

Chapter One

Learning to Think with a Solution Focus

You cannot solve a problem with the same kind of thinking that created it.

—Albert Einstein

It was Wednesday morning and Scot, age fifteen, was scheduled to return to his home campus after six weeks at the alternative school. He was sent there due to his repeatedly being disrespectful to two of his seven teachers. While at the alternative school, Scot improved his grades and got along well with his peers. It was a structured, disciplined environment.

In response, Scot was getting along better with his family and had begun to feel better personally. Even his younger brother, ten-year-old Tim, had noticed the difference in the stress level at home, so much that even *he* had begun behaving at school.

With these successes in mind, Scot's school counselor, who had adopted the solution-focused approach for her guidance program, was taking an extra precaution and had asked Scot to stop by and chat with her before he went to his first class. The school counselor had done *her* homework early in the week by asking Scot's teachers at the alternative school to fill out the Teacher Observation Sheet (a reproducible copy is supplied here) that described what worked with Scot behaviorally and academically. Once she had received the report, she made copies and then distributed them to his home campus teachers. The report described Scot as follows:

Teaching methods that work:

1. *Hard-working student who responds well to prompts/praise* _____
2. *Is reluctant to ask questions but responds well when asked individually if he understands the assignment* _____
3. *Has difficulty concentrating during group work but can complete assignments when reminded and in a quiet area* _____

Description of behavior: Please list positive traits that you observed about this student while he/she was in your classroom:

1. *A respectful student who seems to have low self-esteem but lots of potential* _____
2. *A student who is well liked by his peers* _____
3. *A pleasure to have in class* _____

Teacher Observation Sheet: Alternative School Success

Dear Teacher,

Your student, _____, will return to his/her home campus very soon. Your observations of what has been helpful to the student while in your class will be very important to the home campus teachers. Below, please write down what you have noticed as helpful teaching strategies as well as classroom management strategies that seemed to work with this student.

Teaching methods that work:

Description of behavior: Please list positive traits that you observed about this student while he/she was in your classroom:

Your Signature

Subject/Classroom

The school counselor smiled and mused that it hardly sounded like Scot, who was often sent to the associate principal's office with discipline referrals describing him as disrespectful, disruptive in class, unmotivated, and rude. She was pleased that the break at the alternative school had given him a chance to show his strengths. She was also pleased that one of her favorite colleagues at school had agreed to mentor Scot while he was in the school.

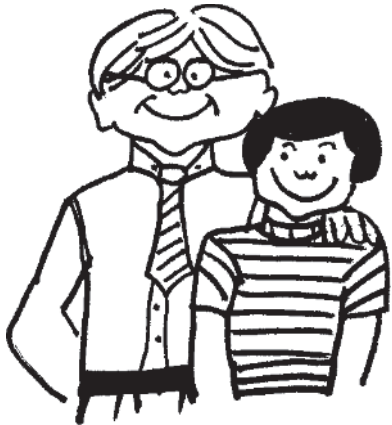
As his mentor, the teacher wrote to Scot while he was in the alternative school in an attempt to get to know him—a sort of pen pal who could support his progress. Scot had written the first note to her, a requirement of the mentor program, and had introduced himself and described his life to his mentor teacher using some guidelines given to him:

Dear Mentor Teacher,

I really don't know what I am supposed to tell you. My parents work all the time and I rarely see them. My mother works at Target and my father works for the school district warehouse. When I get home from school I am supposed to take care of my little brother, Joe, but he can be a real pain so I ignore him. I hate school. My teachers don't like me and for the most part, I don't like them. I have two dogs and my hobbies include listening to rock music, getting on the internet to play video games and hanging out with my friends.

Scot

The teacher was excited to receive her first letter from Scot and eager to write back to him. She told the school counselor that he reminded her of her own son, who had disliked school as a freshman in high school but had since grown up and gone off to college. "He sounds bright and in need of someone to give him some time," she had told the school counselor. The school counselor



reminded the mentor that as part of the mentor program, she would be able to see Scot often at school once he returned to the home campus and that the two of them would also be invited to various social events throughout the semester.

The school counselor thought about the many changes that had happened with students since she had implemented the solution-focused program. The faculty members often e-mailed her about their mentored students, confiding in her. The mentor and the mentored students enjoyed the social events. It was endearing to see students deemed to be at risk mingling with their teachers in a positive fashion. It seemed to give many of them a positive adult in their lives, something that many of them had lacked prior to the program.

When Scot arrived at the counselor's office, she could tell from his expression that he was nervous to be back at school. The two of them sat for about fifteen minutes, and the school counselor showed him the Teacher Observation Sheet that the alternative school teachers had faxed to her the day before. Scot was surprised at the remarks of his alternative school teachers and at first was speechless:

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: I have given one of these forms to each of your teachers. What do you think they will say when they see it?

SCOT: They will probably say that it must not be me.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: Well, let's say that you have accomplished a lot over the past few weeks. Why don't we talk about what you can do when you walk into class this morning, especially with Ms. Lindsey? If I recall, she has not seen this side of you before.

SCOT: Nope, she didn't see me like this, and I'm not sure that I am ready to see her.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: I can imagine. What do you hope she sees in you when you walk in this morning that will show her what impressed the teachers at the alternative school?

SCOT: That I can be good.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: How will you do that?

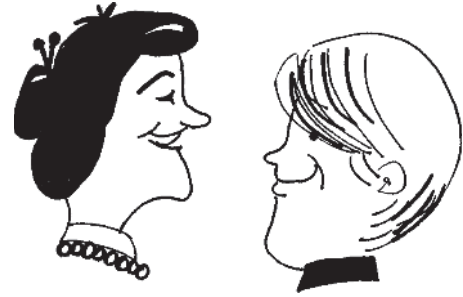
SCOT: Well, I guess that I can walk in and sit down to do my work. But if she starts in on me like she used to do, it will really be hard.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: I know it will. I'll bet you had challenges at the alternative school too, and it looks like you figured that out. Tell me what else you will do here to show her that you are different from what she thought.

SCOT: If I can sit somewhere in the class where my friends aren't close by, I can probably not talk and not talk back to her. That's something that really helped me at the alternative school.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: Okay. Let's walk down to your class, and I am going to reintroduce you to Ms. Lindsey and mention the idea you have of sitting away from your friends.

SCOT: Okay.



What Scot did not know was that the day before, the school counselor had talked briefly with Ms. Lindsey and personally handed her the form from the alternative school. When Ms. Lindsey seemed surprised at the form, the school counselor assured her that she would meet with Scot the next day when he returned and set some goals with him. She also reassured Ms. Lindsey that she was there to support her as well as Scot. The teacher seemed to appreciate the information and the offer of support. Before she left, the school counselor asked Ms. Lindsey to do just one thing when Scot came to class the next day: watch for signs that he was trying to do things differently. If the teacher wanted to, she could mention to Scot that she saw improvement.

