



*Solution Focused Brief
Therapy Skills
for Resolving Challenges*



Solution Focused Brief Therapy for Resolving Challenges

Using a modification of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SBFT), this handout expands its use for finding solutions for relationship challenges. This information will:

- help you define challenges
- allow you to identify strategies that have worked in the past for the same or similar challenges.
- rate different aspects of your experience on a 1 to 10 scale.
- look for exceptions to challenges (for example, times when you might have expected the challenge to occur, but something else happened instead).
- encourage you to do more of what is working.
- Provide questions that remind you about how you deal with challenges positively.

1. What is the challenge you want to overcome?
2. What do you want to get out of solving this challenge?
3. What changes have you already tried in order to resolve the challenge?
4. How would you define the challenge for which you are seeking help?
5. How often does this challenge affect you?



6. How long has it been going on?
7. How have you dealt with it in the past?
8. What is said or done when this challenge occurs?
9. What happens next?
10. And then what?
11. What would you see on the recording if you made a video of the challenge?
12. How have you tried to address this challenge?
13. What has worked, even a little bit?
14. Have there been changes for better or worse since you decided to act?



15. Who else noticed this?

16. What will it be like when the challenge is solved?

17. What will you be doing instead?

18. When that happens, what difference will it make?

19. How will other people know that things are better?

20. Who will notice first?

21. And then who?

22. What else will be different?

23. Tell me about times when the challenge does not occur or is not affecting you very much.



24. Is there something that makes the challenge less at certain times?

25. What are you doing differently at these times?

26. What else is better at these times?

27. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 being the best, how did you feel when things were at their worst? .

28. Where are you on that scale right now? .

29. What happened when you felt like a 10?

30. Therapy can help you with your challenge, but maybe a "10" is too big a goal. What number will be acceptable for you? _____



31. How will you recognize when you are one point further up the scale?

32. What else will be different when you are one point further up?

33. How long will it take to get one point up the scale?

34. How will you get through the rest of the day?

35. How have you kept going so far?

36. What else helps?

37. Is there anyone else who can help you with this challenge?

38. Anyone else?

39. How do these people help you with the challenge?



A Miracle Occurs

Suppose you sleep tonight, and while asleep, a miracle happens, and the challenge that brought you to counseling is solved. But you are asleep and do not realize it has been solved. What will be the first minor signs that this miracle has happened, and that the challenge was solved?

What Has Helped You?

Personal change can be a long and sometimes unexpected process. Sudden insight or following a carefully crafted plan can help you find solutions to your challenges and conflicts. You can also find help by working with a therapist, reading books, spending time with trusted friends, learning information on the Internet and social media, and much more.

Whatever your process in discovering solutions to your challenges and conflicts, writing down what you learned will be essential to making lasting changes.

This worksheet is designed to help you think about what has helped you along your journey to overcome your challenges. At least once a month, it takes some time to fill in the worksheet. You will likely benefit from sharing it with your therapist or a close friend. Of course, you can also use this worksheet more frequently. Using it more frequently may be helpful in times of stress and during difficult life transitions.

Consider

Complete the following questions in the space below.

1. What are specific skills you learned in therapy, counseling, or coaching?
2. What are specific insights you have gotten from therapy?
3. What books or other resources have helped you (be specific about what has helped)?



4. What are some things that have inspired and motivated you (e.g. quotes, people, events, activities, etc.)?
5. What are some decisions you have made that could help you with future choices?
6. Are there spiritual practices or spiritual moments that have guided or inspired you? If so, list them.
7. Have changes in your habits made a difference? How so?
8. What else has helped you?
9. After reflecting on what has helped you, what is the one thing you think made the most important positive impact?

Identifying Past Successes

In solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT), identifying past successes can help you identify your strengths and previous solutions that can be built upon or re-utilized. The goal is to help you gain a more balanced view of your situation and capabilities, which can improve your confidence and self-efficacy. This approach can foster a positive mindset and encourage you to leverage your own strengths and resources.

Identifying past successes is important for several key reasons. Even though SFBT is a goal-oriented therapy that focuses on present and future circumstances and goals (rather than past experiences), exploring past successes plays a vital role within this framework for the following reasons.

This strengths-based approach emphasizes the resources, skills, and abilities you already possess. Identifying past successes can help you recognize and leverage your strengths to address challenges and pursue



your goals.

Reflecting on previous achievements and the strategies that led to those successes can boost your confidence and sense of competence. Self-assurance is essential to motivating you to tackle present difficulties.

Past successes provide a valuable toolbox of strategies, solutions, and coping mechanisms that you have effectively used before. These can be adapted and applied to current situations, offering concrete, proven methods for overcoming obstacles and achieving your goals.

