

Worksheets From

# SOLUTION FOCUSED NARRATIVE THERAPY

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## Meaningful Solutions Exercise

When I conducted research for my dissertation, I had many questions about what caused change in clients. Was it the brilliant intervention of the therapist, the client's competencies, or both? I wanted to know if what clients thought led them to change was the same as what therapists thought caused them to change. I chose to do my research at Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee, where Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg created SFBT. The result of my research was the development of a question that I ask of every client, every group of students I teach, and every group of trainees: "What, if anything, did we do today that might have been helpful to you?"

The answers I receive each time are often unpredictable, validating, and provocative! I value very much the answers I receive, because every answer prepares me for my next question or endeavor. In other words, the model presented in this chapter is not useful just for our clients; it can also be useful for us as therapists. The exercise that follows will assist you in seeing yourself through your client's eyes so that you, too, will be presenting yourself in a manner that works.

Think of a recent case where you felt good about the outcome and so did the client. If the client were sitting next to you now, what would the client say you did that might have made a difference? What else? List at least 10 items that you think the client would say you did.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

What values do you think you embraced as you worked with the client?

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If you were to integrate what worked with the recent client with more clients, just for the next week, what difference would that make for you as a therapist?

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Task: Choose a few clients over the next week and ask them this question at the end of each session: "What did we do in here today that might have made a difference for you?"

Enjoy the answers.

## Solution Focused Stories Exercise

How would those who cherish you describe you on days when you are at your best? Make a list of at least 10 traits and attributes that those persons would use to describe you.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Next, think of some current situations that you might be struggling with. Note them here.

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What traits on the list might help you to get through some of the confusion or frustration in one of your current situations of concern? As you build new solutions using your own traits, keep in mind that the best solutions are those that mean something to you. Concentrate on those situations first. The rest will follow.

# Action-Filled Narrative Summary

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Best Hopes:

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## 2. Mapping the Effects of the Problem/Current Presentation

Scale: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Words:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

**3. Description of the Preferred Future**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

**4. Exception Gathering**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

**5. New Presentation Ideas:**

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**6. Summary**

Preferred Scale by Next Session: \_\_\_\_\_

## Action-Filled Narratives Exercise

It is a huge responsibility for us as therapists to examine our affect and our mannerisms toward clients, and to create a context where clients can work effectively with their competencies. The following exercise may help to identify traits, values, and actions that help you present your best self to your clients, particularly clients that are challenging!

*Suppose, tomorrow morning, as you awake and think of the day ahead, you prepare to be at your best. What might you do or think about as you prepare for your day?*

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*What would you be thinking about as you traveled to your session that would begin to help you set the stage for being your best?*

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*Once you arrived and greeted your first client, what would the client notice about you that would tell him or her you were at your best?*

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*What else would you be doing during the session so that the client got the hint that you thought favorably of him?*

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*How would you end the session in a manner that would indicate you were still at your best? How would the client know at the end of the session that you were thinking favorably about him?*

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*As you leave your workplace later, think about how being at your best on that day influenced your work as a therapist. How did the client react to your being at your best in the session?*

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*As a result of this exercise, how might you conceptualize your own competency as a therapist? Enjoy the reactions.*

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## Triumph Over Trauma Exercise

Chances are, you have experienced difficulties at one time, yet pulled yourself together to continue in your life. How did you do that? The following exercise is designed to help you develop insight into your own coping strategies, so you can see how the therapy performs.

*Think back to a time when you went through a difficult challenge. What were the effects of that challenge on your life?*

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*How would you describe the way you got through the challenge?*

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*What would others say you did that brought you through the challenge?*

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*What else?*

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*Perhaps you have a current challenge. Glancing over your answers to this exercise, what might you utilize for a few days to stand up to the challenge so that you experience life as you desire?*

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## Relationship Presentations Exercise

How do your values guide you in relationships? Mark Hayward and Amanda Redstone have mentioned that life goes off track when problems cause us to lose a connection with our values. Therefore, conversations that reunite us with our values, identified in preferred future dialogue, are enriching to us and influence our relationships. Consider the following thought-provoking questions.

*Think back to a recent encounter with someone who might have been challenging, yet, you were able to work through the encounter (then or later) and felt good about the outcome.*

*What thoughts or values guided you through your responses? (List at least five!)*

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*What did the other person notice about you in the process? What was your presentation? (List at least five!) As a result, how satisfied were you with your response? What difference did that make?*

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Keep these answers close to you, as they are guiding strategies for relationships.