Scot not only got off to a better start when he was reintroduced to Ms. Lindsey by his school counselor on that Wednesday morning, but he did the same in the other class that he had had difficulties with. The school counselor kept in touch with his teachers through e-mail several times each week and sometimes sent Scot a note by way of a classroom teacher that said, "Wow! You have made such a change. I am impressed with you." As for the mentor teacher, she was also the high school physics teacher, so whenever she saw Scot, she was usually working in the lab. Soon Scot became fascinated with physics. When he visited his mentor, he brought his friends with him to see the mentor teacher instead of standing in the back of the school where trouble sometimes started. The mentor stayed in contact with Scot throughout that school year, and the school counselor took note of the classes and the kinds of teachers who seemed to work for Scot. Each semester as the school counselor and Scot met to plan and schedule the next semester, she asked him what was going well first and tailored his schedule from their conversation. Scot graduated three years later and was the first person in his family to attend college.

An Elementary Student Makes Her Mark

Across town on that same Wednesday morning, an elementary school counselor was meeting with a parent who had called her late on Tuesday afternoon and was very upset. The parent had told the school counselor that her daughter's teacher had sent a note home with her daughter describing how she was not working up to her potential. Apparently the daughter had always done well in school, and now the mother was frantic. She admitted that there had been changes with her daughter recently. She was having stomachaches in the morning and complaining about school in the evening. The conversation started as follows:

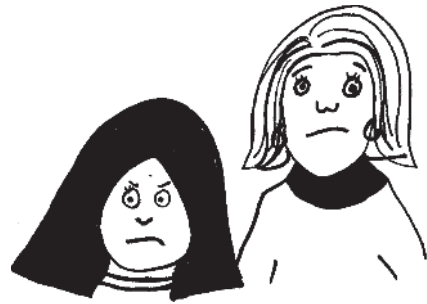
SCHOOL COUNSELOR: What can we talk about today that would be helpful to you?

MOTHER: Somehow I have to figure out what's going on with Megan. This has never happened to her before. She has always been such a good student.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: How will that help you?

MOTHER: I guess if I know what's behind this, I can help her.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: You mentioned that you have never had this problem before. Take me back to a time when this problem was much smaller or didn't happen at all.



MOTHER: Well, she attended a different school last year. We moved to a different neighborhood during the summer, and I had thought things were working out. She did have trouble making friends at first, but now she plays with the other children quite well in the neighborhood.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: How about at school last year? What was different in any way that made it better?

MOTHER: I didn't work last year. When we moved, I took a part-time job in the evening to help with the new house payment. Now her stepdad helps her with her homework. Come to think of it, she did better when I helped her with her homework. Her teacher was different last year too. Megan needs to be prompted rather often. She is bright and will do the work for you if she gets praise and encouragement. She needs help to stay on task because she has a tendency to daydream. A few times this year, she has told me that her teacher rarely asked her if she needed help. Megan tends to be shy, and if she doesn't understand the work, she will just stop doing it.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: So when you helped Megan with her homework, how did that make a difference?

MOTHER: We did it early in the evening and when she completed it, we would watch a movie together before bedtime. We had a routine. With my working now, I'm not sure that the routine is in place.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: And you said that when her teacher prompted her, that made a difference.

MOTHER: Yes.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: I know Megan's teacher rather well, and I would like to share your suggestions with her. Would that be all right with you?

MOTHER: Absolutely.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: Would it also be all right if I went to get Megan out of class for just a few minutes so that we could talk with her?

MOTHER: Sure.

The school counselor went to get Megan from her classroom. She told the teacher that she had been talking with Megan's mother and that she needed to speak with Megan briefly. Together, Megan and the school counselor walked back to the meeting room where her mom was waiting.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: Hi, Megan. It's good to see you. Your mother and I have been talking this morning about how things are going here at school. Your mother told me some ideas that I would like to share with your teacher, and I wanted you to know about them first.

MEGAN: Okay.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: Your mother said that last year, your teacher helped you differently than your teacher this year is. Can you tell me what she did?



MEGAN: Well, we had these bookmarks that we had made, and if we had a question, we were supposed to put them on our desks and she would see it and then come help us. She was really nice. I liked her.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: Your mother mentioned that you did your homework with her last year. Is that right?

MEGAN: Yes, but she works now to get money.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: If you could teach your stepdad to help you like your mother did, what would you teach him?

MEGAN: (smiling) Me teach him? Well, we would have to do homework at the same time each night because sometimes he forgets until it's almost time for bed, and sometimes I forget what my homework is.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: All right. And what would you be willing to do in return for your teacher if she tries to help you more in class just for this week?

MEGAN: I would be really good. I might not talk as much. Sometimes I talk when she is talking.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: Would there be a better place for you to sit in class to help you do that?

MEGAN: Last year I sat up in front next to the blackboard. That's where she wrote the homework assignments down, and I would always remember to write them down that way.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR: Okay. You have both given me some great ideas. Megan, it sounds like it might help if you and your mother could work with your stepdad on a time to do

homework. When I walk you back to class this morning, I would like to share with your teacher what worked for you last year. Would that be all right with you?

MEGAN: Yes.

MOTHER: That would be great.

Megan and the school counselor walked down to her classroom and spoke with Megan's teacher briefly in the hallway. The teacher was told that the school counselor was working with both Megan and her mother to help get Megan back on track with her schoolwork. The school counselor shared the ideas that both Megan and her mother had told her about the classroom that Megan was in last year. The teacher was receptive but unsure how to use a signal like the bookmark. Megan said that she would try and come up with something. The teacher was also told that Megan was going to try to behave more in class in response to the teacher's helping her more in class. The teacher was surprised that she had not been helping Megan enough. The school counselor thanked both Megan and the teacher and promised to check in with both of them the next day.

On Thursday, the school counselor sent Megan a note:

Dear Megan,

It was nice to visit with you and your mother yesterday. I learned a lot from you both. I learned that when you get the help you need in class, you do extremely well. I appreciated the way that you volunteered to help your teacher come up with a way to get her attention when you need help. I look forward to seeing your idea when I visit with you on Friday.

Warmly,

Ms. Johnson, School Counselor

On Friday, Megan's teacher came to see the school counselor to compliment her on Megan's new enthusiasm in class. She said that Megan had made a bookmark for her language arts book out of some magazines that the teacher had used in an art project. When several of the other students saw Megan's bookmark, they asked to make one too. The teacher asked Megan to show everyone how she made the bookmark, which instantly resulted in her getting along better with her classmates. Megan's mother spoke with her husband about a consistent time for homework and chose to call Megan each evening from work when she started her homework, which served as a reminder for her stepdad too. Megan's grades improved, and so did her behavior. The teacher still uses the bookmark idea each year.

If You Build the Opportunity for Success, They Will Come!

