Select and use counselling therapies | SFT

Assessment 1 of 2

Short Answer Questions

Assessment Instructions

Task overview

This assessment task is divided into seventeen [17] short answer questions. Read each question carefully before typing your response in the space provided.

Additional resources and supporting documents

To complete this assessment, you will need:

- Learning resources

Assessment Information

Submission

You are entitled to three [3] attempts to complete this assessment satisfactorily. Incomplete assessments will not be marked and will count as one of your three attempts.

All questions must be responded to correctly to be assessed as satisfactory for this assessment.

Answers must be typed into the space provided and submitted electronically via the LMS. Hand-written assessments will not be accepted unless previously arranged with your assessor.

Reasonable adjustment

Students may request a reasonable adjustment for assessment tasks.

Reasonable adjustment usually involves varying:

- the processes for conducting the assessment [e.g., allowing additional time]
- the evidence gathering techniques [e.g., oral rather than written questioning, use of a scribe, modifications to equipment]

However, the evidence collected must allow the student to demonstrate all requirements of the unit.

Refer to the Student Handbook or contact your Trainer for further information.

Please consider the environment before printing this assessment.

Question 1

In the first session, most solution-focused counsellors begin by engaging in "problem-free talk" with the client.

What is 'problem-free talk,' and why do solution-focused counsellors engage?

[Approximate word count: 90 - 100 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of problem-free talk and why solution-focused counsellors use it.

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

- Problem-free talks help set the scene for solution-focused counselling and allow the counsellor to get to know the client rather than the problem.
- It helps the counsellor better understand the client's strengths and how to best engage with them.
- It helps the counsellor identify the client's competencies, values and positive qualities.
- It allows the counsellor to see the client for who they are rather than a collection of their problems. The counsellor can 'choose' to work with the person instead of the issues.

Question 2

The following table contains three (3) client scenarios and three (3) problem-focused questions that a problem-focused counsellor might ask each client.

You must complete the table by writing an appropriate solution-focused question that a solution-focused counsellor could ask each client.

[Approximate table word count: 15 - 25 words per cell]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of how to ask solution-focused questions.

The student's response must reflect the content in the following sample answers.

Scenario	Problem-focused question	Solution-focused question
Billie is a 17-year-old student who doesn't know what she wants to do after finishing high school.	Why do you think figuring out what you want to do is hard?	Example: "If in five years, I saw you walking down the street and asked how you were, what do you hope you would be doing?
Nick is a 29-year-old engineer who has started feeling anxious whenever he has to do a presentation at work.	Can you tell me more about what happens when you get anxious?	Example: "Can you tell me about a time when you had to do a presentation at work and didn't feel anxious?"

Scenario	Problem-focused question	Solution-focused question
Rebecca is a 34-year-old first-time mother who is feeling overwhelmed by her newborn twins who won't stop crying.	How does it make you feel when you're unable to settle them?	Example: "What has helped – even a little – to soothe them and yourself?"

Question 3

When starting work with a client who is outlining their 'problem' in detail, how can a solution-focused counsellor gradually shift the focus of the counselling conversation to solutions rather than problems?

[Approximate table word count: 90 - 100 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response must demonstrate an understanding of how counsellors can shift the focus of the counselling conversation to solutions.

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

- Ensuring that questions are solution-focused– e.g., instead of asking about the cause/onset/history/effects of the problem, ask about exceptions, strengths, resources and preferred future.
- Instead of asking problem-focused questions and using neutral probes such as "Tell me more about that" or "I can see that this is causing you concerns, and it is important for you to address it."
- Develop specific solution-focused goals with the client by focusing on what they want to change, what their goal is, what steps they need to take to get started, etc.

Question 4

Why do solution-focused counsellors spend time at the beginning of the initial counselling session asking clients about any positive changes that they have made to help themselves since making their initial appointment?

[Approximate word count: 75 – 85 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of why solution-focused counsellors ask about pre-session change.

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

- In most cases, the client will be able to identify some positive changes, which the counsellor will then be able to highlight and explore.
- Highlighting pre-session change can help reveal valuable information for strategy development later in the counselling session.
- Asking about pre-session change sets the tone for solution-focused therapy by allowing clients to see that they can make changes themselves without relying on a counsellor.

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One commonly used solution-focused technique is the miracle question.

    a) What is the purpose of the miracle question, and when is it normally used?

    [Approximate word count: 65 - 75 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of the miracle question and when it is normally used.

