

A Toolbox of Solution-Focused Strategies in School-Based Counseling, Consultation, and Intervention



More info and examples of workshop strategies can be found in *Solution-Focused Counseling in Schools*, 3rd ed. (Murphy, 2015, ACA Press, www.counseling.org) as indicated by the book icon (📚) and corresponding page numbers throughout the slides. These **value-added strategies** enhance the value and outcome of everything else you do with students, teachers, parents, and others.

Strategy 1: Ambassador Mindset



(SFCIS book, pages 72-73)

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few.

—Shunryu Suzuki

Research says: Clients who view themselves as inferior to their helpers are more likely to hold back their input and engagement and to be less hopeful about good outcomes than clients who view themselves as more equal to their helpers.





Strategy 2: Listening



 (*SFCIS book, pages 73-76*)

**To listen well is as powerful a means of influence as to talk well.* —Chinese Proverb

**When you listen generously to people, they can hear the truth in themselves, often for the first time. And when you listen deeply, you can know yourself in everyone.* —Rachel Remen, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*

**If you listen only for problems, you shortchange people. Everyone has something going for him or her. Your job is to spot people's resources and help them invest these resources in managing problem situations.*

—Gerald Egan, *The Skilled Helper*



Strategy 3: Respectful Curiosity



Nobody likes a know-it-all. —Mary Murphy

“Curious & Tentative” vs. “Absolute & Certain”

Expressions of respectful curiosity:

- I'm not sure if this makes sense, but . . .
 - Could it be that . . .?
 - I'm wondering . . .
 - What do you think might happen if you . . .?





Strategy 4: Complimenting

SE CIS book, pages 85-86)

Compliment people on *anything* unrelated to the problem (courage, coping, perseverance, commitment to improving things, attending a meeting, etc.)

- *Direct* (commenting directly on a person's actions)
 - *Indirect* (folding compliments into questions)
 - *Character-based* (referring to a person's positive attributes)



In a study where people were asked what their helpers did that was most beneficial to them, their top answer was "they complimented me on what I was doing right."

Strategy 5: Using the Language of Hope



(SFCIS book, pages 86-91)

Good words. That's where ideas begin.

—Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan

*Empowerment

- What can you do. . .?



*Presupposition

- when vs. if

Qualification

- often vs. constant, there have been times vs. always

Strategy 6: Obtaining Feedback & Adjusting Services



(SFCIS book, pages 101-104)



- The 2 most important types of feedback

- Informal and formal methods

Research says: Obtaining consumer feedback (and adjusting services based on the feedback) dramatically improves practitioners' effectiveness and service outcomes...sometimes doubling their effectiveness!



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Strategy 7: Forming Useful Goals



(SFCIS book, pages 116-135)



The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.

—Socrates

- Scaling Questions (What would 3.1 look like?)*
- Miracle Questions (life without the problem)
- 5-S Guideline

Strategy 8: Building on What's "Right and Working" (Build on Exceptions to the Problem)



If I focus on a problem, the prob



If I focus on a problem, the problem increases; if I focus on the answer, the answer increases.

—Alcoholics Anonymous (2001, p. 419)

- Identify an exception (recent time when the problem was absent or less intense)
 - Explore details of the exception (When? Where? How did you approach things differently?)
 - Expand the exception (What will it take to do this more often or in other places?)

Strategy 9: Building on What's "Right and Working" (Build on Other Resources)



I am more and more convinced



I am more and more convinced that our great problem is taking advantage of what we've got. —Thomas Merton

- Identify and apply available resources toward goals and solutions.
 - Resilience and coping skills (How have you kept things from getting worse?)
 - Previous experiences/successes (What has worked with similar problems?)
 - Solution ideas (What do you think might help turn things around?)
 - Values and beliefs (Why is it important to resolve this?)

Strategy 10: Empowering Any Sign of Change



(SEC/S book pages 146-152)



- Give Credit (Positive Blame)
 - Explore personal/social impact of change/improvement
 - Request People's Advice for Others
 - Prepare for Setbacks
 - Write Notes/Letters

Workshop Wrap-Up**Apply**

Take a few seconds to think about 1 or 2 specific things that you want to do more of—or differently—to build effective relationships and solutions in your work. And remember...



...You Can't Re-Arrange the Furniture Unless You're Invited into the House