Teachers, school counselors, and administrators who are in the trenches every day know that students today deal with issues that leave even the most experienced educator stumped. There are grandparents rearing their grandchildren while their son or daughter is incarcerated. Financial worries push parents to work overtime, leaving little time for families to concentrate on school

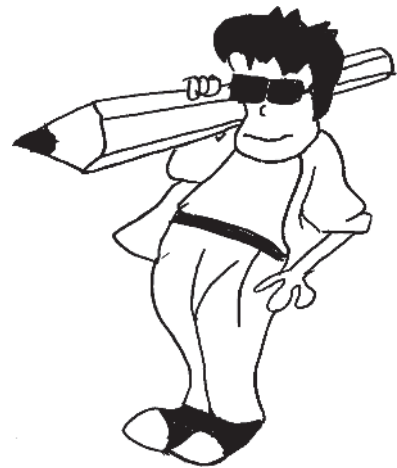
requirements and more time for mischief to evolve during that crucial time after school. While the idea of referring students to outside therapists is a good one, many students and their families can't and don't follow through. Yet the same students keep coming to school, and until they begin making changes, they affect everyone around them. They need help, and they need solutions to make it through the day. The words have to be right and the process has to be brief. The solution-focused approach can do both.



The School District That Did!

These first two stories in this chapter are typical ones in a school district that took a solution-focused approach in response to persistent problems of recidivism in their alternative secondary school and poor student motivation in the lower grades. As the developer and participant in this program, I saw firsthand not only remarkable changes in student behavior but morale improvement among staff members. This new approach of paying attention when students succeed rather than when they fail is a mind shift for many educators, who have only been taught to identify deficits as a way of helping. Many of the staff members were doubtful about whether a new approach would work and responded with concerns:

- Would promoting a welcome-back approach send a message that it was all right to misbehave?
- Would the pairing of a mentor mean that at-risk kids were being given privileges they did not deserve?
- Would looking only for success dismiss the real problems?
- Are we sugarcoating issues?



In response, I learned to ask those concerned staff members about what we had tried and whether those approaches had worked. When they resounded no, I went on to talk about what we were really trying to accomplish: student competency, responsibility, and success. Equally as important, I mentioned that I wanted them, the teachers, to have classrooms where they could teach. When our conversation resulted in defining goals such as getting students to behave, to be more successful academically, and to be more respectful, we were able to determine that the solution-focused program was simply a new experiment. After all, the traditional methods of trying to reach and teach challenging students had failed.

The teachers became slightly intrigued (though it took time) when they recognized that perhaps their classrooms might be easier to manage if the challenging students found some solutions. And I was quick to offer my support and involvement to make that happen for teachers and students. I worked for the teachers as well as the students. Slowly the teachers became interested, particularly when I thanked them for considering the program. During each faculty meeting on the participating campus, the school counselor was given time to inquire about what was working better at school. The counselor didn't stop at a few answers either; he kept asking, "What else?" and, "What else do

you need from me as we begin to work together on the solution-focused approach?” There was little time given to complaints. As stories of success began to emerge, a paradigm shift took place.

It is that paradigm that makes this approach so timely for schools now. That paradigm shift can create competency among all school clients. This chapter begins to explain the process of thinking that can create a solution focus.

The Power of Doing Things Differently

I recall a day as a young teacher, many years ago, when I sat in the teachers’ lounge. I remember finding myself as depressed and frustrated as the other teachers were with some of the negative behaviors our middle school students were exhibiting. I expressed my frustration to several experienced teachers in search of help or advice. I received many empathetic statements such as, “Yes, he’s in my class and he’s a terror there, too,” and, “Her mother has refused to answer my phone calls—one of those families.” I am certain these statements were meant to be supportive, but they offered little help.

Fortunately I recalled a professor from one of my college education classes who once stated that the most helpful thing new teachers, or any other teachers, could do for themselves and their students was to stay out of the teachers’ lounge—lest they become prejudiced against their students! With this in mind and frustrated that I was not getting anywhere talking to equally frustrated teachers, I retreated to my art classroom on a regular basis with another teacher for lunch and conference periods. We soon found that our more positive conversations at lunchtime were refreshing as we talked about personal issues and productive lesson plans. I noticed how I began to feel differently about my students without the labeling from fellow teachers. Thereafter I also noticed how the students reacted more positively to me when I knew less about their behaviors in other classes. I stayed in that middle school for eight years before returning to graduate school and found my time there quite rewarding.

Consider this question: “What didn’t go quite so well last week, yesterday, or today?” How quickly did you recall specific incidences? If you are like most other people, it wasn’t too difficult. You might even have a list! That’s because when things intrude on our day, they stand out like a sore thumb. It’s much harder to think of what did work.

Now consider a different question: “When you think about your week, yesterday, or today, what went slightly better than usual?” It takes more time to answer this question because when life goes smoothly, we mostly breathe a sigh of relief or just enjoy it. We rarely think, “Wow, how did I make this happen? What part did I have in this good result? What was different in any way?” Instead we’re just glad we had one fewer problem.

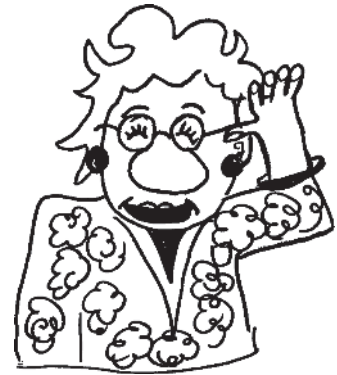
Thinking differently about what we do in our schools means looking for the times when the problems occur less frequently and thinking about what we are doing that contributed to the success. This way of thinking changes the context of the problem from, “Jimmy, you’re having a temper tantrum/anger outburst—get some control” to “The temper tantrum/anger outburst is in control again, Jimmy. How can you take over now?” It takes noticing when Charlie sits in his seat, if only for five minutes, while other students are running around the room. It takes noticing that Charlie stayed on task slightly longer today, even though Jonathan was having a tantrum. It may mean noticing that a poem in English class stirred a high school junior to ask a question for the first time this week. What happened during those slightly successful times? It’s time that we begin to ask ourselves that question because the answers are our solutions.

It's Time to Close the Book and Open Our Minds

Perhaps in some school settings, closing a book may be more important than opening it, since doing so will force us to see our students differently: as competent people, not people with problems. In addition, it is important for educators to begin identifying their own personal competencies as well. That makes the model part of their life, not just part of their tool kit. For example, answer the following:

- What is your most valuable resource in working with your students?
- What would your students say your most valuable resource is?
- Are you a good listener, a creative teacher, a humorous administrator? If so, how do you do that?
- What would your students say you do that makes such a difference?

