift sessions and topics based on the learning needs of the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) September 1</th>
<th><strong>Course Overview and Introductions</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment Due</strong></td>
<td>Insoo Berg &amp; Steve de Shazer Interview Video</td>
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(1) September 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Franklin, et.al. (2012): Ch 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>De Jong &amp; Berg (2008): Ch 1</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Franklin, et.al. (2012): Ch 1</th>
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<td>De Jong &amp; Berg (2008): Ch 1</td>
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<th>Supplemental</th>
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<td>De Jong &amp; Berg (2008): Ch 1</td>
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(2) September 8

**Client-Centered Therapy & Clients’ Theories of Change**

- **Readings**

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<td>De Jong &amp; Berg (2008): Ch 1</td>
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(3) September 15

**Searching for Solutions: SFBT Frames for Success**

- **Readings**

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<thead>
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<th>Assignment Due</th>
<th>Franklin, et.al. (2012): Ch 1</th>
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<td>De Jong &amp; Berg (2008): Ch 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>De Jong &amp; Berg (2008): Ch 1</td>
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Assignment Due

- Signing up for Due Dates for SFBT Video Analyses
- Group Discussion, Activity or Skill-Building Exercise
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<td>Franklin, Corcoran, Nowicki, et.al. (1997) Using self-anchored scales to measure outcomes in SF therapy. <em>Journal of Systemic Therapies</em> 16(3) 246-265. ![17]</td>
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<td>(8) October 20</td>
<td>SFBT ~ Client Feedback, Taking a break, &amp; Goaling</td>
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<td><strong>Texts</strong></td>
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</table>
O’Hanlon, B. (1999) If you don’t have a dream, how you gonna make a dream come true? Using the future to solve problems. *Do one thing different: Ten simple ways to change your life*. New York, NY: Wm Morrow, Ch 6  
| **Essay Exam available on Canvas!** | Goaling Group Modeling Video & Video Analysis #2 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(9) October 27</th>
<th>SFBT ~ Later Sessions</th>
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<td><strong>Texts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Assignment Due</strong></td>
<td>Goaling Group Activity or Skill-Building Exercise</td>
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<th>(10) November 3</th>
<th>Cultural Competency &amp; Ethics [Essay Exam Due]</th>
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</table>
| **Texts** | De Jong & Berg (2013): Ch 12  
Kim (2014): Ch 1 (Also listed in Readings) |
| **Assignment Due** | Essay Exam Due  
Goaling Group Activity or Skill-Building Exercise |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>11) November 10</th>
<th>Does SFBT Work? The Evidence Base</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Text** | Franklin, et.al. (2012): Ch 3, 4, 5, & 6  
Kim (2014): Ch 3 (Also listed in Readings) |
### Readings

#### November 10, continued

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<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
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### Supplemental Assignment Due

- 5 Video Demos of SFBT Due. Activity or Skill-Building Exercise

### Assignment Due

- 5 Video Demos of SFBT Due. Activity or Skill-Building Exercise

### (12) November 17

#### Applications: Special Populations & Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts</th>
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<td>De Jong &amp; Berg (2013):</td>
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</table>

### Assignment Due

- 5 Video Demos of SFBT Due. Activity or Skill-Building Exercise

### (13) November 24

#### Applications: Special Problems:

<table>
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<th>Texts</th>
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<td>Franklin, et.al. (2012):</td>
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November 24, continued

solution-focused therapy. New York, NY: Guilford Press, Ch 12


Berg, I.K., & Dolan, Y. (2001) The pragmatics of hope and respect: An overview of the solution-focused approach. Tales of Solutions, New York: W.W. Norton. (Ch 1, 2, 3, 5,)


Metcalf, L. (1997) *Parenting towards solutions: How parents can use skills they already have to raise responsible, loving, kids*. Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall


O’Hanlon, B. (1999) If you don’t have a dream, how you gonna make a dream come true? Using the future to solve problems. *Do one thing different: Ten simple ways to change your life*. New York, NY: Wm Morrow, Ch 6


https://doi.org/10.1007/s00520-018-4141-1