Welcome!

» The solution focused approach
» Includes clinical methods and techniques
» AND on another level is much more:
» A philosophy, a lens through which you see not just our clients’ trauma and pain
» But also amazing strengths and resilience they already have.

Our road map for today

» The solution focused perspective in general.
» Using it to grow resilience both after trauma and with the stuff of daily life.
» Practice this by interviewing each other.
» Some reflection...

My best hopes...that you will take with you from today:

» A few ideas or tools or techniques you can add to your toolbox.
» Some ways of inviting clients to tap the courage and resilience they already have.
» Excitement about how powerful a solution focused perspective can be with people who who've experienced trauma, both large and small.

Who sees clients who have experienced trauma or loss?

» Think of a specific person.
» Think of a strength or example of resilience you’ve seen in that person.
» And another one.

You are already solution focused...

2 pieces of the solution focused approach:
1. Noticing a piece of the solution that’s already happening.
2. Doing it again.
   the “What else” question

Noticing another, and then another...
“...The most valuable answers after the 5th ‘what else’"...
Images and words of resilience...

Notice which resonate most for you.

Nuggets from the literature

- Most common response to trauma?
  - Resilience!
  - Bannink: data from National Comorbidity Study
  - 50–60% exposed to trauma
  - Only 8% meet criteria for PTSD (Kessler et al., 1995)

Methods for Strengthening It:
Distress tolerance

- From dialectical behavior therapy:
  - Tolerating strong emotions
  - Trusting that they will pass
  - Accepting without judging
  - Self-soothing
  - Visualizing yourself in a safe place
  - Tolerating urge without acting
  - Remembering what and whom you care about
  - Sometimes it’s really hard to do
  - And our clients do it anyway...

Methods for Strengthening It:
Mental Toughness

- From sports, business, performance, coaching more than from therapy
  - Precisely what makes it resonate for some!
    - Doing what you need to do under pressure
    - Making fast decisions
    - Endurance/focus, especially at critical moments
    - “Turnaround toughness”: bouncing back
  - Our clients have more than they realize
  - And you have a name for it...

A solution focused approach to resilience...

How much do you already know about the solution focused approach?

a. I know a fair amount about it.
b. I know a little about it.
c. Other than hearing the phrase, it’s pretty new to me.

- Milton Erickson
- Mental Research Institute
  - Richard Fisch, John Weakland, Paul Watzlawick
- Brief Family Therapy Center
  - Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg
• No matter how severe a problem, there are times it is less severe or absent. “Exceptions.” When you notice and point them out, they happen more often.
• Not necessary to have a lot of information about the problem.
• Goal not to “eliminate problems” but to reach a goal.
• What will it look like when the goal is reached?
• “The miracle question” Story about how it came to be More Than Miracles…

• Variations on the miracle question:
  • “Best hopes”
  • Coping questions
    • If someone has experienced trauma, hard times, it can seem disrespectful to ask about a future where pain is gone or drastically reduced.
    • Instead, “With what you’ve been through, how do you get through the day?”
    • “How did you do that?”
    • “I don’t know. I just did it.”
    • “What else?”
• What you focus on grows…

• Invites recognition of choices (the person who got up to go to the bathroom…)
• “I had to get up to feed my baby.”
• “The dog needed to go out.”
• We highlight that: “He needed you.” (implicit compliment)
• Again, what you focus on grows…

• How did you get here today?
  • They tell us about being nonfunctional.
  • Not getting out of the house.
  • Feeling hopeless, incompetent, overwhelmed, unable to resist substances

… and this person is here…
• “How did you do that?”

• John

A few other techniques
• Difference questions
• Relationship questions
• Scaling questions
  • 10 as the destination, 0 the opposite
  • Where are you now?
  • Why not lower? (NOT the question they think you’re going to ask…)

• Input at the end of a session: 3 components
  • Validation
  • Highlighting of strengths
  • Suggestion (if client is okay with that):
    • Do more of what works
    • Notice when pieces of best hopes are already happening
    • If something isn’t working, do something different.
    • Notice how doing these things makes a difference.
Case examples

- Britney
  - Adapted from Fredrike Bannink, Working from the future back
- Natalie

Interviewing experience

- Groups of 3 or 4: therapist, client, consultant(s)
  - Clients: think of a small loss or discrepancy between what you hoped for and what you got
  - Therapists: have a conversation about how you coped
    - Use solution focused tools, nuggets—but mostly do what you do
  - Consultants: watch for strengths and resilience in the client
  - 10 minutes…then your next instruction

Consultants, tell the therapist the strengths and resilience you saw and heard in the client.

Therapists, give your client some brief end of session feedback.

- (Maybe highlight strengths and/or invite noticing more times resilience is happening)

Clients, share with your therapist what was most helpful about the process.

What did you discover from this exercise?

Vicarious resilience

- People talk about vicarious traumatization – but vicarious resilience happens too.
  - Tenacity and resilience are contagious!
    - Hoyt
    - de Jong and Berg

Imagining experience…

- Imagine a client who is a challenge
  - (not because of a safety issue, but in some other way…)
  - You acknowledge to yourself your reaction…and begin your session.
  - What is a detail you discover about this person?
  - What do you find yourself liking about them?
  - What is amazing about them?
  - What did you discover about vicarious resilience? Your own resilience? The power of solution focused conversation?

Conclusion

- Strengths and resilience are already there
  - In our clients
  - In their worlds
  - In ourselves
  - So keep noticing them…
  - Because what you focus on grows…
Thank you!

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