The solution-focused ideas in this book contain suggestions for simplifying interactions between educators and students. So begin suspending your thoughts about needing to solve every problem of every student, teacher, parent, and administrator who walks through your door. First, you can't possibly do that, and second, if you did, you would teach them that they needed you to solve their problems again in the future. That's not only overwhelming for you but unfair to them. Think how much better you both will feel when you begin helping them to solve their own problems and they leave your office realizing that they had the tools all along. They will grow, become more successful, and begin believing in themselves for a change. And you might just begin believing too, like the sculptor Michelangelo, that inside every beautiful piece of marble is a statue of beauty, just needing someone to free it from the stone. You will use different tools to free your students, teachers, and parents from their problems, and they will see themselves as competent, many for the first time. As for the tools? They will show you which ones work for them. You merely have to ask the right questions.



Begin by Helping Students Recall When They Do Well

A very energetic seventh-grade boy once told me that his failure to turn in many other homework assignments caused his grades to stay below the passing level. During one of our sessions, he said that he did well in the classes where he sat in the front row. I suggested, in response to this comment, that he and his parents request a seating change for the remaining classes. But there was more. I asked him, "Tell me more about what else helps you to turn in your homework."

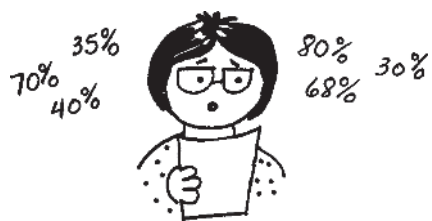
He said that what really mattered was where the classroom was. I was confused, so he explained that he began to notice how he turned in some assignments: he found that he turned in all of his papers when he put his homework in the class textbook and then took the textbook to class.

Unfortunately, he said, he could do so only when his books were in his locker and were near certain classrooms. If the locker was far from his classroom, he did not have time to get his work from his locker and turn it in.

He said that he had never been one for keeping an organized notebook, much to his parents' dismay, because he found it to be too much trouble. But after the conversation and observation about the locker, he turned to me in the session and said, "I just need to put my homework in each of my books and carry all of my books to class in my athletic bag." Although this would not have occurred to me, it worked well for him. His teachers called his parents to report his improvement in turning in his homework. And as for the student, he became quite strong!

Invite the Student to the Conference Table

As you will learn while reading this book, I often visit the schools of my private clients and gather teachers, parents, and students in an informal conference. In a recent conference with an eighth-grade boy who was struggling with paying attention and completing homework assignments, I asked



all of his teachers about the times Tom turned in work, paid attention, and performed other positive behaviors. Four out of eight of his teachers said that he turned in all of his work and that paying attention was only a slight problem. The other four were adamant about his reluctance to turn in work and pay attention. I casually mentioned that I wondered what was going on in four of Tom's classes that encouraged him to participate and complete his work. Needless to say, four of Tom's

teachers became very quiet. They began to look in their grade books. Finally, one of the four teachers who had given positive reports said, "Let's ask Tom." Tom was reluctant to respond to his teachers, so I asked him to take his time and to be very specific about what worked. I then asked him how he might use some of the strategies that worked in half of his classes in one or two of his others for just a week. He stated some very specific strategies:

"I sit in the front of the room."

"I complete the homework in class."

"The teacher asks me if I understand the assignment."

"My dad checks my assignments when I ask him."

"When I know Dad will check with my teachers, I get with it."

I respectfully asked the teachers if they would watch Tom for just a week and notice when he attempted to do things differently and to tell him directly when they noticed his new behaviors. I then asked Tom to "do whatever it takes to get your teachers to notice you." The dynamics that occurred were powerful. The teachers who were quick to critique Tom's performance experienced peer pressure. Why was it that Tom succeeded in other classes but not theirs? The student, having stated his strategy in front of all eight teachers and his dad, committed himself to being watched and encouraged his dad's future participation and collegial competition. His school performance improved. An outline of this conference is provided at the end of this chapter on pages 27–28.

First, Believe in Yourself; Next, Recognize Strengths

Looking at students with a new lens is only an external tool if the theory behind it does not make sense to us personally. In fact, one of the tenets of Alcoholics Anonymous that conveys one's honesty in recovery is the idea that a person must “walk the talk.” Otherwise, it is merely lip-service. It is quite easy to notice days when school goes poorly. But what about those days when you leave feeling as if you have made a difference, even if for only one student? Those days are treasure chests of solutions.

Moving from a Problem-Oriented to a Solution-Focused View

Educators who use solution-focused ideas have taught me that as they changed their thinking about students and themselves from a problem-oriented view to a solution-focused view, they changed their behavior and became more resourceful with interventions—and so did the student. The case study in the following section describes such a phenomenon.

Getting Through the Day Without Crying

Pat Peters, a fifth-grade teacher specializing in English as a Second Language (ESL), came to therapy as a last resort before she resigned her teaching position. She had taught for twenty years in another city and had recently taken a job at an inner-city school. She told me she was experiencing a depression that affected her so deeply that merely walking into the school building in the morning caused her to burst into tears at the sight of her students.

The students, a majority of whom were dealing with severe problems at home such as neglect, abuse, poverty, and little supervision, would react violently in the classroom toward Ms. Peters when she tried to discipline them with conventional discipline plans set by the district. She had spoken to the principal but received little support except for empathizing.

I began the first session by asking Ms. Peters how she had been able to stay in teaching for twenty years in what I considered to be a challenging teaching position. She responded modestly, saying that she was a good teacher who loved her profession. There had been students over the years who had made it a rewarding career. She said that was the difficult part, for these students were not all difficult. I asked about the students she found less difficult and how she had made it in her current position for the past five months in spite of the difficulties. She responded that there had always been one class in the morning at 10:00 A.M. that she looked forward to. The children in that class could not read when she began teaching them, and now they were progressing. Many of them were adolescents, and since they were nearing an age to drive a car, she had taught them to read a driver's license test booklet since she knew that subject would keep their interest.

She began to smile as she told me of one boy whom other teachers found very violent. She said initially she often placed her hand on his shoulder, and he would wince. Now she could place her hand on his hand, and he smiled at her. I commended her spirit and caring for her students and her practical approach to gaining their interest in reading. While she was glad to be given the



compliments, she still became sad as she mentioned the difficulties at hand. I continued to commend and affirm her professionalism to seek out those who needed her and help them respond to her so warmly. Quietly, she took the affirmation, although reluctantly.

As the session ended, I asked her to do only one task until I met with her again: “During the next week, I would like you to look at your students differently. Instead of seeing them as resisting you and fighting you, I would like you to see them as needing you but not knowing how to relate their needs. I’d like you to pick one student this week and do what you did for the student you told me about. I am asking you to do this for yourself, not just the student, because I can see the joy you receive when you touch a student and make a difference. It seems to work for you. Your smile told me so.”