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

- The miracle question is designed to get clients to look towards their preferred future and imagine how it will differ. This shifts the focus from the problem to the solutions.
- The miracle question helps the counsellor and client understand exactly what the client wants to change (i.e., counselling goals).
- It is typically used during the initial counselling session.

    b) What should a solution-focused counsellor do if they ask a miracle question and the client responds, "I don't know"?

    [Approximate word count: 70 – 80 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of the appropriate counsellor response in such a situation.

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

- Remain in encouraging silence to give the client time to think and respond.
- Prompt the client with questions to help them consider the specifics – e.g., What would be the first thing you would notice? What would you feel that was different? What would you see that was different? What would you do that was different?
- Encourage the client to use visualisation techniques to experience their preferred future.

    c) Solution-focused counsellors do not simply ask the miracle question in isolation. They follow up with questions to clarify the client's preferred future.

    List three (3) questions a solution-focused counsellor might ask to help do this.

    [Approximate word count: 35 - 45 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of appropriate follow-up questions to the miracle question that can be used to elicit more meaning.

The student's response must reflect the content in the following sample answer.

- "What else will be different?"
- "What might others (e.g., spouse, family members, children, friends, colleagues) notice about you that would tell them that the miracle has happened, that things are different?"
- "Have there been times when you have seen pieces of this miracle happen?"
- "What's the first step that you can take to begin to make this miracle happen?"

d) Imagine working with a client with strong religious beliefs that would make the standard wording of the miracle question inappropriate.

In the space provided, write an amended miracle question that you would ask. You must ensure that your re-wording retains the critical essence of a miracle question.

[Approximate word count: 110 – 120 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an ability to amend the miracle question appropriately. Students may replace the word 'miracle' with appropriate terms such as 'dream', 'magic wand' or with a 'future meeting'. Students may also use a future-oriented, hypothetical question as long as it is likely to achieve the purpose of the miracle question.

Wording may differ, but appropriate answers must reflect the themes and characteristics of the following examples.

- "Suppose that while you are sleeping tonight, you have a dream. While you are dreaming, the problem that brought you here is solved. When you wake up tomorrow, you may not remember your dream, but you will notice that some things are different. As you start your day, what would be the first thing you notice that is different? How would you know the problem had gone?"
- "Suppose that, in six months; I'm walking down the street and bump into you: I ask how you are, and you say I'm much better. What will have had to change for you to be able to say that and mean it?"

Question 6

Another common technique of solution-focused counselling is exception questions.

a) What role do exception questions play in facilitating client change?

[Approximate word count: 130 - 140 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of how the use of the exception questions facilitates client change

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

- Exception questions explore times when the problem does not exist or is not as severe and help determine what was different about those times. This information can help the client better understand their situation and strengths, facilitating client change.
- The exception questions can facilitate change by drawing on the client's past successes and strengths to help them identify appropriate changes to their lives to facilitate their preferred future.

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b) Once an exception has been identified, the counsellor encourages the client to explore the context of the exception.

List five (5) questions that solution-focused counsellors may ask clients to help explore exceptions.

[Approximate word count: 40 – 50 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of five appropriate exception exploration questions.

The student's response must reflect the content of **five** of the following sample answers.

c) Imagine you are working with a client, Bridgette, who says, "I really want to lose weight, but I find it so difficult to work full-time and raise four kids on my own. I get the kids ready for school in the morning and then go to work. Then my evenings are spent preparing dinner, helping the children with homework and getting them ready for bed. I don't have time to focus on myself."

Complete the following table by writing one exception question and two (2) follow-up questions that you could use to respond to Bridgette.

[Approximate table word count: 10 – 15 words per cell]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of appropriate exception and follow-up questions to use in response to this client statement.

The student's response must reflect the content in the following sample answers.

Exception question	Have there been any times when you have been able to focus on yourself?

Follow-up question 1	How were you able to make that happen?
Follow-up question 2	What did you do differently that day?

Question 7

Another common solution-focused technique is the use of scaling questions.

a) What role do scaling questions play in solution-focused therapy?

[Approximate word count: 40 - 50 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of scaling questions' role in solution-focused therapy.

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

- Scaling questions can be used in several different ways. For example:
  - The progress scale can measure client change and progress towards the goal.
  - The following step scale can be used to help the client set small goals that can help motivate and make changes.
  - The willingness and confidence scale can help both the counsellors and the client understand how confident/willing a client is to achieve a particular goal, which can then be used to develop appropriate goals to motivate and facilitate change.

b) Imagine that you are working with a client, Denver, who says, "I'm always late. I never seem to show up on time – whether it's a work meeting or a social function. I got in big trouble when I showed up late to an important meeting with a client yesterday. Even my family and friends are getting fed up with it."

i. In the space provided, write a progress scale question that you could ask Denver to help provide a baseline from which future progress can be assessed.

