

BOOK REVIEWS

Solution-Focused Therapy: The Basics by Yvonne Dolan

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Solution-Focused Therapy: The Basics discusses the fundamental work of a Solution-Focused therapist. It describes and unpacks Solution Focused Therapy by taking us back in time to when it was created, by showing how a way of thinking shaped a way of working, and by providing detailed descriptions of the approach.

Solution-Focused Therapy: The Basics by Yvonne Dolan

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Solution-Focused Therapy: The Basics discusses the fundamental work of a Solution-Focused therapist. It describes and unpacks Solution Focused Therapy by taking us back in time to when it was created, by showing how a way of thinking shaped a way of working, and by providing detailed descriptions of the approach.

Basic beliefs and assumptions like, “No problems happen all the time; there are always exceptions that can be utilised” (p30), or “If it’s not working, do something different” (p38) are reviewed in detail, and both clear descriptions and concrete tools are presented — for example, different categories of “SF questions” (p13). Later in the book, Yvonne Dolan shows how these different types of questions can be used in practice: the category “SF-detail Question” is demonstrated by *What else contributes to it being at 3 and not lower?* (p76), which invites detailed descriptions when working with scales. Another example is the category, “SF Difference Question” on page 94 in *Is there anything else that is different?* — a question inviting further reflection.

It is useful that many small examples of dialogues are offered, to demonstrate where in a session which technique is being used — this is highlighted, allowing the reader to observe it quickly: “Erin: It would be... (She is smiling). SF Practitioner: I think you have done a very good job in describing that. (SF direct Compliment). Erin: Thanks” (p54). Each chapter is structured with presentation of the content and a *Chapter Summary*

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and *Experimental Exercise*, allowing readers to try out some of the tools themselves, at once. This makes the book hands-on, easy to read, and practical.

For newbies in SF therapy — practitioners newly wanting to explore working with the approach — the descriptions of the basics of both theory and practice are very useful. The second half, Chapters 4-7, describes how to work in other contexts, such as like schools, treatments of Post-Traumatic Stress, business coaching and as applied to self-help.

I found it difficult to see consistency in the use of the acronyms of the approach (SF/SFT/SFBT/SFP/SFC), despite the context marker (p1) of how two of the terms should be understood. (Such difficulties of comprehension extend to the repetition of five lines, on p.87 and p.142.) The author has, however, a detailed understanding of the language, and the book is rich in descriptions in of many kinds, and uses language in a varied, vivid and professional fashion.

Solution-Focused Therapy: The Basics says it “reflects the official version of SF described in the official *Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Treatment Manual* (Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Association 2013; Trepper et al., 2012), on which the research evidence supporting SF practice is based” (p19), and I assume it might be the official version for members of the SFBTA. I am not, however, aware of any “official” version in Europe, any one way of working. Since I was introduced to SF in the late 90s, the approach has evolved on many levels — and significantly over the last 10-15 years. So — does the absence of a description of these recent developments have a significant impact on this handbook in Solution Focused Therapy? I would say No — the techniques are all there, as well as the basic assumptions.

In summary, this is a clear and accessible introduction to Solution Focused Therapy. Its structure presents the underlying preconceptions — you might say, *Why we do* — and moves on to *What we do*, including in contexts such as schools or the treatment of post-traumatic stress, provides conversational examples, and finally offers simple concrete tools and techniques to expand on *How we do*. It is thus practical and easily understandable — and since nothing new is presented, it remains faithful to its title: it is a basic book about SF Therapy.

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