Using Solution-focused thinking in career counselling

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Solution-focused counselling

- Pioneered by Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg and colleagues at Milwaukee Brief Family Therapy Center.
- Brief, constructivist, positively framed, future-oriented, collaborative inquiry that is respectful of client diversity and contextual differences.
Constructivist principles

- Everyone’s reality is based on their understanding of, and participation in, their own experiences.
- Human behaviour can only be understood in the context of the client’s whole environment and interactions within it.
Solution-focused thinking

- What is solution-focused counselling?
- What are constructivist principles?
- What is solution-focused thinking?
- The solution-focused career counsellor
Overview of a solution-focused strategy

1. Problem clarification and imagining the possible
   Constructing well-formed goals
2. Building client self-helpfulness
   Positive exceptions
   Encouraging hope (WISHED)
3. Constructing meaningful feedback
Problem clarification and imagining the possible

Well-formed goals must be:
- The client’s
- Small (but important)
- Specific, realistic, concrete, behavioural, observable
- The ‘start’ of something
- The presence of something
Techniques that help clients imagine the possible

- Direct questions
- Miracle questions
- Scaling questions
Direct Questions

- What would you like to get out of today’s career counselling session?
- How will you know that coming to see me about your [career concern] was a good idea?
- How will you know that you are where you want to be?
- What will be different for you when you [reach your goal]?
Miracle Question

- Most useful when clients are 'stuck'.
- Helps clients verbalise their thoughts about 'if only...then'.
- Client envisions a preferred future that incorporates:
  - Work/career/leisure
  - Relationships
  - Financial
- Suppose a miracle was to happen...what would you notice?
Scaling Questions

- Can be used to focus the entire session.
- Help clients construct meaningful descriptions of their concerns, goals, strengths, motivation.
  - What does that place on the scale look like?
  - Is there a point on the scale you would rather be?
  - What would be different for you at that point?
  - What would it take for you to move one point up the scale?
Building client self-helpfulness with Positive Exceptions

- Help clients explore behaviour or circumstances that make problem less problematic.
  - Have there been times when ...?
  - What did you do differently then (self helpfulness)?
  - What would others say was different for you (contextual meaning)?

- Responses provide examples of client success, resourcefulness, strengths
Encouraging Hope (WISHED)

- Wh qns (what, where, who where) NOT why?
- Instead (to replace negatively worded goals)
- Suppose (to help clients imagine alternatives)
- How (to encourage self-helpfulness)
- Emphasise positive differences
- Draw or write, make visible all positives, possibilities.
Constructing meaningful feedback

- Compliments
- Bridging Statement (goal)
- Future oriented message
Relevant reading