

- **SOLUTION FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY
(SFBT) GROUP and GAMBLING
TREATMENT**

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Solution Focused Background

- Founders: Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg and the Brief Therapy Center, Milwaukee
 - Based on work at the Mental Research Institute, (MRI) Palo Alto, CA
 - The emphasis is placed on building exceptions to the presenting problem and making rapid transitions to identifying and developing solutions intrinsic to the individual or problem
 - Explores current resources and future hopes rather than present problems and past causes

Solution Focused Background

“Change will lead to insight more often than insight will lead to change”.

- Greatly influenced by Milton Erikson who believed:
 - Everyone possesses the skills and abilities to solve their own problems and,
 - That small changes could lead to bigger changes
 - Client centered strong interest in communication, a purposeful conversation
 - Comments above not cited are quotes from Erikson, otherwise sources are noted

Basic Philosophy and Assumptions

- Change is constant and inevitable
- Clients are the experts and define goals
- Clients have the resources and strengths to solve problems
- Future orientation, history is not essential--If going on a trip from Pittsburgh to Chicago and you stop in Toledo, do you need to look at the map on how you got from Pgh to Toledo?

Basic Philosophy and Assumptions

- Focus on the positive, possibilities, the solution, future goals, visions
- Short term
- Clients want change
- Emphasis is on what is possible and changeable
- People are influenced by, and not determined by, the past

Solution Focused Group Therapy (SFGT)

“The most important thing in changing human behavior is the person’s motivation.” deShazer

- A primary characteristic of some problem gamblers is low or ambivalent motivation
- Action gamblers may get discouraged when it seems progress is slow
 - Motives for low or ambivalent motivation
 - May be related to the personality of the action/escape gamblers
 - And the stage of the individual’s gambling
 - Early versus late stage
- Escape gamblers may be feeling deeply discouraged
 - May feel vulnerable

Solution Focused Group Therapy (SFGT)

“Perhaps if you were in a similar situation you would have an idea as to what to do.”

- SFGT may set the tone for gamblers initially reluctant to become more involved in treatment/recovery
- May feel safer for ambivalent gamblers to talk about solutions rather than problems
- May help problem gamblers to see small successes from first session by entering goal setting rather than history gathering

Why a Solution Focused Approach?

Change happens all the time; You're job is to identify and magnify useful change.

There is no one right way of seeing the world.

A detailed understanding of the problem doesn't translate into a solution.

The solution's clues are there in front of you; You just have to see them.

Intelligent small changes can have bigger impacts later on.

It is important to stay solution focused, not solution forced.

“Find out what works and do more of it.”

SFGT Group

- Group can offer strong support for people attempting to make changes (Yalom, 1999)
- Allows flexibility in determining group members
- Allows individuals to find or develop a social group that supports an abstinent lifestyle
- Since unacquainted with each other's problems, group may instinctually practice problem free discussion in early sessions

