

BOOK REVIEWS

Solution Focused Therapy by John J Murphy

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<https://doi.org/10.59874/001c.129253>

Journal of Solution Focused Practices

Vol. 9, Issue 1, 2025

John J Murphy's *Solution Focused Therapy* is the 26th volume in the esteemed APA *Theories of Psychotherapy* series, and a great step towards making Solution Focused Therapy (SFT) more known and accepted in the therapeutic field. The book, which dives headfirst into the refreshing, pragmatic world of SFT, is a well-structured and easy-to-read introduction to the core tenets of Solution Focused Therapy and its connected theoretical rationale.

***Solution Focused Therapy* by John J. Murphy**

American Psychological Association (*Theories of Psychotherapies* series), 2023, 189 pages, ISBN 9781433837678, \$39.99 paperback (Kindle and ebook versions available)

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From the perspective of the history and theory of SFT to the concrete therapy process and its evaluation, the book visits and revisits the core theoretical solution-focused question that we all can be thankful to Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg for asking: "What do clients and therapists talk about when therapy is successful?" (Murphy, 20224, p.xvii).

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One sentence frames the book and sums up the remarkably simple but so hard-to-apply process of SFT: “The three main techniques of SFT are asking, listening, and amplifying. Therapists ask useful questions, listen closely to clients’ responses, and amplify aspects of their responses and lives that support desired outcomes. When being purely solution-focused, there is rarely anything else the therapist does outside of these activities.” Murphy 2024, p.6 and p.145).

This is simply all you have to do to carry out an evidence-based, effective and transcultural working form of psychotherapy, as the research chapter shows — and it is still surprising to many in the psychotherapeutic field that this approach works as well, overall, as other widely-recognised approaches. Murphy discusses this empirical evidence in detail, setting it against the critical questions most frequently posed to Solution Focused practitioners.

From this perspective, the book might be most interesting for people not yet familiar with the approach who want to understand why and how how simple questions, asked with genuine curiosity and hope, can unlock doors we didn’t even know existed. Opening up this perspective of world-making, Murphy reminds us that therapy is not about fixing broken people, but about uncovering strengths and solutions that are already present. This book presents SFT straightforwardly as what it is: a collaborative practice that invites clients to describe what they want from therapy, and to achieve it in the shortest time possible by applying what they already have in place.

Murphy explains well why this is by no means easy to apply to our therapeutic communications, but he supports the reader with very practical appendices that offer commonly-used questions, crib sheets for first and consecutive sessions, the common scales for client-informed treatments (Partners for Change Outcome Management System), and a glossary of key terms.

Allow me finally to ask a question that expands what is so well expressed in this book.

Imagine we were all to take the ethos of SFT into the sphere of all our actions way beyond therapy, out into all aspects of our lives. How would the world we live in change? And how might even very small shifts in perspective catalyze significant changes towards the best possible version of the world we can truly succeed in creating together?

Submitted: January 20, 2025 BST. Accepted: February 25, 2025 BST. Published: February 03, 2025 BST.



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