Reluctantly, Ms. Peters said she would try but did not expect to really do it. I told her I realized that this was a tremendous task for someone as sad as she described herself. This realization prompted me to write her a note and mail it the same day as the session:

Dear Pat,

I enjoyed meeting with you very much today. As I mentioned to you, I hold a special feeling for teachers, having been one for ten years. I admired your desire to talk to me about things that were bothering you at school and also your need to have better experiences in your classroom. This week I hope you will look at your students differently. I have a feeling that the magic you worked with [student name] made a tremendous difference in your life as a teacher. My hope for you this week is that you will do this for yourself once again with another student. I look forward to hearing about it!

Sincerely,
Linda Metcalf

Merely focusing on Ms. Peters’s problems would have done little to rid her of the frustrations and sadness she was experiencing. Since she conveyed that she wanted relief from her depression and get through the day without crying, it was more helpful to focus on her successes and help her fondly reminisce on times when she did not cry. Many of us enjoy looking through photo albums and recalling happy, joyful, and meaningful occasions. What does reminiscing do for us? It often changes our perception of life events, people, experiences, and even future events. It reminds us that there have been happier times. Most of all, it changes our focus from one of problem saturation to that of a time when problems seemed less dominant. Our successes are like badges of courage, and we revel in our—or family members’—accomplishments. It was important that Ms. Peters recall her teaching successes at a time when she felt that there was little success.

When working with students, teachers, parents, and administrators, searching for more efficient, successful, happier times solicits solutions. Ms. Peters needed a reminder that she was indeed a teacher who made a difference, even in her current situation. She had become “problem saturated,” noticing only the times when negative behaviors kept occurring, and her students readily responded to her perceptions. More important, her goal was to “get through the day without crying.” If I had appealed to her that her students needed her and that she must give more of

herself and put aside her feelings, I would have been giving advice, perpetuating the problem, and losing Ms. Peters's trust by not hearing her goal. Both the teacher and the students would have received a true disservice.

Ms. Peters sought relief from feeling depressed and frustrated. If her goal was "to be less depressed and frustrated," it would have been difficult to project how she would do so, especially since depression and frustration occur intermittently in many people's lives. In addition, being in the context of seeing herself depressed and frustrated left her feeling hopeless. She knew she had a tough population and simply wanted to make it through the day and then possibly make a difference to her students.

Don't Do Something New; Do Something That Worked Before!

The task for Ms. Peters was designed from her previous successes so that she would receive some satisfaction as she had before. It also practically guaranteed that she could do it. I make it a point when using solution-focused ideas never to ask the person in counseling to do something he or she has not done before successfully. This means I always connect the task to a similar successful action the person has taken previously. For example, Ms. Peters was successful with a student who often experienced violent situations. As I asked her to attempt with only one student what she had been successful at with another student, I asked her only to do what she had been successful at previously. If I had asked her instead to implement a new behavioral program, hug each of her students in spite of their behaviors, and smile when she felt like screaming, I would have been disrespectful to her. I also couldn't have been as confident that she would succeed. In short, I cooperated with her goal. Steve de Shazer, one of the founders of the solution-focused approach, mentioned in his many writings that cooperating lessens resistance and encourages success.



One week later, Ms. Peters returned to therapy, smiling and reporting that her students had been better that week. She thanked me for the note, commented on my taking the time to write her, and mentioned how much that had meant to her. She also said that she was uncertain if she would have followed through with the task if I had not sent the note. She said she realized now that she had just been "thinking too negatively about the kids." I complimented her on this discovery. From that point on, she turned our conversations to other issues of concern in her life. Using the same approach throughout our remaining time together, Ms. Peters's depression and frustration lifted, and therapy ended after six sessions. She was able to complete her school year and then retire.

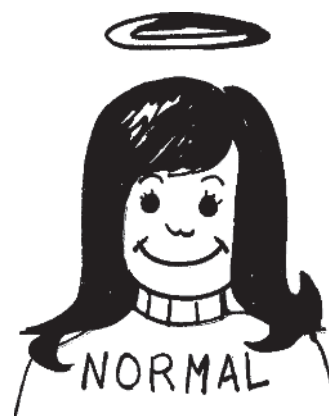
The Focus Is Now on the Solution, Not the Problem

The solution-focused approach presented in this manual offers a different way of thinking about school problems and assists both educators and counselors in discovering solutions through exceptions that have occurred previously. The ideas of the solution-focused approach encourage the

student, parent, or teacher to step outside the problem for a moment and observe the influence of the problem on his or her life. From this observation and from identifying times when the problem is in less control, the student and educator are able to develop their own tasks so that they are in more control. This approach is particularly helpful in work with parents and teachers, for it allows them to notice how they encourage and discourage problems with students. When no centralized blame is placed on a parent, student, or teacher, resistance is lessened and everyone's task is to simply solve the problem.

Guidelines for Using the Solution-Focused Approach in the Classroom

The work presented in this manual is based on a cooperative relationship between the educator, student, parent, and counselor. The following guidelines were developed from the work of William Hudson O'Hanlon and Michele Weiner-Davis, authors of *In Search of Solutions* (1989) and have been applied to the school setting.



1. Using a Nonpathological Approach Makes Problems Solvable

When the educator or school counselor redescribes the problem in a normalizing manner, hope and possibility emerge as problems seem to become more solvable. The school counselor or educator then looks for exceptions to when the problem occurs, again inferring that solutions exist. For example, a student who is sent to the counselor for being hyperactive may experience the counselor reframing the complaint as “very energetic,” a nonpathological term. This nonproblem approach lessens resistance by replacing it with a notion of normalcy. When the counselor talks to the student about the times when he is controlling the energy instead of it controlling him, he is challenged to gain control over the problem, which is interfering.

A high school junior might be referred to the vice principal for an anger problem that often causes disruptions in the classroom. An administrator might notice (as the student sits quietly) in the lunchroom one day that the student could have been tempted to explode in anger but did not. The next time the vice principal sees the student, he might comment on his amazement that the student could have gotten angry but instead refused to explode. He might ask the student, “How did you manage to be in control?” The student might then experience the vice principal differently and become aware of some positive behaviors that he did not know existed.

2. There Is No Need to Attempt to Understand or Promote Insight to Solve Problems

Here's an interesting fact: knowing why we are the way we are doesn't offer solutions. In fact, there has never been any research that deduced, “When you know why something happens, you have a solution for change.” Instead, when students, parents, or teachers are given a reason that must be

behind their sadness, anger, or anxiety, they often use that information as a symptom and reason for not succeeding. Even in severe cases of past sexual or physical abuse, students who are complimented on their strength to survive rather than given reasons for feeling depressed often blossom into competent, confident human beings who can deal with problems and events efficiently. It is our job to assist them with noticing their competencies.

One of the easiest ways of noticing a student's competencies is to notice if the problem is occurring at the time of intervention or initial interview. For example, a child who is sent to the counselor's office for being very angry may, in that context, appear to be a polite or calm child. That context is important because it produced the desired result. If the counselor asks the student, "How have you managed to control your anger for twenty minutes as you talked to me?" both may realize some more exceptions. Perhaps the child relays that the counselor is kind to him and not punitive. Maybe the time of day is an exception. Either way, the task can be developed according to the student's answers and counselor's observations.

