

From Paper to Practice

Sensible Strategies for School-Based Counseling

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Learner Objectives:

Effectively facilitate activities and conversation in school-based counseling sessions.

Apply counseling strategies to support the use of the NASP Practice Model and the provision of mental health services to students in schools.

NASP Domains:

1: Data-Based Decision Making

4: Interventions and Mental Health Services to Develop Social and Life Skills

6: Preventive and Responsive Services

8: Diversity in Development of Learning

Agenda

Part I:

Eligibility & IEP Development

BREAK

Part II:

Strategies & Practice

Q & A

Practice: Warm Greeting

- Opportunity to make sure student(s) are greeted intentionally and positively at the start of each session
- Examples: Elbow bump, toe tap, compliment, knock-knock joke, silly faces, animal moves
- **Today: turn to the person next to you and say the first word that comes to mind (Example: person 1 says, “coffee” and person 2 says, “delicious” then switch).**

(Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, 2020)

Why is this important?

From the Centers for Disease Control:

- 1 in 6 school-age children met diagnostic criteria for a major mental health diagnosis (per parent and teacher report)
- Anxiety is the most commonly reported mental health diagnosis, followed by oppositional defiant disorder and AD/HD

The National Alliance on Mental Health:

- 50% of all mental health conditions begin before age 14
- 50% of school-age children received any kind of treatment in the last year
- Children are most likely to receive mental health support in school than in any other setting

The Association of Children's Mental Health estimates 1 in 10 children have a psychological disorder significant enough to impact their functioning in their school home or community setting.

Counseling as a Related Service per IDEA

Sec. 300.34 IDEA: “Related services means transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education...

Counseling services means services provided by qualified social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors, or other qualified personnel

Psychological services includes—

- (i) Administering psychological and educational tests, and other assessment procedures;
- (ii) Interpreting assessment results;
- (iii) Obtaining, integrating, and interpreting information about child behavior and conditions relating to learning;
- (iv) Consulting with other staff members in planning school programs to meet the special educational needs of children as indicated by psychological tests, interviews, direct observation, and behavioral evaluations;
- (v) Planning and managing a program of psychological services, including psychological counseling for children and parents; and
- (vi) Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.

Bottom Line: School-based counseling as a related service is for educational benefit

Eligibility Considerations

Students requiring skills to be successful in school and to make progress on existing IEPs and whose needs cannot be met using less restrictive supports

Conversations about counseling as a related service should occur within the ARD committee and should be based on evaluation data

- For students already identified: assemble the ARD committee to discuss the need counseling services, to review the IEP and discuss other relevant information to problem-solve whether evaluation for counseling is appropriate
- For students undergoing initial evaluation: these considerations can be included as part of the evaluation.

Questions to Consider

What is the the team's concern? How long have these concerns been present?

Have other interventions been unsuccessful?

Is the student making educational progress? If not, does the student need counseling to be successful accessing the curriculum and making progress on their existing IEP goals?

Does the student have competencies to make counseling beneficial?

Has the student participated in general education counseling services? If yes, what was their response?

Does the student have existing social, emotional or behavioral supports? Do these supports reflect current areas of need?

Is there a behavior intervention plan? Is it based on a recent functional behavior assessment?

Is the student receiving counseling privately?

Is it appropriate to remove the student from their educational setting to provide counseling?

What skills or competencies does the team hope the student will obtain through counseling?

Is the student open to participating?

Sources of Data to Make a Decision

1. The existing IEP (present levels of performance, goals and progress)
2. Review of cumulative data (report cards, discipline referrals, attendance)
3. Existing evaluation (social, emotional or behavioral information, FBA/BIP)
4. Sociological factors (family history, recent or significant changes, prior counseling participation)
5. Interviews
6. Observations
7. Standardized measures