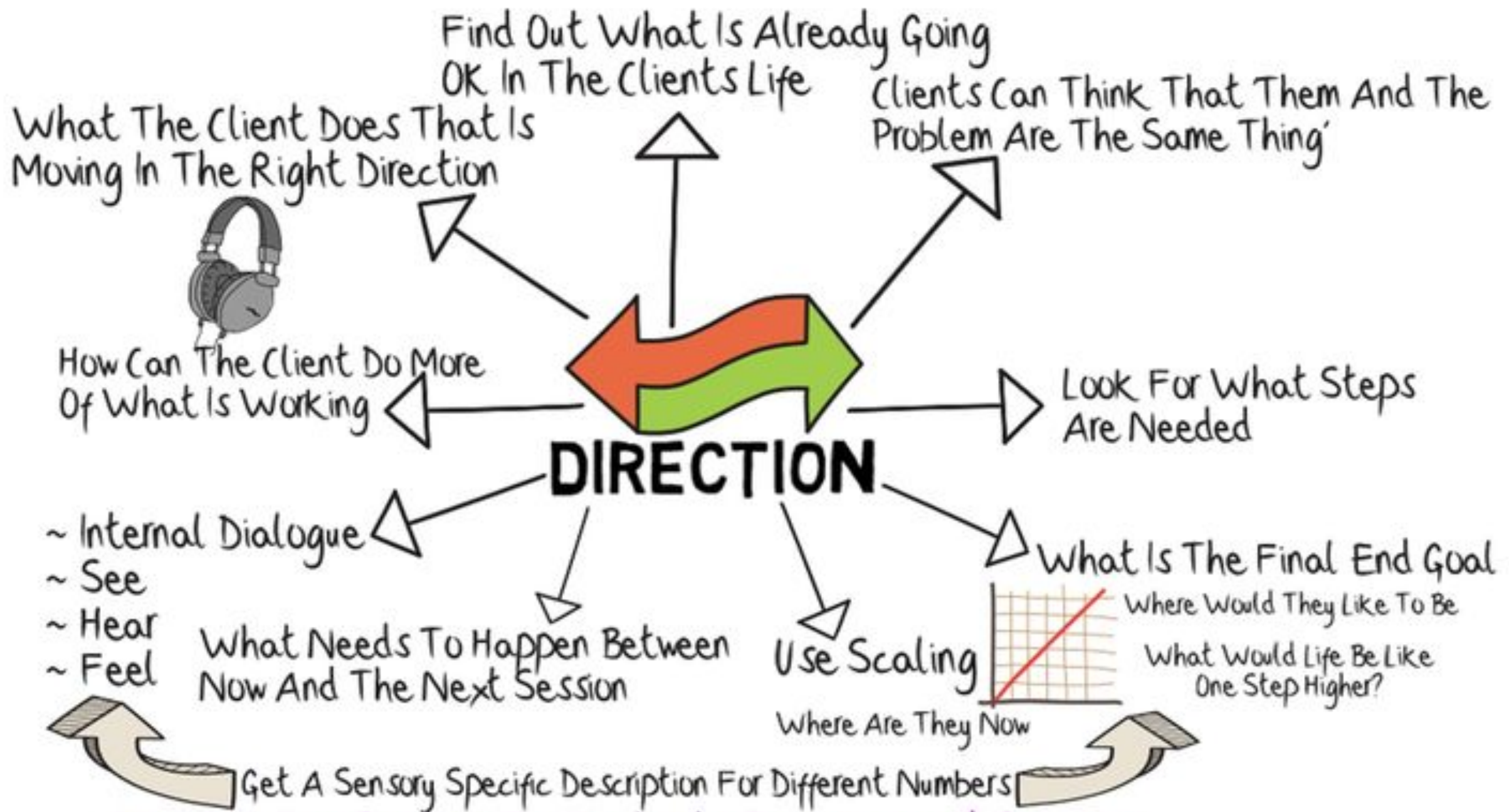
SFGT Group

“It is really amazing what people can do. Only they don’t know what they can do.” Erikson

- Able to fully participate in group process without necessarily being required to disclose their particular problems with the group
- A variety of folks since getting a group with 10 gamblers may not be too likely
- By engaging with one another in problem free talk in the group, individuals develop rapport with one another

SFGT Group

- Can be comforting to individuals who may be sensitive about their issues—some gamblers may feel shame and/or guilt about their situations
- Female gamblers may feel comfortable in group setting
- Allows search for solutions immediately even when the gambler or the family is in crisis
- Gamblers give and get feedback from several participants; individuals with addictions often respond to peers more than to professionals
- In SFGT groups people are first thought of as resources for solution building



You Can Use Scaling To Evaluate Progress And Success

SFGT—Sessions—Building Rapport

“What you expect to happen influences what you do.” deShazer. 1995

- Introductions/brief overview of the sessions
- Individual introduces him/herself to the group by talking about their interests, family, things that are going well or times in the past when things were better
 - What are your best hopes? Dreams?
 - What would need to happen today in order for you to know it was a good idea to come to group today? (goal setting)
- Some individuals, mandated usually, have at least goal—to get out of treatment as soon as possible
- Or, another approach is:

SFGT--Sessions—Initial Session/Pre Session Change

- What changes occurred between making the appointment for the first session and the first session?
 - Ask about time between the decision and actual action
 - “What’s better since you called?”
 - 3 possible responses
 - May say nothing happened; if so, go on and ask next individual
 - May say things have started to get better; therapist asks, “Such as...”
 - May say things are about the same; therapist asks, “is this unusual that things haven’t gotten worse?”

SFGT—Sessions—Initial Session

- Engage individuals in problem free talk at the beginning
 - Listening actively to this can tell you a lot about the individual's potential, resources and competencies
 - Demonstrates an interest in the individual
 - Allow the counselor to identify the things that are going well/strengths



SFGT—1. Problem Talk

“Problems are best understood in relation to their solutions.” De Shazer

- Am I focusing on the problems presented by the gambler? Or am I pushing my own agenda, e.g. total abstinence
- Problem talk doesn't change anything
- Use **past tense** when discussing gambling and **future tense** when speaking about solutions and goals.

SFGT—1. Problem Talk vs Future Talk

- Problem focused: How long have you been gambling?
- Solution focused: What would your life be like if you weren't gambling?
- Expectancy—"yet", "so far", "up to now", "when"
- End game—what happens as the problem ends or starts to end
- Contexts of competence
 - Areas in person's life that he/she feels good about

SFGT—2. Separating the Person From the Problem

“There’s nothing so wrong with you, that what’s right with you can’t fix.” Mark Katz

- The person is not the problem
- Refer to gambling as “it”; this allows for a change in the perspective. What do you want to do about “it”?
- Imagine a future when you don’t gamble

SFGT—2. Separating the Person From the Problem

“Forgiveness is giving up hope of a better past.”

- Look into the future and see yourself as you want to be, no longer gambling. Explain what happened to cause the change to come about
- Keeping the problem external gives participants opportunity to see themselves as less problem saturated

SFGT—3. Miracle Question

“Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.” George Bernard Shaw

- Set up the question.
- “Suppose that tonight, while you are asleep, a miracle happens.(pause) As a result of this miracle, all of your gambling problems that brought you here today are gone. (pause) But, because you were sleeping, you don’t know a miracle has happened and the problems are now solved. You have no way of knowing that there was an overnight miracle that solved the problem. (pause) When you wake up tomorrow morning what might be the first thing you will notice that will tell you something is different?” “What else?”
- Pose the question to the group eliminating the word gambling if need be

SFGT—3. Miracle Question in Groups

Remember the introverts will think before they respond, they need to process.

The extroverts process by talking

In therapy with groups, the miracle question can be asked to the group as a whole.

If asked to individual members, each one would give his or her response to the miracle question, and others might react to it.

If the question is asked to the group, members may “work on” their miracle together. Provide support, reminders of goals.

The SFBT therapist, in trying to maintain a collaborative stance among group members, punctuates similar goals and supportive statements among group members.

You can't change what you can't change



SFGT—4. Exceptions, Differences or Instances

“There’s a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.” Leonard Cohen

Problems don’t happen all of the time.

- Use of the word “instances” may be more acceptable than the word “exceptions”
- What is the gambler doing when he’s not gambling? Do more of it.
- Tell us about times when gambling doesn’t occur or occurs less than other times.
- Exceptions are the past.

SFGT—4. Exceptions, Differences or Instances

- Talk about the times when you don't feel the urge to gamble.
- What is different about those times?
- What is different about you when you're not gambling?
- Tell us about a time this week when you thought about gambling but didn't.
- What do you suppose your family (children, spouse, etc) would say they like the best about you when you are not thinking about gambling?
- We ask *different* or *instead* questions
- The answers are the stepping stones to solutions