

This much-needed manual presents a flexible and culture-sensitive, solution-focused approach to family therapy, grounded in research evidence and full of useful clinical examples and compelling case vignettes that offer detailed practice-based knowledge. A must-read, both for family therapists who look for practical clues on how to integrate solution-focused techniques in their practice, and for solution-focused therapists who have not yet dared to apply the approach in family therapy sessions.

—**Mark Beyebach, PhD**, Associate Professor of Psychotherapy, Public University of Navarre, Pamplona and Tudela, Navarre, Spain; coauthor of *Changing Self-Destructive Habits: Pathways to Solutions With Couples and Families*

Franklin and Kim describe the nuts and bolts of solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) with families through practical examples, dialogues, handouts, tables, and other learning resources. These respected, experienced solution-focused authors give a thorough account of SFBT's cross-cultural change process and its empirical, conceptual, and historical foundations. Putting this manual into action will enhance practitioners' efforts to help families change with dignity.

—**John J. Murphy, PhD**, Psychologist, Professor Emeritus, University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, United States; author of *Solution-Focused Therapy* (American Psychological Association, 2024)

The foundational book, *Solution-Focused Brief Therapy With Families*, edited by renowned leaders in the field, Cynthia Franklin and Johnny S. Kim, provides evidence-based tools and techniques for impactful brief therapy sessions with both individuals and families. Emphasizing collaborative, language-based solution-building, it covers the development of solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) and essential elements such as constructing meaning, activating strengths, developing client goals, solution-focused scaling, and using questions to catalyze change. This makes it an invaluable resource for professionals dedicated to positive, goal-driven therapy.

—**Anne Bodmer Lutz, BSN, MD**, Executive Director, Institute for Solution-Focused Therapy; Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts, United States

This is a very important book for clinicians who want to help families change by using solution-focused principles and practices. Up-to-date, well-researched, readable—it's all here: theoretical foundations, evidence base, step-by-step guides to therapy sessions, key techniques, and copious case examples with their solution-focused dialogues. Most importantly, all the content is directed toward inspiring the moment-by-moment effective practice with families.

—**Peter De Jong, MA, PhD, MSW**, Researcher, International Microanalysis Associates; coauthor with Insoo Kim Berg of *Interviewing for Solutions*

Written by two experts, Dr. Cynthia Franklin and Dr. Johnny S. Kim, who have devoted their careers to researching and practicing solution-focused brief therapy, this treatment manual provides a step-by-step guide to clinical practice with helpful case examples and addresses important processes in treatment including dealing with emotions and crisis situations. *Solution-Focused Brief Therapy With Families* is a must-read for those who are interested in learning this strengths-based and family-centered approach to working with families.

—**Mo Yee Lee, PhD**, Professor, The Ohio State University College of Social Work, Columbus, OH, United States; coauthor of *Solution-Focused Treatment of Domestic Violence Offenders: Accountability for Change*

Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Preface—Cynthia Franklin and Johnny S. Kim</i>	<i>xi</i>
1. Introduction to Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT)	3
Cynthia Franklin, Matt Riley, and Johnny S. Kim	
2. Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Core Elements and the Process of Change	23
Cynthia Franklin, Katharine Sucher, and Johnny S. Kim	
3. Overview of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Structure	51
Johnny S. Kim and Cynthia Franklin	
4. Assessment and Beginning the Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Family Session	69
Johnny S. Kim and Cynthia Franklin	
5. Goal Formulation and Preferred Future	83
Johnny S. Kim and Cynthia Franklin	
6. Concluding the Family Session and Conducting Follow-Up Sessions	99
Johnny S. Kim and Cynthia Franklin	
7. Working With Emotions in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy	113
Cynthia Franklin, Anao Zhang, Matt Riley, and Johnny S. Kim	

8. Solution-Focused Crisis Intervention With Youth and Families	137
Xiao Ding, Cynthia Franklin, and Johnny S. Kim	
9. Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Case Examples With Parents and Children in Clinical Settings	155
Sara Jordan, Johnny S. Kim, and Cynthia Franklin	
10. Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Case Examples in Youth and Family Services	167
Sara Jordan, Johnny S. Kim, and Cynthia Franklin	
<i>Index</i>	<i>179</i>
<i>About the Editors</i>	<i>185</i>

Preface

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy With Families: A Training Manual is an applied book designed to help clinicians learn how to use the fundamentals of solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) and its specific strategies to assist families in clinical practices. We designed this book specifically for psychologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists, licensed professional counselors, psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, and other professionals who engage in family counseling and therapy and want to learn how to practice SFBT. Students within psychology and other professional groups who engage in family counseling and psychotherapy will find this book useful in their education and professional training programs. We are both trained as solution-focused therapists and, for the past 25-plus years, have gained extensive experience as clinicians, researchers, and teachers who have worked with other SFBT experts on the practice, dissemination, and implementation of SFBT globally. We were both fortunate to be originally trained in SFBT by the cocreators, Insoo Kim Berg and Steve de Shazer, who generously supported our research to study the evidence base of SFBT. Since the deaths of de Shazer (2005) and Berg (2007), we have continued to carry on the practice, research, and training on SFBT, having also worked in the leadership of the Solution Focused Brief Therapy Association (SFBTA), an organization founded by de Shazer and Berg that supports training in and research on SFBT.