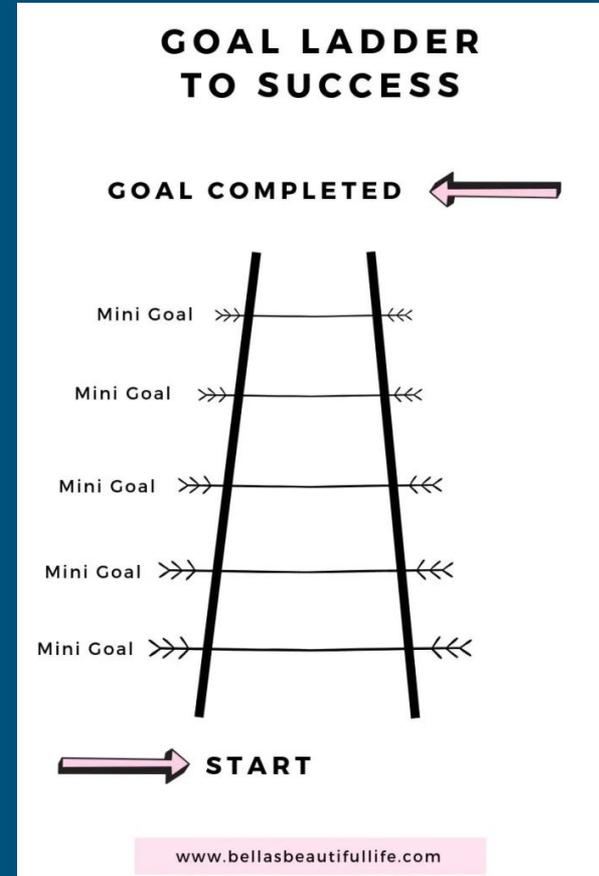
Developing the Counseling IEP

- Ensure that evaluation reflects the student's present levels of functional performance using measurable and objective data. This information can be easily adapted into a present levels statement and used to develop IEP goals.
 - Present levels should be brief, focused and support the need for the goals and services

Developing the Counseling IEP

Develop an IEP and treatment plan that aligns with the student's goals:

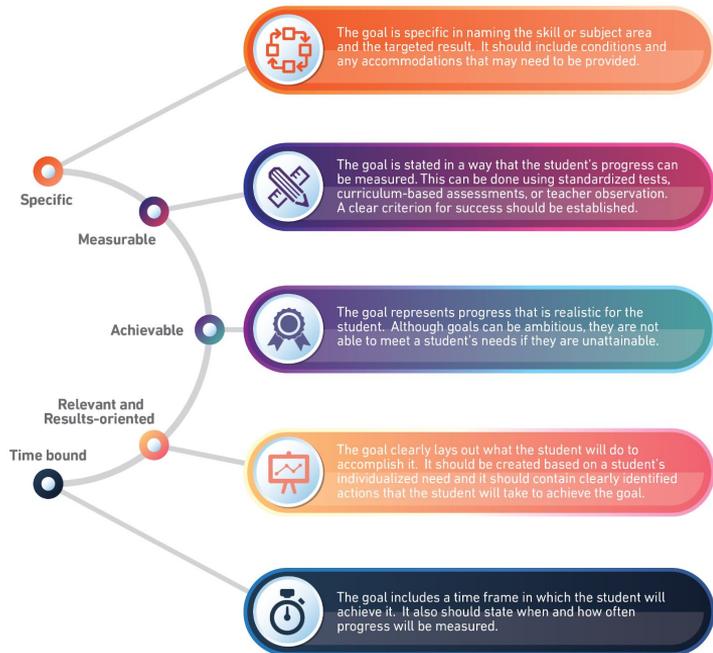
- Work with student to develop goals & objectives
- Use student language
- Identify what student will be doing
- Collaborate with student to develop achievable steps to reach identified goal
- Set the bar so student will be successful



Example:

- Identified problem: anger management/frustration tolerance
- Student identified goal: “I want to work on my anger.”
 - Collaborative identified goal: “I will finish my work instead of giving up or yelling.”
- Treatment plan goal for IEP: Student will utilize coping skills as needed to complete assignments when student becomes upset during work time in 4 out of 5 instances over 6 consecutive weeks as measured by teacher and counseling data.

How to Write SMART IEP Goals



Example:

By October 2017, when given a set of dice, ten frames, and a verbal prompt, Student will represent addition and subtraction within 20 with objects, drawings, and/or equations as measured by 80% accuracy during at least 4 out of 5 teacher observations. Progress towards mastery will be measured on a quarterly basis.

Adapted from:
Lee, A. M. (n.d.). How to Tell If Your Child's IEP Goals Are SMART. Retrieved October 11, 2017, from <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/how-to-tell-if-your-childs-iep-goals-are-smart>

SMART goals should contain two components: both the overall goal and the objectives (or markers) to achieving the overall goal.

Example:

In 36 instructional weeks, using strategies learned in counseling sessions, Stephanie will independently utilize coping skills as needed to complete assignments when she becomes upset during work time in 4 out of 5 instances over 6 consecutive weeks as measured by teacher and counseling data.

