Finding the Solution

Applying Solution-Focused Theory when Working with Students

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What we will be COVERING

- The Basics of what Solution Focused Theory Is.
- The current research that is out
- Why it matters to Student Affairs
- Case Studies and Real Life application
- Resource Sharing
The Basics

- Goal Oriented theory that focuses on Strengths
- Originally used as a brief therapy in counseling setting
- Questions and Compliments are Major tools
- Students are the experts of themselves
  - Adopt the “not knowing” attitude
Goals should be specific and something that can be motivated

Goals should be positive and focus on strengths

These goals can be broken into smaller pieces. Little changes lead to big changes.
Scaling Questions

* Checking in to see where they client is at with the goal on a 1-10 scale.
  * 1 being that it is the worst that it can be
  * 10 being that its perfect and wonderful with no problem
* Measure both where they are currently at and where they think the number should be to be successful.
Offering a different, more positive view of something the student perceives as a fault. (Welfel & Patterson, 2005, p. 91)

This can happen throughout the sessions to help with his understanding.
Looking for Exceptions and Constructing Solutions

* Here you are looking for things that have helped progress or things that have worked in the past.
  * “Has this problem always been happening or has there been a time when it hasn’t been as bad?”
* When things have worked make sure that compliment then progress or show enthusiasm for the option.
There are times when what they are working on hasn’t gotten better.

Ask coping questions of how did they keep it from going even lower.
“Homework Assignments”

- Make the student the expert and ask them
  - “If you were going to give yourself something to work on this week, what would it be?”
- This is a way for them to take ownership and work on something to make themselves better.
Some people have difficulty thinking of a goal.
The Miracle Question can be used to come up with smaller goals.
Allows for them to think of it in a more positive light.
There are many forms of the Miracle Question but there is one that is commonly used.
I am going to ask you a rather strange question [pause]. The strange question is this: [pause] After we talk, you will go back to your work (home, school) and you will do whatever you need to do the rest of today, such as taking care of the children, cooking dinner, watching TV, giving the children a bath, and so on. It will become time to go to bed. Everybody in your household is quiet, and you are sleeping in peace. In the middle of the night, a miracle happens and the problem that prompted you to talk to me today is solved! But because this happens while you are sleeping, you have no way of knowing that there was an overnight miracle that solved the problem. [pause] So, when you wake up tomorrow morning, what might be the small change that will make you say to yourself, ‘Wow, something must have happened—the problem is gone!’” (Berg & Dolan, 2001, p. 7.)
Why it Matters to Student Affairs

- Easy to Apply
- We work with students usually in very quick settings
- Easily make the connections and a new frame to look through.
Activity

Please get together with a partner

* Through the activity, please note how you are feeling
Let’s try it out

* For 2-3 minutes talk about everything that has gone wrong this week. Your partner should listen and ask questions that draw out your responses on what has gone wrong.
* Take another 2-3 minutes to talk about what has gone right today. Your partner will listen respectfully and ask questions that elicit additional remarks.
* Now discuss with each other how each brief conversation made both you and your partner feel.
Case Study
Case Study Reaction Questions

* How, as a student affairs professional, do you help students cope with stress? What kinds of activities or suggestions do you share with students? Do you ever reflect on how you operate and what you model in this area?
* What assumptions do you bring when working with a student? Do they hold up with a Solution-Focused approach? In what types of situations might they not hold up or be the most effective approach?
* Austin clearly has many strengths and wants to succeed in college. Think of a more challenging situation, a student whose strengths may be harder to identify easily. How might you use a Solution-Focused approach with that student?
Conclusion and Thank You

* Questions?

COUNT YOUR RAINBOWS, NOT YOUR THUNDERSTORMS.
DOSES-OF-INSPIRATION


http://www.sfbta.org/research.pdf