SFBT aims to shift the focus from challenges to solutions, from what is going wrong to what is going right. Highlighting past successes helps to cultivate a positive outlook, encouraging you to view yourself as capable and resourceful, which is more conducive to challenge-solving and goal achievement.

By identifying past successes, you can see evidence of your ability to make changes and achieve goals, which fosters hope and optimism about your future.

Your path to success is unique. Examining past successes helps you identify personalized strategies and solutions that align with your values, preferences, and life context.

Identifying your past successes empowers you, providing a sense of agency and a toolkit of

strategies for addressing current challenges and working toward future goals.

This worksheet is designed to help you reflect on your past successes and understand how they are a foundation for overcoming current challenges. By recognizing your achievements, you can build confidence and a sense of competence that will aid you in navigating life's difficulties.

Anticipating Success

Psychologists have long recognized the ability people have to create their futures unconsciously. Some people make things worse for themselves without realizing it. They expect things to go wrong, and without really thinking about it, they do things that make their fears come true.

Other people seem to put themselves in situations that make their lives better. Of course, if you live a healthy lifestyle, work hard, and plan for the future, things are more likely to go better for you. A positive attitude that anticipates success also makes a difference.



Recognizing the importance of our unconscious wishes and needs, solution-oriented brief therapy (SFBT) asks people to concentrate on how things will be in the future, where their challenges will have less influence or may be absent altogether. Concentrating on the positive aspects of your life rather than on your challenges directs your unconscious to make decisions that will be more productive and beneficial. The concept of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" is a very real psychological phenomenon. You can make your future better or worse – so why not make it better?

Creating the Solution

Imagine that the challenge you are now having will be gone in six months or a year. Write about how your life has changed for the better. Be very specific. Be positive but also realistic.

Now, reread what you wrote. Is there anything you can do that is likely to make this happen? Even if it is not directly related to your challenge, write it down. Make a copy of this practice and read it frequently, perhaps once weekly. Keep reading about the future. Convince yourself that it can happen. Keep thinking about even the simplest ways to make positive changes in your life.

Things to Do Differently to Make Positive Changes in My Life



Exploring Exceptions to the Challenge

Solution-focused therapy is a goal-directed collaborative approach to change conducted by directly observing your responses to a series of questions. Based on what you want to achieve, it focuses on the present and future circumstances and desires instead of past experiences. The approach assumes you have some knowledge of what would make your life better, even though you may need help describing the details of your better life. You already possess at least the minimal skills necessary to create solutions, and you may identify when a challenge is not present or less influential in your life. Establishing these situations can build hope by demonstrating that the challenge is not “fixed” and not constantly occurring.

Exceptions refer to those instances or periods of time when your challenge either does not occur at all or happens to a lesser extent than usual. These exceptions provide evidence that the challenge is not constant and that there are circumstances under which you experience relief or better outcomes. Identifying and understanding these exceptions help you to:

Recognize that the challenge is not all-encompassing, offering hope and a different perspective. Analyze what is different about these times—what factors, behaviors, thoughts, or external conditions contribute to the absence or reduction of the challenge.

Use these insights to develop strategies to increase the frequency of positive exceptions. This might involve replicating the behaviors, thoughts, or conditions present during the exceptions.

Build on existing strengths and resources, reinforcing your capacity for creating change in your life. Exceptions challenge the challenge-saturated story that you might have and open up new possibilities for action. They are the foundation for constructing a more positive and solution-focused narrative about your life and capabilities.

This worksheet includes a practice designed to help you explore and identify exceptions to your challenge, which can be pivotal in creating a pathway toward a solution.

Reflections

Reflect on and answer the following questions. Think about recent instances and those in the more distant past. Remember, the goal is to identify exceptions to the challenge—times when you expected the challenge to happen, but it did not, or times when the challenge could have been worse.



Briefly describe the challenge you are facing.

When has this been less of a challenge for you?

Think about last week. Were there times when the challenge did not occur, even though you might have expected it to? Describe these instances.

Can you think of times in the past month when the challenge was less intense or absent? What was different about these times? Be specific.

Reviewing the exceptions you identified, what happened during these times that was different? Consider your actions, thoughts, environment, and the people around you?

What did you do differently during these times? How did others around you behave differently?

What small steps can you take to increase the frequency of these exceptions or to create new exceptions?

Are there specific behaviors or thoughts that you can replicate or encourage to occur more often?



Set one or two small, achievable goals for the coming week that involve replicating the conditions or behaviors associated with the exceptions.

How will you remind yourself to implement these steps? Consider setting reminders, enlisting the help of a friend or family member, or placing visual cues in your environment. Describe what you will do.

Reflect on your experiences at the end of the week. Did the challenge occur less frequently or intensely? Explain.

What adjustments would you like to make to your approach for the next week?
The next month?