Non-Example:

In 36 instructional weeks Stephanie will improve her coping skills as measured by counseling notes.

Goal and Objectives Example

In 36 instructional weeks, using strategies learned in counseling sessions, Stephanie will independently utilize coping skills as needed to complete assignments when she becomes upset during work time in 4 out of 5 instances over 6 consecutive weeks as measured by teacher and counseling data.

Objectives:

1. Student will learn and practice 3 coping skills, including but not limited to, deep breathing techniques, using words to ask for a break, and doing chair push-ups to use when feeling upset (Weeks 1-6)
2. Student will identify 3 warning signs or body cues when they are becoming upset (Weeks 7-12)
3. Student will identify 3 triggers to body cues telling them when they are upset (Weeks 13-18)
4. Student will (with faded prompting) practice coping skills when frustrated with assignments in 3 out of 5 instances (Weeks 19-24).
5. Student will independently practice coping skills when frustrated with assignments in 2 out of 5 instances (Weeks 25 - 30).

Consent, Assent and Confidentiality Procedures

While the child's parent or guardian will have signed in agreement with ARD committee recommendation for counseling, it is best to connect with the family privately to discuss counseling services.

Consent is provided by the child's parent (if under 18), however, the child's assent (or agreement to participate) should be obtained prior to the provision of services.

The terms of confidentiality should be clearly reviewed with the parent/guardian and the student.

Confidentiality

Exceptions to confidentiality:

1. Counselor has reason to believe there may be harm to self or someone else.
2. Counselor has reason to believe that you are involved in or have knowledge of child abuse, elderly abuse or the abuse of anyone who is incapable of protecting their own rights.
3. Counselor can be legally compelled to testify in a court of law to disclose information given in confidence if a judge deems that there is just cause for such testimony.
 - a. Could be verbal or include documented notes

A Note on Confidentiality and IEP Progress

Counseling IEPs will require progress monitoring for review and discussion by the ARD committee

- Have a conversation with families and students regarding limitations to what you will share in progress monitoring:
 - May share themes of content, progress, but not details or all information shared in confidence.
 - Highlight the importance of maintaining rapport with the student and that anything related to safety would be shared or discussed together.
 - Consider that parent can request notes/documentation

Solution-Focused Play Therapy Basic Skills

Nonverbal Skills

- Nonverbal behavior
- Empathy
- Reflecting behavior

Content Skills

- Reflecting content
- Reflecting feeling
- Summarizing

Encouragement Skills

- Complimenting
- Amplifying solution talk
- Returning the focus to the client

Interviewing Skills

- Open-ended questions
- Relationship questions
- Exploring client meaning

Nonverbal Skills

Nonverbal behavior

- Includes body posture, gestures, eye contact, eye movement, facial expressions, tone and intensity of voice, spatial distance from client, use of silence

Empathy

- The ability to understand another's world and feelings as if it were your own
- "To sense the child's anger, fear, or confusion without getting bound up in it." -Carl Rogers

Reflecting behavior

- Noticing the client's nonverbal behavior

Content Skills

Reflecting content

- Listening for who and what are important to to the client, incorporating and echoing clients' key words, paraphrasing
- Normalizing

Reflecting feeling

- Noticing and acknowledging feelings that may be expressed through words or behaviors
- Affirming client perceptions

Summarizing

- Restating a set of behaviors, phrases, or feelings that have been expressed

Encouragement Skills

Complimenting

- Recognition of client strengths and past successes
- Should focus on what the client does, says, or what's working well
 - Direct - "You worked really hard on that."
 - Indirect - "How were you able to make that tower so tall?"
 - Self-compliments - when the child notices positive abilities about themselves

Encouragement Skills

Amplifying solution talk

- Helps clients move from problem talk to solution talk
- Noticing hints of possibility; “wows and hows”

Returning the focus to the client

- Involves the client taking responsibility for change
- Have client focus less on how they want others to change and more on how they see themselves as part of the solution

Interviewing Skills

Open-ended questions

- Allows client to answer in a variety of ways rather than answer with a “yes” or “no”
- Often begins with “how” or “what”

Relationship questions

- Invites the client to consider possibilities from another person’s perspective
- Use family members, teachers, friends as a reference point

Exploring client meaning

- Getting a clearer understanding of what clients say and do, and how the client makes meaning about past successes and future possibilities

Limit Setting

A - Acknowledge child's feelings, wishes, or wants

C - Communicate the limit

T - Target acceptable alternatives

Ex. Child refusing to return to class

“You’re disappointed our time is ending and wish we could spend more time together. It is time to return to class. You can choose which way we walk.”

