“We discovered that problems do not happen all the time. Even the most chronic problems have periods or times when the difficulties do not occur or are less intense. By studying these times when problems are less severe or even absent, we discovered that people do many positive things that they are not fully aware of. By bringing these small successes into their awareness and repeating successful things they do when the problem is less severe, people improve their lives and become more confident about themselves” (Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Association, n.d.).

**Group Discussion 1:** Write down the names of the other people in your group. Get to know each other and write down important information about them.

Partner 1 Name: ___________ Partner 2 Name: ___________

About Partner 1: ___________ About Partner 2: ___________

**Background: Postmodernism (Tarragona, 2008)**

1. Trend that developed in the 1970’s  
2. Opposite of “meta-narratives”: Believes that there is not a singular, universal truth, and that truth changes based on various contextual lenses, such as culture, theories, gender, etc.  
3. Rejects the medical model of modern therapies  
   a. No diagnoses  
   b. Counselor is not the expert in client’s life.  
4. Academic Advising Setting:  
   a. **Developmental Advising**  
   b. Student is the expert and makes their own decisions  
   c. Non-judgmental and transparent

**Group Discussion 2:** Each of you will discuss a problem either in your personal or professional life that you are comfortable discussing. For the people listening, you may ask questions for more clarity on the problem. Write down notes about your partners’ presenting problems.

Partner 1 Problem: ___________ Partner 2 Problem: ___________

**Overview of Solution-Focused Theory (Tarragona, 2008)**

1. Insoo Kim Berg and Steve DeShazer  
2. Developed at the end of the 1970’s  
3. Too much time focused on problems and not enough time on how to work through them  
4. Process  
   a. Define the problem.  
   b. Help the student set clear goals for working through their situation.  
   c. Explore exceptions and solutions.  
   d. Identify strengths.  
   e. Develop steps toward solution.  
   f. Avoid self-disclosure.  
   i. Can impact student’s ability to discover their own solution that works well for their situation
Group Discussion 3: Share with each other what biases you have when working with students. While listening to your partners’ problems, did you experience any biased thinking?

Notes from Discussion:

Techniques for Advising

1. Defining the problem and goal
   a. Get as much clarity on the problem and goal as necessary.
   b. Open-ended questions

Group Discussion 4: Discuss with your partners what you want to happen with your problem. What would you like to see in place of the problem? Write down your partners’ goals for their problems.

Partner 1 Goal: 
Partner 2 Goal: 

Take note of the open-ended questions you asked while getting to know your partners, their problems, and their goals.

2. Exploring exceptions and strengths
      i. Closed-ended question: “Have you ever felt confident making a decision in the past?”
      ii. Presuppositional question: “At what times in the past have you felt confident making a decision?”
   b. Ask the “miracle question.”
   Example: “Suppose that while you are sleeping tonight and the entire house is quiet, a miracle happens. The miracle is that the problem which brought you here is solved. However, because you are sleeping, you don’t know the miracle has happened. So, when you wake up tomorrow morning, what will be different that will tell you that a miracle has happened and the problem which brought you here is solved?” (De Jong & Kim Berg, 2002, p. 85)

Group Discussion 5: In your groups, create your own “miracle question” together or use the example above. Ask each other a “miracle question” and also explore exceptions to your problems and identify your strengths using presuppositional questioning.

Your miracle question:

Write down the presuppositional questions your group asked each other.
3. Developing steps toward the solution
   a. Follow the **SMART model** when helping students develop steps.
      i. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timelines
   b. **Scaling questions** to help make steps measurable
      i. Example: What would need to happen to move your comfort level speaking in public from 3/10 to a 4/10?
   c. Assign homework with a deadline.
   d. Provide feedback, highlighting the positive aspects of the student.

Group Discussion 6: Work with each other to identify one step you can each take toward the ideal situation you described in your answer to the “miracle question.” Ask scaling questions to develop an objective step and check to confirm that it follows the SMART model. Write down the steps each of you will take.

Partner 1:                  Partner 2:                  You:

What were the scaling questions you asked each other?

**Conclusion**

1. Solution-Focused Advising is adaptable into many advising practices and models.
   a. Examples: Design Phase of Appreciative Advising and Strengths-Based Advising
2. Model is brief, which can be accomplished in one or two advising meetings.
3. Not for every situation
   a. Sometimes, there is no realistic outcome to overcome a problem, or the student is not capable of seeing it.
   b. Medical model may be best for student’s situation.
   c. **While advising is partly counseling, we are not counselors, and this was just an introduction.**

**Activity:** Write down three things from this session that you will adapt to your advising practice.

1)  

2)  

3)  

**Final Group Discussion:** Write down the contact information of your partners or trade business cards. Agree to realistic deadlines for your SMART steps and write them down. On those deadline days, follow-up with your partners.

Partner 1 Contact Information:                  Partner 2 Contact Information:                  Partner 3 Contact Information                  

Deadline:                  Deadline:                  Deadline:
Resources for Further Learning