3. It Is Not Necessary to Know a Great Deal About the Complaint

Today many school districts discourage their school counselors from doing therapy. Using solution-focused therapy does not necessitate that the counselor know everything about the problem in order to be helpful or appear to be doing therapy with students. The counselor can refer to the problem as either "it" or "the problem," using the student's language. Referring to the problem in this manner externalizes it, and the student and school counselor align to defeat it together.

A kind and understanding teacher once related a story to me about a seventh-grade student from a neglectful home (under investigation by authorities) who repeatedly came to her for nurturing when she was tearful. The teacher attempted to talk to her about the sadness, and the student refused. The teacher wisely and respectfully recalled times when her own daughters were young and felt a need for attention when they were saddened. She told the student it was fine with her if she needed attention at times, even if she did not want to relay the problem at hand. The student continued to approach the teacher for attention at times and eventually developed more trust with her. The teacher never knew what the exact problem was and did not find that information necessary in order to be helpful with the solution. In many situations, respecting a student's or teacher's need for privacy will lessen the resistance to communication and open up possibilities for solution talk. And it can happen without knowing details.

4. Students, Teachers, Administrators, and Parents Have Complaints, Not Symptoms

Anyone who has ever been labeled knows how it can change self-perception. I recall a young woman who came to counseling and declared that she was manic-depressive, suicidal, and bipolar, and she also was bothered by post-traumatic stress disorder. She even looked the part. She was sad, hopeless about her life, and saw no future with the labels and diagnoses. After hearing this résumé of pathology, I looked at her and said, "Would it be all right, just for this session, to put the labels outside in the



hallway and just for an hour talk about what it is that you want to be different?” When the session was over, I asked the question that I typically end with: “What did we do here that might have made a difference?” She said, “It was nice to talk about something besides ‘the problems,’ because now I don’t feel as sick. I don’t feel as hopeless as I did before.”

5. The School Client Defines the Goal

Consider these unfair statements that well-meaning teachers and school staff all over the world hear:

“All students who come from single-parent homes are not functional. How can they be? They need an involved parent.”

“He already has a police record at fourteen. What kind of future could he possibly have? He needs to stop hanging around the other misfits here at school, or he will surely fail.”

“She’s being reared by her grandmother, who has three other grandchildren to rear. How can she possibly get the attention she needs at home for her homework? She has to become responsible on her own.”

“His brother was a troublemaker, so he must be one as well. He needs to shape up if he comes to my classroom.”

For years we have decided what students needed to do because of our unfair observations. There have been tasks designed by counselors, educators, and other experts who saw commonalities in behaviors and subsequently assigned solutions. Many times the suggestions worked after much labor to convince the school client by the “experts.” However, the students came to depend on the expertise of the educators, placing more burden on the educators, who eventually felt anxious and resentful for having to do it all. Even worse, the student got little credit except for a pat on the back for following the directions given by the educator. That technique builds dependency, not competency.



Some outstanding strategies for solving the problems of students, teachers, and parents have come from these very populations and are mentioned extensively throughout this manual and the accompanying Field Guide. The solutions develop from exceptions defined by the persons involved. When I wrote down the exceptions that I heard directly from students, teachers, and parents, tasks developed that were achievable. The key to assisting students, teachers, and parents in solving their own problems lies in listening to their definition of what needs to be different and asking when it has been different.

6. There Is a Ripple Effect When One Person Changes

Virginia Satir, an experiential therapist who believed in the ripple effect that happens in systems, often wrapped a rope around a family as a playful exercise. She wanted to make this point: it takes only one person to move and change positions in order to cause other members of the family to move and change positions as well.

When school counselors reach a challenging student in their office and, with the student, come up with a plan, unless the school counselor and student inform the rest of the system what the plan is, the chances are that the plan will fail. The system unknowingly will attempt to bring the student back to the unwanted behavior by roles that stay the same. Those roles are comfortable and easier. It takes just a minute to sit with a student and construct a short e-mail message to the student's teachers or parents. In addition, the task becomes a contractual process, and the student becomes invested. Her task is to show the system the changes she has made. The system becomes intrigued that the student has motivation, and the chance for change doubles.

7. Complex Problems Do Not Require Complex Solutions

When I was a new elementary school counselor, I recall being asked to talk to a fourth-grade boy who had a problem with encopresis. He soiled his pants each morning, supposedly, around 11:00 A.M., and had done so for the past two years. Everyone in the school had a pet explanation of the problem:

- The teacher thought the boy was avoiding social interaction.
- The principal thought he was being defiant.
- The school psychologist thought he had sad feelings about his parents' divorce.
- The school nurse thought he was just too needy.

So, doubtful about what to do, they sent him to me. I was intrigued. He was slightly overweight, polite and kind, and loved to play video games. I asked him some behavioral-oriented questions about what happened when he soiled his pants. He said he would go to the office and call his mother, and she would come to pick him up and take him home to change clothes. There, he washed his own clothes and his mom, if she had time, would make him a hot lunch.

At first, it nearly slipped by me, so I asked more about the lunch. He said his mom always sent sandwiches in his lunch, and he disliked them. He preferred hot lunches, but his mom did not always have money to purchase the school lunch.

I asked the principal if we could get Johnny on free lunch as an experiment for two weeks. I asked Johnny to bring up a few sets of clean clothes in case he didn't get to the bathroom on time. I then told him that the school had discovered that he could get a sort of "grant" from the school that enabled him to eat hot lunches for the next two weeks.

There was only one incident during the next two weeks. We kept him on free lunch for the rest of the year, and the incidents completely stopped.

8. Fitting into the School Client's Worldview

Lessens Resistance

Many counselors have encountered students who felt persecuted by a teacher or parent. The adolescent often exaggerates the dilemma and appears to dramatize the seriousness of the situation. Suggesting to an adolescent that she must change is sometimes a guarantee that she will not; it is the nature of adolescence. However, aligning with a student, stepping into her worldview to get the teacher, parent, or administrator off her back, is the quickest way to resolution. Resolved that the teacher, parent, or administrator will not change, the student has no recourse but to come up

with ways to resolve the situation. The results are the same: the student behaves differently, and others respond in kind. For example, a high school student who feels the coach just won't get off his back and is full of complaints to the vice principal can be asked:

VICE PRINCIPAL: How will you know when things are just slightly better for you in regard to the coach?

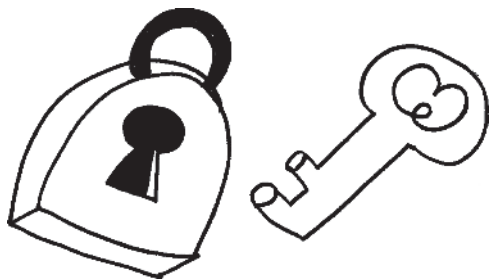
STUDENT: He won't hound me as much. He'll get off my back.