## Dangerous Habits Exercise

Think of a habit, routine, or any concern that currently might keep you from living the way you wish. It can be anything, such as being too sedentary at night, overspending, or not doing something you desire to do, such as exercise. Then imagine the following:

*Suppose tomorrow when you awake, the habit that keeps you from living your life the way you want disappears.*

1. *What would your morning, afternoon, and evening look like that would tell you and others who are important in your life that you have put the habit out of your life?*

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2. *What else?*

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3. *What else?*

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4. *What else?*

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5. *What difference would putting the habit out of your life, just that day, make to you?*

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6. *What difference would it make to others in your life?*

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Enjoy the description of your habit-free day. And, tomorrow, try out just one or two very small ideas that you came up with when you answered, "What else?"

## Ideas for Assisting Clients With Grief and Loss

- “Tell me about \_\_\_\_\_. What difference did he/she make in your life? What did you love about him/her? What did she/he teach you? What else?”
- “If we looked through \_\_\_\_\_’s eyes what would \_\_\_\_\_ say he/she appreciated about you?”
- “What difference will it make for you someday when you begin appreciating those traits in yourself? What might you begin doing today, just on a small scale, that \_\_\_\_\_ might appreciate as well?”
- “What do you think \_\_\_\_\_’s reaction would be to see you appreciate those qualities in yourself?”
- “I want you to keep in mind, that each time you do those small actions that \_\_\_\_\_ appreciated, you bring alive the things that \_\_\_\_\_ loved about you, and you honor \_\_\_\_\_’s life.”
- “As you think back to the times in your life when you did not get what you needed from your parent or guardian, tell me what he/she should have noticed about you.”
- “What did others notice about you that \_\_\_\_\_ did not notice?”
- “As you think of the qualities you possessed in the past that went unnoticed by \_\_\_\_\_, how do you explain your ability to \_\_\_\_\_ currently?”

## Timeless Influences Exercise

Think of a person who you miss in your life and answer the following questions:

*What was it like being around \_\_\_\_\_, whom you loved? Who was he or she?*

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*How did this person's actions make a difference in how you understood yourself and your life?*

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*How did being around him or her make you think and feel about yourself?*

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*How did he or she contribute to your sense of who you have become?*

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*What do you think it meant to him or her to be connected to you?*

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*How might his or her life be different on account of knowing you?*

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Over the next few days, do something that the person would appreciate in you. Know that when you do, that person just got closer to you and his or her influence grew again. If the person is still living, consider writing him or her a note.

# Exception Observations

Dear Teacher,

I would like to invite you to a conversation for \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ in room \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock. Your presence is requested because you are an important member in the student's academic life. As the student's therapist, I want to learn from you what works slightly with the student. The meeting will not last longer than 30 minutes. Prior to the meeting, please notice times when this student is slightly successful in your classroom. Note the kinds of lessons, activities, behavioral interventions, motivational strategies, or other methods that help the student to be slightly more successful. Please list these times when the student is more successful in the following list. Please list at least five of these "exceptions" to the following problem, and bring the list to the meeting.

Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Therapist signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student signature

Exceptions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Source: Metcalf, 2010, p. 72.*

# Solution Focused Team, Parent, and Student Meeting

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Team: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Identify hopes:** The leader opens by expressing appreciation to those attending the meeting, then starts the conversation: *“What are your best hopes for our meeting today?”*  
(It is common for attendees to answer by saying what they do *not* want. Help those who respond in this way to develop a more workable goal by asking, *“What do you want to happen instead?”*)

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On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 meaning not successful and 10 meaning completely successful, where is the student?

Parent: \_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_ Teachers (take average score): \_\_\_\_

2. **Set goals:** The leader thanks everyone for their responses and asks everyone, *“What will the student be doing in the classroom over the next 3 weeks so that the score increases and our concern decreases?”*

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3. **Identify exceptions:** The leader asks about the exceptions that everyone present was asked to document: *“Looking at your Exceptions Observation sheet, when is this happening or when has it happened slightly already?”*

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To Parent/Student: "When have things been better in other classrooms, grades, or situations at school or even outside of school?"

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4. **Develop strategies:** The leader asks the student, teachers, parent, and staff members who are present to decide which exceptions can be used and adapted in the classroom and at home for the next few weeks.

Classroom strategies: (teachers and student)

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Curriculum addition based on exceptions:

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Home strategies:

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5. **Scaling progress:** The leader restates the scores from the beginning of the conversation and asks the participants what rating they hope the student will achieve by the next meeting.

Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Teachers: \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary:** The teacher asks the parent and student, "What was helpful for you today in this conversation?"

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Next meeting date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Adapted from Metcalf, 2010, pp. 73–74.

# Exception Findings

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

The documentation on this page is *only* for exceptions—times, situations, or activities when the student begins to be more successful in the classroom.

**Week 1 Exceptions:** List activities, situations, assignments:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly score: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 2 Exceptions:** List activities, situations, or assignments:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly score: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 3 Exceptions:** List activities, situations, or assignments:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Weekly score: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Source:* Metcalf, 2010, p. 75.

