

Sources of inspiration...

You may be wondering how to assist clients in transition from „less wanted” toward „more wanted” on the basis of every required source of inspiration while you apply into practice useful purposefulness assumption within Situations Model of SFBT. This short paper will outline it somehow for you.

Let's start little bit earlier! I mean since SFBT started to be developed in Milwaukee (BFTC), Bruges (Korzybski Institute) and later “all around the world” the very obvious and valuable strategy was giving attention to utilize client's experiences. They called it – exceptions technique and it was rooted in the works of Milton Ericson and his thinking. Tendency to stay focused on utilizing client's experiences was reinforced by many other SF assumptions, ideas like: work within client's perception, client is the expert, client have everything she/he needs to obtain desired change, your role is just to listen to and ask questions, follow not knowing stance! In practice therapist was very entitled to ask questions like:

When it was better? How was that? What was different than? or

What do you know about others in similar situations and how can we utilize it?

It worked pretty well, especially in cases where client's experiences with themselves or client's knowledge about others in similar situations appeared to be sufficient to obtain desired change. However it was not always a case. That was one of my practical dilemma during work with clients, that referring to their “exceptions”, means experiences, not always was sufficiently useful. I was trying to find out ways how to respond better to client's needs in such situations. During years I developed “data situations” technique, which inherently incorporates exceptions technique taken from SFBT, but is broaden by other strategies on the quest to find useful ideas for the client how to make a shift from “less wanted” toward “more wanted”. In case we look for definition we can define **data situation as the information based on the past or presence, which potentially could be useful for a client in the context of present situation and preferred situation.**

Theoretically each conversation about exceptions is undertaken to meet at least one or two goals. First of them is "inspirational" one, second "operating" one. Inspirational goal means that by talking about exceptions we mainly focus our attention on building pictures of clients "better" functioning. We're mainly interested in the description of how it was, what was different, what was going on. Operating goal directly focused on the aspects of know how. So, we want to figure out possible connections, supportive coexistence, positive influences, useful strategies which allow us to achieve preferred situation. There're a few kinds of the data situations, and only some of them refers to client's experience. Still referring to client's experience seems to be obviously and naturally first source of searching in typical situations of using SFBT.

You can see structure of data situations technique described into the particular steps.

1st step – referring to client's personal experience- within SFBT tradition obvious source of searching for useful experiences.

What is your experience with this? when it was like that? how was that? What was useful?

if sufficient – stop here - if not sufficient go to the some of the next steps

2nd step – referring to client's knowledge about others - it's about client's experience and knowledge based on observing others or just taken / received from others

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What do you know about other people experience with this? How was that? What was useful for them? How can you/we utilize it?

if sufficient – stop here - if not sufficient go to the some of the steps

3rd step – encouraging client to find out more about other experiences - by using this source of exceptions we offer to client's possibility to meet with people who personally share similar situations, difficulties, goals, preferred situations like our client and are ready to talk to each other and exchange with personal know how with others. Another option is reading, watching, listening to via very different media sources about other's experiences.

Would like to meet with people with such experience? Go and find out about their experience! Meet with them personally or read about that! How was that? What was useful for them? Go, find out, come back, share with me! How can you/we utilize it?

if sufficient – stop here - if not sufficient go to the some of the steps

4th step – referring to therapist's knowledge about others experiences - in some cases it may be clear for both sides - client and therapist - that knowledge and experience collected by therapist from her/clients during years of practice could possibly become useful source of ideas how to cope with life, or how to achieve preferred situation. Important issue is getting clients authorization to speak about therapist "know how" collected from previous clients in somehow similar situations.

Would you like to listen to my knowledge about other people and their experience with this? If yes, I can share with you! So, it was like that.... How can you/we utilize it?

if sufficient - stop - if not sufficient go to the some of the steps

5th step - referring to therapist general knowledge - sometimes for many reasons some of the mentioned above sources of exceptions are not sufficiently useful for our clients. Still probably we as, a professionals have some kind of theoretical knowledge, which at least light in the darkness with the minimal hope, that can be helpful for a client, as long as, client is interested in considering such data.

Would you like to listen to some "books" knowledge I have about this? if yes, I can share with you! So, it's like that... How can you/we utilize it?

if sufficient – stop here - if not sufficient go to the some of the steps

6th step – referring to the idea of co-creating prototypes - basically concept of exceptions is rooted in the past, is based on the past experiences. Prototype exceptions tends to be focused on near future, like the concept of small change at the scaling technique. Prototype exception implies that client and therapist try to put their effort to create new strategy, which contains possibility of being useful for a client following one of the sf rules "do something different".

So, what we can do now is to co-create prototype! Are you interested in this? if yes let's do brainstorming and develop prototype! Than, you'll check it out!

if sufficient – stop here - if not sufficient go to the some of the steps

7th step – referring to mystical sources of inspiration based on clients believe – some of our clients bring resource of having relationship with God, mystic person. Our personal believe, as a therapist is not so important here, much more important is believe of the client. In most cases, believe of Gods existence assume God's ability to share with God's grace, and one of them is God's inspiration. Medical doctors, at least some in Poland, encourage clients in very difficult situation to use this strategy by saying: "We have done all we could, now you can pray and wait." Following such direction we can incorporate it into clients situation and encourage client to "apply" to her/his God for a kind of advice, inspiration...

How have you been inspired by your God previously? What was the way of communication? What was it about? Pray for inspiration to your personal God! Keep your mind open for God's advices! Remember messenger can appear in very different context! Come back with your observations!

if sufficient – stop here - if not sufficient go to the some of the steps

8th step – referring to coping strategies

What if the only thing we can do is to cope somehow better with this?

let's focus on coping with this, as long, as we'll not be able to find out something more useful...

My experience with practical utilization of the concept of data situations appeared to be very handy and well addressed to client's needs and expectations. It's based on the idea taken from the knowledge about human species. What is typical for the human species is gathering and sharing information. That ability to gather and share information gave the massive impact to human's development. I decided to utilize that tradition more widely within my practice.