VICE PRINCIPAL: I agree, getting him off your back is a good idea. When, this year, has he been off your back?

It is often helpful to use this approach with students who complain about other teachers, coaches, nurses, and others in school. The goal is the same: to assist the student in creating better relationships. Another approach to this same situation would be to invite the coach and the student for a joint conference. The conference might begin with the vice principal addressing the coach: "Coach, Todd's concerned about the way you and he have been dealing with each other lately. I want you to know that I called you both here because I want you both to get what you want in this situation. Can you tell me a time this year when you didn't find it necessary to keep after Todd?" During the conversation, Todd may hear the coach say that when Todd showed up for practice on time in the fall and worked hard, he had no reason to give him a hard time. This usually comes as a surprise, and Todd may start moving in a better direction. Everyone wins.

9. Motivation Is a Key Ingredient for Change

Many times motivation is not present because people do not know what they want to occur differently and have no specific goal in mind. The way to find out about motivation is to ask



directly: "Are you willing to do whatever it takes to make things better for you?" If the answer is yes, you have a customer. If not, let the student know you are there and that he needs to come back soon when he is ready to tell you specifically what it is that he wants changed. The counselor might say, "Sandy, it's obvious to me that you have some true concerns about Mr. Smith, your algebra teacher. One thing I've learned is that unless you know how you want things to be, it's hard to accomplish any-

thing different. Let's take a break. For the next few days, I'd like you to think about what you want changed with Mr. Smith. You might try paying attention to times in his class that are slightly better for you, as well as in other classes. In a few days, please stop by and tell me what you liked about those times and what you hope will happen more often."

If a student, teacher, or parent desires a change but is not quite sure what it is that she wants to be different or is wanting to change someone else, caution that she cannot change anyone but herself. Then ask the following question to assist in identifying a goal: "Notice this week the times when you feel slightly better. Notice where you are, who is there, and what you are doing. Come back next week, and tell me what part of the week you would like to experience again."

10. There Is No Such Thing as Resistance When We Cooperate

Steve de Shazer (1985) said that when we find ways to cooperate with people, there is no such thing as resistance. This means that we align, sympathize, empathize, and use language designed to connect with the student, even if his or her goal or desire seems impossible. It is important to cooperate in this manner and then renegotiate with the student how things would be different if the impossible goal occurred. This serves to honor the student's wish and help him or her to see other ways to reach that wish. Children and adolescents seek acceptance and validation, so by working in this way, the student is accepted by the school counselor and the goal is heard as a valid one. For example, a student who fights constantly may be perceived as wanting some control in his life and should be acknowledged for needing control; a parent who overprotects can be perceived as protecting slightly more than necessary. These collaborative statements and messages align with whatever the students seek, but the reframing opens up possibilities instead of perpetuating the problem.

For example, students who fight and like being in control can be discouraged from fighting. A principal might say, "Now that you are in the principal's office, it looks like the problem is controlling you! I realize that fighting gives you some control, but now I've got control over you. I'd like to give it back to you. I wonder what you might do to stay out of my office and under your own control?" And a teacher might ask a parent who is overprotective, "You obviously love your child very much. I wonder, though, if it is working for him that you are at school constantly now that he is interested in becoming much more independent. You seem like the kind of parent who would want him to begin finding his own way. I'll keep an eye on him and stay in touch if you like." Both situations cooperate with the school client's view and lessen resistance.

11. If It Works, Don't Fix It; If It Doesn't, Do Something Different

One of the most helpful questions to ask school clients who keep trying the same ineffective strategy over and over is, "Is this working for you?" At times it sounds absurd as they describe their previous strategies of smarting off, stomping out, or fighting in the bathroom. Often both educator and student (or parent) end up smiling, realizing that everyone's strategy can be improved. The session can become more productive by asking the same student, "What has worked for you?" This allows him to recall successful interventions that have worked. The tasks for the days and weeks ahead develop from past successes, no matter how small and insignificant they may appear during the process.

12. Focus on the Possible and the Changeable

Many children would like to be Spiderman, and many adolescents would like to stay out all night. Realistic thinking is the key in solution-focused work, and it must focus on the visible and specific. For example, a child who wants Tommy to stop teasing him can't change Tommy but can change where he encounters Tommy on the playground. An adolescent who complains about his mom's yelling can't stop her from yelling (although she would probably disagree) but can change his responses to those that work at other times with other people (or even his mom).

In addition, the time allotted to work on solutions is important and should be customized to the age of the school client. In elementary schools, a task should not be attempted for longer than an afternoon for a kindergartner to two days for a sixth grader. In secondary school, two days to one

week should be the maximum time a task is to be carried out. Performing a task within this short time period is more achievable than attempting to change for an entire term. Besides, children and adolescents conceptualize the future in short time frames. Cooperating with that thinking gets compliance.

13. Go Slowly, Building on Skills and Success

Caution students to not go too fast. Really! You may find that your students want to score a 10 on the scale and be in charge of their life after one visit with you. While you may find it thrilling that they are so motivated, it is more helpful to be supportive and ask them to improve just slightly. Then when they achieve more than you encouraged, they are the experts extraordinaire.

Also, cautioning students to go slowly prevents slow success from being perceived as failing or not happening fast enough. In actuality, when defeating a problem is the focus, not going backward into the grip of the problem should be viewed as success. Make sure you commend students, for example, for not going backward. Another reason for encouraging students and teachers to go slowly is that lasting change takes time. A flutist may find that improvement fluctuates with different musical scores. Change occurs in the same way.

14. Rapid Change Is Possible

Teachers who use the solution-focused approach in classrooms directly are often surprised at how quickly students change behaviors. An elementary teacher told the story of Scott, a kindergartner, who had temper tantrums at least three times a week, usually before 10:00 A.M. Tired from the frequent referral, one morning she went to him and asked:

TEACHER: Would you like to fight off the temper tantrums [his description] just for today?

Scott looked puzzled at first but then said that he wasn't sure if he could.

TEACHER: It's 9:45, and I've just realized that you have not had a tantrum yet this morning. How have you done that?

SCOTT: I just did it!

The teacher continued to remind Scott when he continued to fight off the tantrums during the morning and ask him, "How are you doing this?" Scott did not have a tantrum that day and decreased his tantrums to once every two or three weeks. His teacher rewarded him with being line leader more often, and his counselor presented him with a certificate stating that he had defeated the temper tantrum monster. His mother called and asked the teacher what she was doing because her son was coming home from school so much happier than before.