Cultivate Safety & Trust

ABCs of an Effective Learning Environment:

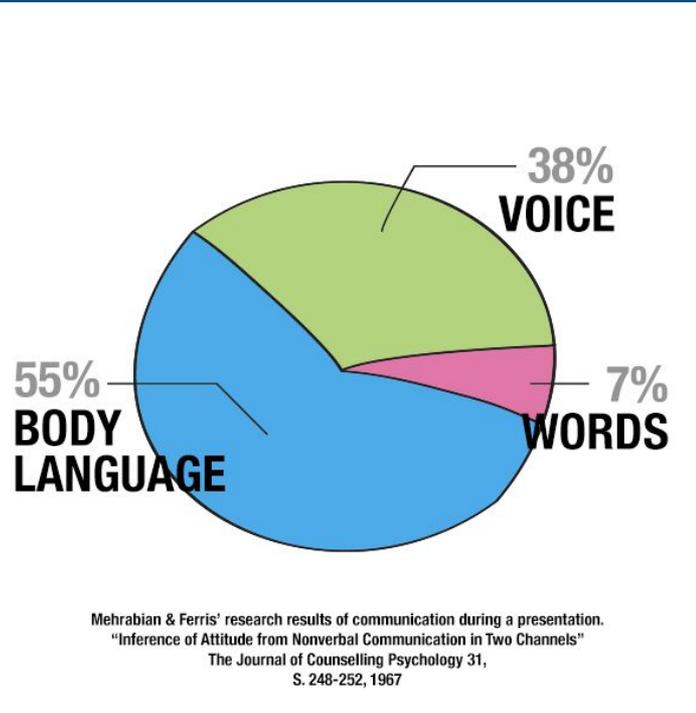
A - Autonomy: *to be in control and empowered to make decisions*

B - Belonging: *to be accepted and valued by others*

C - Competence: *to feel effective and accomplished*

(Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Cultural Differences in Communicating & Listening



Nonverbal communication impacts the effect of the verbal message by the recipient.

Consider how nonverbal communication reinforces status differences: are you sitting or standing when you greet the student? Are you sitting back or leaning in? Are you making eye contact or are you distracted?

Consider your desired dynamic and adjust accordingly. Recognize differences in verbal and nonverbal gestures across cultures as well as value of independence/assertiveness vs. reserved/passivity.

(Jussila et al., 2015) (Safir, 2017)

Cultural Differences in Communicating & Listening

Practice “Mindful Listening”

1. Look in the mirror (*Cultivate self-awareness*)
2. Step into your student’s shoes (*Shift awareness to another person’s perspective*)
3. Step up to the balcony (*Imagine yourself as an observer watching and listening to yourself and the student interacting*)

(Safir, 2017)

Pause for Reflection

Think about an opportunity to listen that you have coming up or have had recently with a student and reflect on:

Race and Culture

1. How do you identify? What communication styles are normative to your communities?
2. How does the student identify? What communication styles are normative to their communities? Do your perception of “normal” match?

Gender

1. What is your gender identity? How does your gendered experience shape the way you communicate and relate to others?
2. What is the student’s gender identity? How might gender influence the way the student interacts with you?

(Safir, 201

Pause for Reflection

Role

1. Consider your role as a school psychologist and person of status and authority. When does your role represent rewards or generate threats?
2. How might the student's role and status impact their emotional safety or social threat?

Emotion

1. How comfortable are you with displays of various emotions? How does your cultural background influence your comfortability? What was the role of emotion in your family of origin?
2. How comfortable is the student with displays of various emotions?

Be the observer:

1. Are either of you missing critical information that you need to effectively communicate? What's the quality of trust in the counseling relationship?
2. How are your identities similar or different? To what extent are you aligned?
3. Is the interaction unique or does it represent a pattern within the school organization or hierarchy?

(Safir, 2017)

Internal Homework

1.

Session Organization

3 Signature Social-Emotional Learning Practices:

1. Welcoming Inclusion Activities
 - a. Builds community and introduces the work ahead
 - b. Example: greeting activities, circles, low-threat interaction
2. Engaging Strategies
 - a. Interactive and reflective experience that meet multiple needs
 - b. Example: Brain breaks, pairing up for reflection/discussion
 - c. Plan time for debrief
3. Optimistic Closure
 - a. Foster a sense of accomplishment and acknowledgement of the important work
 - b. Example: action statements, wonderings, accolades

(The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), 2019)

Break Time: 15 minutes

Activities



Three Wishes*

Supplies Needed: paper, drawing utensils

Steps:

1. Give client 3 sheets of paper.
2. Provide instructions to draw a wish they have for themselves, one on each sheet.
3. Once complete, client can share wishes take turns guessing wishes.