[Your response should be approximately 30 – 40 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of an appropriate progress scale question that could be used to measure a baseline from which future progress could be assessed.

The student's response must reflect the content in the following sample answer.

On a scale of one to ten, with one being I'm never on time to appointments and ten being I'm always on time to appointments, where would you say you are now?

ii. In the space provided, write a next-step question that you could ask Denver to help him identify what degree of change would be significant enough for him to move up the scale.

[Your response should be approximately 30 words]

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iii. In the space provided, write a confidence scale question that you could ask Denver to help him understand how willing he is to achieve his goal.

[Your response should be approximately 15 – 20 words]

Question 8

Another common solution-focused technique is reframing. Briefly explain how reframing is used to facilitate client change.

[Approximate word count: 80 – 90 words]

Question 9

Solution-focused counsellors often provide clients with feedback through a summary message at the end of a counselling session.

Briefly outline the three (3) components typically included in a summary message.

[Approximate word count: 80 - 90 words]

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

> - *Compliments* – genuine affirmations and statements of praise and support for what the client is already achieving.
> - *Bridge* – a link between the other two parts of the message that usually contains a rationale for the task that will be suggested.
> - *Task suggestions* – the suggestion of homework tasks, such as observing some aspect of their lives, doing more of what has been working for them, or finding out why certain exceptions occur.

Question 10

What is a formula first session task, and why is it used in solution-focused therapy?

[Approximate word count: 70 - 90 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of the formula first session task in solution-focused therapy.

Student responses need to include a reference to the following points.

> - Formula first session task is a homework task that solution-focused counsellors ask clients to complete between the first and second sessions.
> - It requires the client to focus on what is going well for them/what they want to continue to happen in their life.
> - The task is designed to increase the client's optimism and help the client to uncover their existing strengths/resources that they can use when tackling their problem.

Question 11

Similar to person-centred counsellors, solution-focused counsellors come to counselling with a particular attitude underpinned by their assumptions about clients.

List three (3) assumptions that solution-focused counsellors make about clients.

[Approximate word count: 30 – 45 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response must provide at least three assumptions that solution-focused counsellors make about clients.

The student's response needs to include a reference to **any three** of the following points.

> - Clients can behave effectively, even though it is temporarily blocked by problem-focused thinking.
> - Clients often present only one side of themselves; counsellors can help them to examine other sides of the 'problem' story they are presenting.
> - Clients are doing their best to make change happen.
> - Clients want to change, can change and will vary.

Question 12

Briefly describe the roles of the counsellor and client in a solution-focused counselling context.

Assessor instructions: The student's response must demonstrate an understanding of the role of the counsellor and client in SFT.

The student's response needs to include a reference to the following points.

a) Roles of counsellor	[Approximate word count: 65 - 80 words] • Help clients step out of a problem-focused mindset and become more solution-focused, drawing upon their strengths and capabilities. • Help their client to recognise their competencies and strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses or problems. • Use solution-focused techniques to help clients identify and work towards their preferred future. • Provide clients with positive feedback about their strengths and the changes they have made.
b) Roles of client	[Approximate word count: 25 - 35 words] • The client is an 'expert'. • Set the goals or determine what they want from counselling/to change. • Reflect on their preferred future and respond to solution-focused questions.

Question 13

Identify two (2) benefits and two (2) limitations when using a solution-focused approach in counselling.

[Approximate word count: 60 – 75 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response must demonstrate an understanding of the benefits and limitations of a solution-focused approach for clients.

The student's response must reference **two** of the following points **per cell**.

a) Two (2) benefits	• Suit clients who need a brief, time-effective process. • Focuses on what can be done. • Provides a positive, validating environment for clients to be recognised for their capabilities and strengths
b) Two (2) limitations	• It may not be suitable for clients who are more comfortable with problem-focused therapy or interested in exploring the causes/histories of their problems.

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	• It may not suit clients who are overwhelmed with problems and cannot see the possibility of good moments. • Clients must have a certain level of self-awareness, openness to change, and the ability to reflect and articulate their preferred future.

Question 14

While solution-focused therapists do not employ specific techniques in a particular order, most solution-focused therapists seek to achieve specific aims during sessions.

    a)   List three [3] aims of an initial solution-focused counselling session.

        [Approximate word count: 15 - 30 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of at least three initial solution-focused counselling session aims.

The student's response needs to include a reference to **any three** of the following points.