15. Change Is Constant and Inevitable; Watch for It

When you read a new book, experience a new workshop, or develop a new habit, change occurs. The systems we live in change constantly, which leads to our changing constantly. The process is not always easy, but it is inevitable. When students and parents express the sad notion that "he/she will never change," it is more helpful for the counselor to acknowledge this perception: "I'll bet it must feel that way. When have you noticed [name] making very small changes in other situations?" "Did you have a part in that? How did you do that? How did you see her do that?"

Remember to encourage the school client to “try one thing different” as an experiment and tell you later what the result was. This encouragement places the responsibility back on the school client and increases competency.

16. Every Complaint Pattern Contains Some Sort of Exception

How often have you heard the following statements?

“I’m angry all the time.”

“He’s hyperactive constantly.”

“She never stays in her seat.”

“I’m totally stressed out all of the time with all of my classes.”

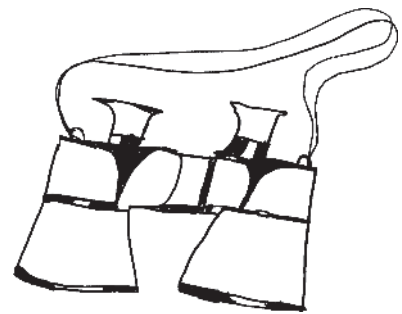
These global statements of complaints are typical from people who feel hopeless and out of control. Yet no one stays angry 100 percent of the time, for they would surely be exhausted. When students talk about school being “awful,” ask, “When is it not as awful?” Opening up the possibility that to each problem there is an exception gives opportunities for people to see that they are in control more than they think. Many times, counting the minutes, hours, or days when a problem is not interfering with schoolwork or home makes it seem more solvable and less intrusive in life. For example, of a seven-day week, three days might seem to be slightly depressing and only for three hours of each day. Thinking that 9 hours out of 168 hours are downtime minimizes the effects of the problem, lessens the burden, and helps the student or educator feel more in control.

17. Changing the Time and Place Will Change the Context for a Solution

Students often complain about the teacher who never calls on them or doesn’t pay attention to them. However, on examination, a student may realize that it’s not the teacher but the timing that’s crucial. Sending a student back to class to notice when the timing is better to approach the teacher may give the student a new perspective on how to achieve the goal of getting called on or getting necessary attention. If possible, encourage a teacher to visit with you and the student and ask the same questions. Together, changing the time and place according to what works best will benefit both.

18. Look at Problems Differently and Redescribe Them

I once remarked to an adolescent in a group who had been placed in a psychiatric hospital-based school how well he did on a weekend visit with his parents. In the past, he had talked to me about his violent outbursts and angry words that truly were interfering in his reconciliation with his parents. He described himself as doing “okay,” but said one of the staff members said he was “stuffing” feelings, which made the client feel negative about his actions. I remarked that I saw it a little differently: I saw him as successfully disciplining himself around his parents. He



stopped for a moment and then agreed that he had disciplined himself and kept control. From that point on, when another peer talked of “stuffing” feelings, he retorted that the peer was good at self-disciplining. It’s contagious.

Summary

Considering and questioning how we think about school, students, teachers, parents, and administrators is vital to this approach because our reactions will differ if we think about issues using a problem focus rather than a solution focus. Our beliefs and theories about people and their competencies are evident from the moment we shake hands with someone in distress until we help them reach resolution. Consider the following questions for yourself:

- How do you think about people and their abilities to change when they are given the opportunity? How have you created that opportunity before?
- Do you believe that your students have competencies—or that they need you to solve all their problems?
- Do your teachers and staff members feel that you work for them as much as you do your students? If so, terrific! If not, what will you begin doing differently to send that message?

Learning to think differently about school clients often leads us to noticing many avenues in which others have discovered the same secret. In an episode of *Northern Exposure*, a popular television show in the 1990s, a scene involving the carving of a flute sends a metaphorical message that can be adapted to our school clients. In the episode, a Native American woodcarver carves a flute as a younger Native American man watches him. The woodcarver is focused and quite careful. The younger man is curious: “How to you know where to carve?” The woodcarver politely and respectfully replies in reference to the wood that he holds in his hands: “Inside every alder branch, there is a flute—your job is to find it.”

Now, go find the flutes.



Solution-Focused Training Exercise: Chapter One

The following questions have been designed as a personal exercise to assist in understanding solution-focused ideas. The exercise can be duplicated for faculty meetings. For maximum benefit, discuss your findings in groups of two or three people.

THE PROBLEM-FOCUSED APPROACH

What has been the most frustrating problem for you this year at school? This is the problem.

What did you do to solve your problem? These are your strategies.

Which ones worked? Circle those strategies. Which ones did not work? Draw a line through those.

If your answer was full of success, congratulations! If, however, you were not satisfied with your strategies, please read on. The problem with “problems” is that we notice them only when they’re bothering us—when they are present. Clues to solutions lie in the times when problems are not present. These are called exceptions.

THE SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH

What will be different when the problem that has been bothering you at school disappears? This will become your goal.

Solution-Focused Training Exercise: Chapter One (cont.)

When was the last time you were just slightly successful in achieving that goal?
(Searching for exceptions)

How did you do that? (Exceptions = strategies)

Where else in your life, profession, job, or personal life are you successful at accomplishing something similar to the above goal?

What strategies do you use to accomplish such a personal task?

If you tried just one or two of these strategies in school for a week, what would you do? What would someone see you doing differently?

Tasks

- Today, notice what goes well. Make notes of what works instead of focusing on what doesn't work in your job, with your kids, or with others in your family. Notice how you feel when these exceptions to life's stresses occur. Consider prescribing this for yourself the next time you need a solution.
- Before the week is over, try a strategy that you identified as helpful in your personal life at school with one student, one teacher, or one parent. Observe what happens.

Teacher-Student-Counselor Conference

Begin the conference by meeting with the teachers as a representative of the student in case the teachers are upset with the student and need to voice their concerns. After the concerns have been voiced, let the teachers know that this conference will focus on what needs to happen rather than why there is a problem with the student. Then invite the student into the meeting.

Say to the teachers: "I am currently working with [student's name], and together we are interested in your concerns. Let's begin by talking about how you would like things to be in the future." This becomes the goal of the meeting. [If the teachers begin to talk about what needs to stop, thank them and respectfully ask for what they want to see instead.]

Make a list of their wishes for the future:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Say to the teachers: "Please each of you look in your grade books or notes and begin to identify times when a little of that happened for [student's name] in the classroom. Make a list:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Teacher-Student-Counselor Conference (cont.)

Say to the student: "We are all interested in your thoughts about the times when [the student's goal] happened slightly in a classroom. Tell us what a teacher did that made the difference for you." Make a list:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Say to the student: "What did you do during those times that also helped these successes to happen?"

Say to the teachers: "What did you say that [student's name] did to help these successes to happen?"

Say to the teachers and the student: "If over the next week, we were all to try again what has worked before, what would you each suggest we try based on our discoveries here today?"