Can be adapted to address specifics: wishes for family, wishes for future, wishes for school, etc.



Adapted from Gil (2015)

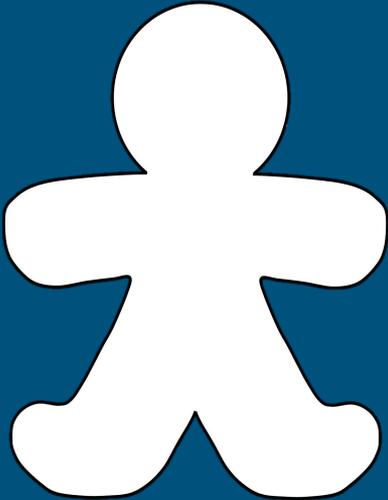
Head to Toe Regulation*

Supplies Needed: outline of gingerbread person, drawing utensils

Steps:

1. Give client person outline and drawing supplies.
2. Start by brainstorming different ways we use our bodies to regulate. Begin with the head and work your way down.
 - a. Ex. How do you use your brain to regulate? How do you use your eyes, ears, mouth, arms, hands, etc.
3. Write or draw ways you regulate different parts of our body.

Can be adapted to do a body scan and identify/bring awareness to physical sensations experienced with different emotions



One-Minute Four Square*

Supplies Needed: paper, drawing utensils

Steps:

1. Instruct client to draw a line down the middle of their paper short ways and long ways to make four equal sized squares.
2. Assign an emotion to each square. Ex. joy, worry, fear, surprise
3. For each square, have client think of a time they felt that emotion higher than a 7 on a scale of 0-10. Give client 60 seconds to draw a picture of the memory.
4. Client can then share their memories.



Feelings Legos



Supplies Needed: Legos/colored blocks

Steps:

1. Have each person pick 10-15 Lego blocks.
2. Assign each Lego color a different emotion.
 - a. Yellow=excited, blue=disappointed, red=angry
3. Take turns sharing about each feeling based on your chosen pieces.
 - a. Memories, triggers, how that feeling is expressed, how you manage or cope with that feeling
4. Build something together using all of the pieces

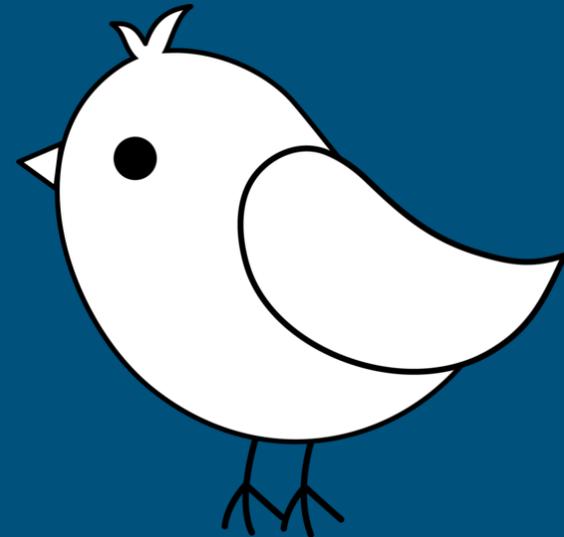
Follow the Leader

Supplies Needed: paper, drawing utensils

Steps:

1. Choose who will be the “leader.”
2. The leader will think of something they want to draw, and then provide instructions to have other person create a drawing as close as possible to theirs, without saying what it is or using visual cues.
3. When finished, compare products. Individuals can take turns leading and following

Can be adapted to be done with blocks/legos, Play-Doh, or making a design with playing cards



Other Activities

Dream Board

- Use magazines, markers, scissors, and glue/tape to create a collage showing dreams or goals for the next year.
- Encourage client to think about what they would like to accomplish, begin finding pictures or phrases that represent goals they would like to work on, and then tape or glue them to a board/piece of paper.

Uno or Candy Land with the Ungame

- After each move, take turns picking a card from the Ungame to answer a question.