- Form a therapeutic relationship.
- Create a climate for change.
- Clarify the client's goals.
- Uncover the client's resources.
- Explore with the client how they can work toward goals.

    b)   List three [3] aims of subsequent solution-focused counselling sessions.

        [Approximate word count: 15 – 20 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should demonstrate an understanding of at least three aims of subsequent sessions in solution-focused counselling.

The student's response must reflect the content in the following sample answer.

- Review the client's performance.
- Consolidate constructive change.
- Develop different strategies for change.

Question 15

Briefly outline one [1] key difference in documentation between solution-focused therapy and more traditional problem-focused therapy.

[Approximate word count: 40 – 50 words]

- The format is different (e.g., instead of following the form of notes on initial assessment, treatment plan, progress notes, and closing summary, with a significant focus on descriptions of the problem, solution-focused documentation generally seeks to document the stages of solution-building)
- Initial session records should reflect clients' "best hope" for outcomes, description of preferred future, current exceptions and strategies, scales, feedback and compliments were given, etc. Subsequent session records should reflect the progress achieved, strengths and strategies, scales around progress, motivation and confidence, feedback and compliments assigned, etc.
- It is important to record details of scaling questions (e.g., the meaning of "0" and "10", the number the client is currently at, what will be different when the client is one number higher, what steps are required to move up the scale, what resources needed, etc.

Question 16

Steve de Shazer is credited with being one of the original developers of solution-focused therapy.

Describe the eight key features of de Shazer's therapy in the following table.

[Approximate word count: 30 - 60 words for each key feature]

Assessor instructions: The student's response should describe the eight key features of de Shazer's therapy listed in the table below. The student's response must reflect the content in the following sample answer.

Key feature	Description
Brief and goal-oriented	Solution-focused therapy is typically conducted over a short duration, often limited to a few sessions. It emphasises setting clear and achievable goals that guide the therapeutic process.
Future-focused	The therapy encourages clients to envision their desired future and work towards it. It emphasises exploring what the client wants to achieve rather than dwelling on past problems or searching for their causes.
Solution-oriented questions	The therapist uses specific questioning techniques to explore the client's strengths, resources, and past successes. Questions such as "What would be different if the problem were solved?", "What small steps have you already taken towards your goal?", and "What can you do to move yourself forward?" are

Key feature	Description
	common in solution-focused therapy.
Exception and miracle questions	These questions are used to help clients recognise times when their problem was less severe or temporarily resolved. The exception question asks clients to recall moments when the problem was less intense, aiming to uncover coping strategies or solutions. A key focus for exception questions is to uncover strengths the client may not realise they have but which have been used in the past and can be used again now to move them closer to their desired goal. The miracle question encourages clients to imagine their life without the problem, helping them envision possibilities and potential solutions.
Scaling questions	There are three types of scaling questions used in solution-focused therapy: 1. The progress scale, which seeks to identify where on a scale from 1 to 10 the client currently sees themselves. 2. The next step scale which helps a client focus on one small change they can make to move themselves up the scale by one place. 3. The confidence/willingness scale helps a client to clarify how important the goal is to them by seeking to enumerate their willingness to do the work or confidence that they can do it.
Focus on small steps and solutions	Solution-focused therapy emphasises identifying small, achievable steps that clients can take toward their goals. Clients are encouraged to build on their strengths and previous successes to find practical solutions.
Collaboration and empowerment	The therapist and client work together as equal partners in the therapeutic process. Clients are viewed as experts in their own lives, and the therapist's role is to facilitate their self-discovery, empower them, and support their autonomy.
Utilisation of language and language patterns	Solution-focused therapy pays close attention to the client's language and uses it to guide the therapeutic

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Key feature	Description
	conversation. The therapist listens for client-generated solutions, identifies past coping mechanisms, and reinforces positive language patterns.

Question 17

Solution-focused counsellors seek to avoid "problem-focused dialogue" and instead use solution-focused questioning.

Provide two (2) examples of solution-focused questions that a counsellor could ask a client.

[Approximate word count: 20 – 25 words]

Assessor instructions: The student's response describes two (2) examples of solution-focused questions that a Counsellor could ask a client. The student's responses will differ but must reflect the content of the following sample answers.

- What will your life look like when you no longer have that problem?
- What would you like to change about your current situation?
- Can you tell me about a past week you didn't need to drink?

Assessment checklist:

Students must have completed all questions within this assessment before submitting. This includes:

1	Seventeen (17) short answer questions are to be completed in the spaces provided.	☐

Congratulations, you have reached the end of this assessment!