## Reintroducing School Clients Exercise

Think back to when you were in school, and try to recall a teacher who made a difference to you. Chances are that the teacher wasn't someone who gave you less work, but did something to inspire you and get you excited about what you were learning.

*What did the teacher do that worked?*

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How did you respond to the teacher as a result of his/her teaching strategies?

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How are you still affected by such people today in your work or relationships?

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*What is it about these interactions that mean the most to you?*

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*What else? (Times 10.)*

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These observations about how you learn best, get motivated, and feel inspired are probably still valuable to you today. The next time you seem a bit off track with a project, a client, or any professional interest, recall what worked before. It might give you the push you need.

## Writing Miracle Days With Families Exercise

It is always easier to think, "If he/she would only change, I would be happier." Changing others is something we do not have control over. However, we do have control over what we do. Perhaps if you are wishing for another person to change, consider what you might be doing if he or she did change. Get a clear picture of things you might do or be able to do if that person changed. Then, think of something very small from that vision, and do it independently. It might take pressure off of your partner, and give you new insight into what you are capable of!

*Think of a current relationship that you value yet are not completely satisfied with. If you could change the person in that relationship, what would you change?*

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*As a result of the person changing, what might you be able to do differently? List several things.*

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*What difference would it make for you to be doing those things?*

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*What would doing those things bring out in you, as a person?*

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*What might others notice about you as you begin doing those things on a very small scale?*

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*When might you begin to value and believe in yourself?*

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Over the next week, try doing something on a very small scale that can bring out in you what you value and believe about yourself.

## The Path to Less Distress Exercise

Think of a current client that you are working with who is causing you some concern. Perhaps the client is not able to verbalize a goal clear enough for you to pursue with the client. Maybe you leave each session thinking, "I hope he or she doesn't reschedule!"

*For a moment, think of how you are describing the client. Be honest. Then, think of how you have approached the client using that description. How effective would the client say the therapy has been?*

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*Now, with a great deal of imagination, come up with a new description of the client. With that description of the client, how will you greet the client the next time you meet?*

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How will you do things slightly differently, given the new conversation?

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As you try out this exercise on a real client, watch for how the session goes differently. When the session ends, look back on what you did differently and recognize how your flexibility as a therapist might have helped you, too, escape the clutches of a diagnosis.

## Program Entry Interview

1. Tell me how you will know when treatment has been successful here. I am interested in your ideas. (If the client says that therapy was someone else's idea, ask: "What would that person he or she hopes will be different for you once treatment is complete?")

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2. Tell me times in the past when the problem did not affect you as much as it does now. What went on then that helped you to be in control of the problem? What else did you do then that made things different? What did others do?

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3. When you have completed our program, what do you hope you will be doing differently that will assure you and your close significant others that you are ready to leave? (Ask the client for specific overt behaviors. If the client says, "I will be less angry," ask, "Instead of being angry, what will you be doing instead?")

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4. How might other people at home or work or in other important relationships know that your life is on track?

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5. When you think of your answers so far, how would you state your personal goals for treatment at this facility?

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6. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 meaning highly likely, and 1 meaning not possible, where would you rate your current likelihood of achieving your goal?

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7. Considering the number you just gave me, which of the following activities do you think would begin to be the most helpful in achieving the goal you have described?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multifamily therapy        | <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical recovery group    | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's issues     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Experiential (ROPES) group | <input type="checkbox"/> Men's issues       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger control group        | <input type="checkbox"/> Survivor's group   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dangerous habits group     | <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting skills   |

The interviewer then suggests to the client the following groups as a starting point for the program and asks for the client's consent:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AM process group   | <input type="checkbox"/> PM process group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual therapy | <input type="checkbox"/> Family therapy   |

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Client Signature

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Interviewer Signature

# Progress Notes

Name of Client: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal of Client: \_\_\_\_\_

Therapy/Activity/Group Type: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Exceptions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Scale: 1-10

Where is the client today in relation to achieving his or her goal according to the client? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Source: Metcalf, 1992, p. 27

## Treatment Planning and Group Therapy Exercise

Most of us are involved with groups. Whether it is through our employment, sports teams, classes, family gatherings, or other interactive activities, our involvement affects the group. Think of a current “group” that you are engaged in and would like to be more involved in and think about the following questions:

1. *How would you scale your participation in the group on a scale of 1 to 10?*

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2. *What would others in the group say you do that they appreciate? Where would they scale you?*

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3. *What would others in the group say they wished you would do more of?*

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4. *What could you do to raise your score?*

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5. *What difference could that make for you, if you moved up the scale?*

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We are all social beings. We tend to thrive in the presence of others, especially when we get back from others what we hoped for. Yet, we often play a part in what we get back. I hope this exercise provides you with a look at your role in groups so that you can create a context in your life with others that is fulfilling for you and exceptional for them.