(Hartwig, 2021)

Other Activities

Feelings Jenga

- Using a game of Jenga and a sharpie, write different emotions, phrases, open-ended questions, and fill-in-the blanks to prompt discussion.
 - Ex. “My teacher...”, “I am good at...”, “When I am sad I...”, “I feel worried when...”

Totika

- Similar to Jenga
- Has decks of cards with different topics such as self-esteem, social skills, divorce, bullying, anger, etc.



Group Activities - *Greeting*

Four Corners (*decision making, situation analysis, perspective taking, empathy*)

1. Before the activity, mark four to five areas in the room with a large image, number, or word that corresponds to the choices you will be giving.
2. Ask participants to silently reflect on a statement or question prompt that is aligned to the content of the engagement.
3. Share response choices with the group on a poster/slide (quotes, pictures, etc.).
4. Instruct participants to choose one of the responses, then ask them to move to that designated "corner" of the room, find a partner or trio within the group that forms in that area, and share what drew them to that choice.

Synectics (*social awareness, impulse control*)

1. Project an image or supply picture card(s) to tables.
2. Explain that the task is to complete the sentence stem: "[Given topic] is like this [image] because..." Participants generate and record as many comparisons between the image displayed and the topic presented as possible in one or two minutes.
3. Do a partner followed by whole group share.

Group Activities - *Greeting*

What's New? (*decision-making, situation analysis, communication, social engagement*)

1. Ask participants to find a partner in a way that is appropriate
2. Say, "Think of something that is new with you that you want to share with your partner." Then give participants a moment to think
3. Explain that each person will share their news while their partner listens silently, without comments or questions.
4. Tell participants you'll be keeping time and you'll let them know when it's time to switch roles.
5. Give pairs a moment to decide who will go first, ask the starting partners to raise their hands to make sure everyone is ready, then give the go-ahead to begin.
6. At the end of a minute or two, use your attention signal to bring the room to quiet and let participants know it is time to switch roles.

Debrief by asking what it was like to share AND listen to one another.

Group Activities - *Engaging*

Fishbowl (*perspective taking, empathy, diversity, respectful, self-awareness, self-management*)

1. Set up two concentric circles of chairs, all facing the center of the circle and have everyone take a seat
2. Provide the question prompt or discussion topic and set a timer for 10 minutes. Only inside group members may speak during this time. Instruct the outside group to quietly listen and notice their own ideas that surface during the discussion. Note-taking on a graphic organizer may be helpful.
3. When the time is up, ask the groups to trade place so that the outside group is sitting on the inner circle chairs and vice versa. Set the timer again and let the new inside group discuss the topic

Debrief: ask participants to write down a response to one comment they heard and explain why they agree/disagree, turn to a partner and discuss how it felt to be a listener and a discussor, share one word or short phrase with the whole group that was important about the discussion to them.

Group Activities - *Engaging*

Maitre d' (communication and social engagement)

1. Prepare engaging prompts (questions, quotes or images) that are aligned to the group's goals
2. Explain that when you, the maitre d', call a "table" (e.g. "Table for three!"), participants must move quickly to arrange themselves into groups of that number and then begin discussing the prompt.
3. Let them know that to keep things moving and encourage mingling, they will only have a few minutes to talk with each other at that "tables"
4. Share the first prompt and call out, "Table for _____!"
5. Use your attention signal to bring the room to silence when the time is up
6. Repeat several times, each time offering a different prompt for discussion

Debrief: What is something you heard that stood out to you? What is something you're wondering about? In what ways did your understanding of _____ deepen or change? What was the benefit or challenge of this activity.

Group Activities - *Engaging*

Save the Last Word (*impulse control, self-discipline, appreciating diversity*)

1. Identify a reading or video excerpt that will serve as the catalyst for this activity.
2. Have participants read/view the selected text/video and highlight three sentences or make note of three ideas that particularly stand out for them.
3. Ask participants to write each sentence/idea on the front of an index card. On the back of the card, ask them to write a few sentences explaining why they chose that quote (what it meant to them, reminded them of, how it connects to their own experience, etc.).
4. Divide the participants into groups of three, identifying one person as A, one person as B, and one person as C.
5. Invite the A participants to read one of their chosen quotations or ideas to their group. Then persons B and C discuss the offering while person A listens. (For example, What do they think it means? Why do they think these words/idea might be important? To whom?)
6. After several minutes, ask Participant A to read the back of their card (or to explain why they picked the quotation or idea), thus having “the last word.”
7. This process repeats with B sharing and others reflecting before B gets “the last word,” then is repeated again with C sharing.