In this book, we share our clinical and research experiences in learning SFBT, for the purpose of improving the clinical skills and fidelity to this

approach in family counseling. This book summarizes all aspects of SFBT therapeutic skills, including theory and the underlying process of change, assessment strategies, session structure, and counseling techniques. All of this information is grounded in research evidence and practice-based knowledge, and we purposefully structured this book with step-by-step instructions and detailed case descriptions. We believe that this kind of detailed clinical instruction was missing from other resources on how to practice SFBT. This book specifically focuses on clinical instruction using case descriptions, but all case examples throughout the book are fictionalized and/or use composites, and no identifying client information is included. We especially wanted to write this book because we noticed, in teaching graduate students and in training clinicians, that they had a hard time grasping the change process of SFBT and were unable to know how, when, and why to proceed with SFBT techniques such as the miracle question, scaling questions, exception questions, and so forth. Clinicians did not fully comprehend ways to formulate the questions and order them in a way that progresses toward client change during a counseling session. We noticed that many clinicians struggled with the coconstruction process, which is core technique and essential for therapeutic alliance and for facilitating change in SFBT. Furthermore, many of our students and trainees did not receive much clinical instruction in family counseling and how to practice SFBT with families. For these reasons, we wrote this book to provide a resource for how to practice SFBT with families and to remedy the learning gaps that we observed.

AIMS OF THE BOOK

Readers of this book will increase their knowledge of SFBT and understand several different techniques, which will serve as a useful foundation for using SFBT in a variety of settings and with families struggling with different presenting problems. First, readers will develop a firm grasp of SFBT's theoretical underpinnings and how it developed over time. This book provides context for readers, beyond the specific techniques of SFBT, by showing them the core practice elements and how the therapy works in sessions with families. This knowledge will enhance how quickly clinicians may develop their own style of therapy with this modality, based on their personal background in other family therapy modalities. Also, it will help readers understand the unique advantages of SFBT and how SFBT differs from well-known modalities that readers may already be familiar with.

Second, clinicians will understand how to conduct an SFBT counseling session by examining a detailed guide on how best to use SFBT techniques,

as well as case examples that outline how these strategies can be used in real-world situations. This includes descriptions of how to conduct an opening session, follow the optimal process for coconstruction, develop a positive and collaborative relationship, work with the emotions of families, and help families identify their preferred futures and goals. This book explains to readers the best practices for closing each session and how to structure the end of the therapy sessions. Many chapters provide ample case examples and illustrations of the therapy process and techniques. Throughout this book, as we stated previously, all case examples are fictional, use composites, or have had names and identifying details changed to ensure client confidentiality.

Third, readers will leave with an understanding of how to conduct SFBT when working specifically with families who have experienced trauma and crisis situations in a variety of settings such as health care, mental health, schools, social services systems, and private practice offices. This book also provides guidance on how SFBT may be used to help clients who are navigating parenting or school conflict, difficulties with a child, or family conflict more generally.

INSIDE THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the origins and background of SFBT. It traces SFBT's lineage from systemic family therapy and summarizes its empirical support with diverse families and across countries and continents. This chapter, and each subsequent chapter, concludes with key takeaways and a list of additional learning resources for readers seeking more discussion of the topics therein.

Chapter 2 summarizes the core elements of SFBT theory and how the process of change works. It highlights the importance of family clinicians learning the process of change to become proficient in the practice of SFBT. Essential elements are covered, such as the coconstruction process and strategic use of language, working with the strengths and resources of clients, building a collaborative relationship, the importance of goals and a preferred future, and the use of positive emotions in change.

Chapter 3 provides a guide for readers on how to conduct an SFBT meeting from start to finish and begins with a brief overview of solution-focused assessments. We briefly discuss the SFBT techniques used in each phase of a session, as well as their purposes, and we discuss how to conduct follow-up meetings and how the session structure sequence can be modified. This chapter serves as a big picture view of the therapy structure and techniques that are then broken down and illustrated in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 discusses how to start a first meeting with families, which includes establishing a collaborative relationship and therapeutic alliance, establishing the family session topic, and beginning a conversation with a family using the SFBT model.

Chapter 5 outlines how to continue a solution-building conversation by finding out what the clients want in the session, including how to handle multiple goals from various family members. It illustrates specific questions for transitioning to goal formulation and preferred future questions that help families figure out what they want out of the session. This chapter introduces the miracle question, the fast forward question, the suppose question, and difference questions that are used in the goal construction process and discussion of desired future outcomes.

Chapter 6 shows how to transition to the conclusion of a session. Specific clinical techniques are covered, such as optional session break, providing compliments to clients, scaling questions, setting up behavioral tasks, and setting a subsequent appointment if needed. In addition, this chapter discusses how to use the SFBT approach when conducting follow-up meetings with the same family.

Chapter 7 addresses misunderstandings about how SFBT responds to the emotions of families—providing instruction, based on our clinical experiences, that demonstrates how to work with painful emotions and psychological distress in SFBT. Specifically, it illustrates how to increase hope and positive emotions by using various SFBT techniques. This chapter also includes ways to integrate emotion-focused approaches into SFBT language and interventions while still utilizing SFBT's core change processes and techniques.

Chapter 8 summarizes how to use SFBT in crisis intervention with youth and families. It describes what a crisis is and how SFBT has been used in these situations, illustrating a two-order SFBT crisis intervention approach that closely aligns with the session structure covered in earlier chapters.

Chapters 9 and 10 conclude the book with additional examples of how to practice SFBT with various family cases. They offer several examples of the process, structure, and techniques explained throughout this book. Examples of cases include parenting issues and externally motivated families within larger social systems such as schools, child protective services, or the criminal justice system.

It is our best hope that this book will be a helpful guide to you as you practice SFBT. As with learning anything new, it takes time, practice, and persistence to gain confidence in using SFBT with your clients. Please reach out to us with feedback and questions.

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