Debrief: What was a benefit of listening to others respond to your passage before you spoke? To what degree was it challenging to hold back your own thoughts while others spoke?

Group Activities - *Engaging*

Mindful Minute (*identifying emotions, stress management, self-discipline*)

1. Explain that our breath can be used to calm our bodies and steady our minds.
2. Ask participants to bring awareness to their breathing when you sound a tone. It may be helpful for participants to place their hands on their bellies and notice the gentle rising and falling of their breath.
3. Invite them to either close their eyes or to rest them by looking at a spot they choose across the room. Remind them there is no need to try to breathe in any special way, but to just notice how their own breathing is happening right then.
4. Gently sound a triangle or bell or verbally signify the end.

Debrief: ask participants to share how the activity felt to them and when they might use this in their lives, and/or to share similar ideas like this that help them stay present and focused.

Group Activities - *Closing*

Future Me (*identifying emotions, recognizing strengths, self-efficacy*)

1. Hand out paper, pens, and stamped envelopes and ask participants to self-address the envelope. Be sure they also add their address as the return address to ensure delivery. Be mindful of alternatives for students who may not have a permanent address, like using the school as their address.
2. Read/post prompts that connect to the session; for example, “What have you learned that you plan to apply in the year ahead? (Or to your practice?) What do you want to remember from today's session?” “What message of encouragement do you want to send yourself?” “What reminders about how you're feeling right now do you want to capture in writing and send to your future self?”
3. Collect letters in their sealed envelopes and inform participants that you will mail the letters to them at a later date.

Group Activities - *Closing*

One-Minute Accolade (*accurate self-perception, impulse control, respect for others*)

1. Inform participants that you are going to set the timer for one minute (or longer if you have more time). During that time, the group will see how many people it can hear from.
2. Invite participants to think silently for a minute about ONE reflection question that you provide, such as: Something you appreciated about today, something you learned, something you want to thank someone for, or something that went very well, something you are grateful for, etc. Tell them to raise their hand when they have an idea of what they'd like to share.
3. Once several hands are raised, select one person who will start off. Explain that when you start the timer, the first person will go. Then anyone can share, whenever they're ready.
4. Encourage participants to listen attentively to each speaker. When one person finishes, someone else begins. It's okay if there is quiet between people sharing; that is natural.
5. Repeat the reflection question and start the timer.
6. When the timer goes off, listen as the person who is already speaking finishes. Then thank the group and move on. It's okay if not everyone who wanted to share had a turn this time. With repeated opportunities, the group grows more fluent and also more comfortable with silence between sharing. This closing activity can be used over and over without losing its impact!

Group Activities - *Closing*

One-Word Whip Around (*identifying emotions, impulse control*)

1. Prepare a statement or question prompt that is aligned to the content of the engagement. For example, “Think of one word about how you are feeling now that you have participated in this engagement” or “Decide on one word that sums up your learning for today.”
2. Invite participants to form a circle.
3. State the prompt, explain that everyone should prepare a one-word response, and allow a minute of private think time.
4. Ask for a volunteer to start off stating their prompt. The volunteer then chooses a direction to go (left or right), and participants continue to respond in turn around the circle. As always, it’s okay to pass by saying, “Pass.”
5. Note: Rather than “correcting” anyone who responds more lengthily, allow the modeling of the remaining group members to get the design back on track.

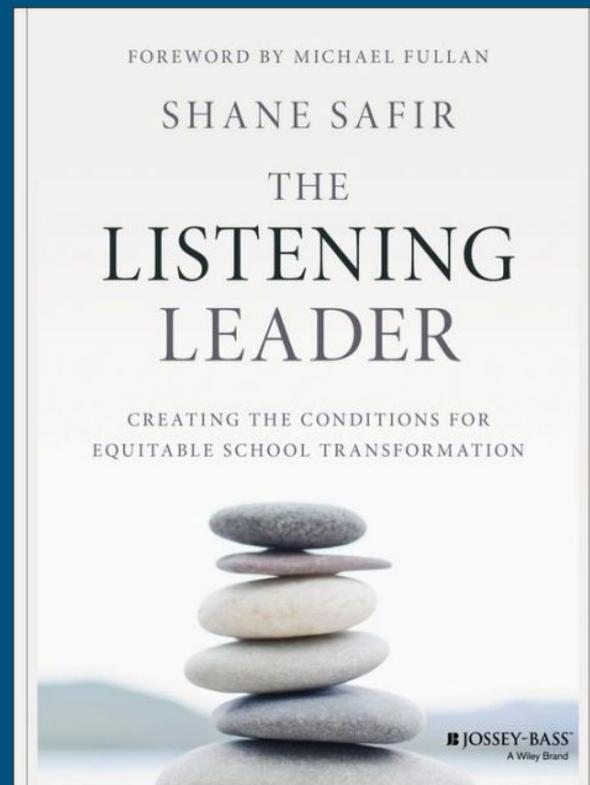
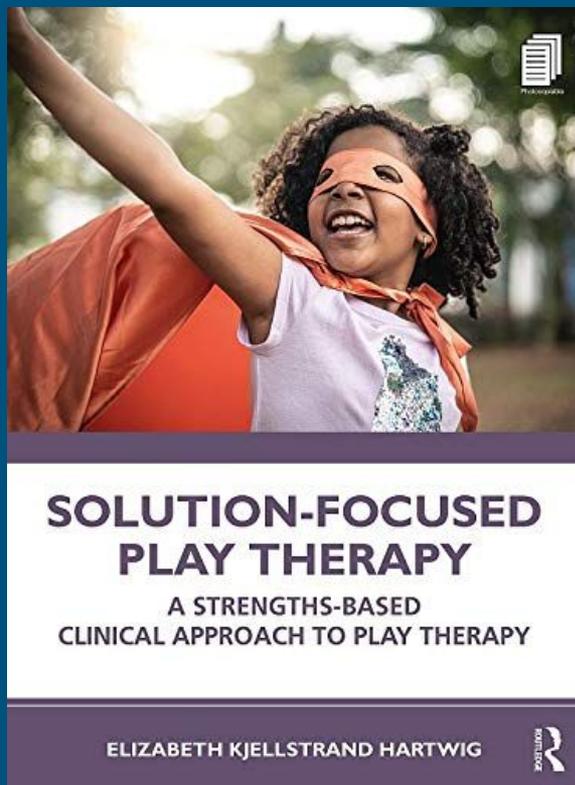
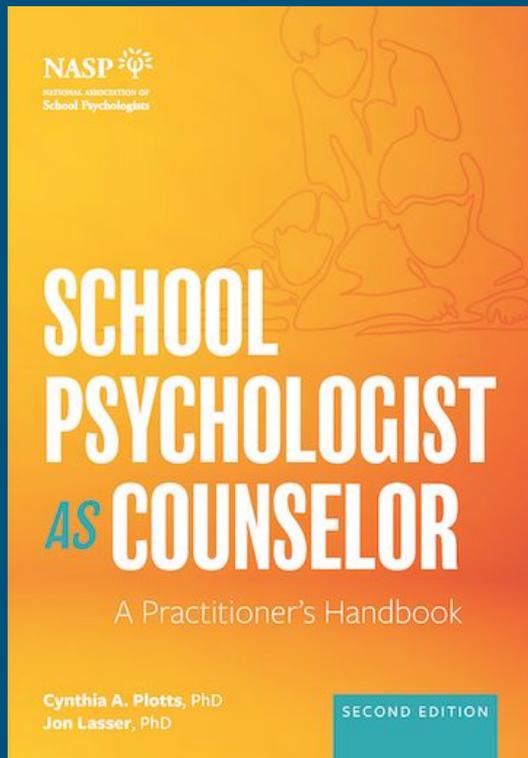
Debrief: ask participants if they noticed any themes or similar responses and ask what that might tell us about the engagement or participants. If it’s respectful and possible to record the words each person says, create a Word Cloud and share it with the group at a future date.

Group Activities - *Closing**

My Next Step (*self-efficacy, self-discipline, goal setting*)

1. Ask participants to think of their first next step based on what they learned during the engagement. It might be a conversation, more reading, or thinking more about a topic.
2. After giving participants a minute to think about what that step would be, ask them to share their next step with a partner or at their table.
3. Ask participants to write their “next step” on a sticky note and post the note somewhere they will be reminded of their task, such as on their desk, inside the cover of their related text, or in their assignment notebook, or take a photo with their phone.

Resources



Resources

[Association of Children's Mental Health](#): Problems at School

[Centers for Disease Control](#): Mental Health Systems in School-Age Children in Four Communities

[Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#): SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook

[Greater Tacoma Community Foundation](#): Social Emotional Learning During COVID-19

[National Alliance on Mental Health](#): Mental Health in Schools

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