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Book Review - Tools for Effective Therapy with Children and Families: A Solution- Focused Approach

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BOOK REVIEW**Tools for Effective Therapy with Children and Families: A Solution-Focused Approach**

Pamela K. King

Routledge Publishers, 2017, 155 pages, ISBN 978-1-138-12617-6, £29.99 pbk (hbk, ebk also available)

Review by Benjamin Finlayson

Doctoral student at Texas Tech University in the Program of Couple, Marriage, and Family Therapy

We are seeing more literature in support for Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT). Pamela King's book demonstrates the sound use of SFBT with children and demonstrates tangible ways for you to incorporate them into your practice. During the pandemic of 2020, many clinicians are now working virtually. This may raise some concern in how to work with children across teleplatforms. Though the author is not writing specifically for tele-therapy, the tools she introduces and the resources she recommends are likely ones your clients have in their home currently. I think this book can help you as you reopen your in-person practices and is also useful for immediate work with your children and families in tele-therapy settings.

Taken from the front-matter of the book, *Tools for Effective therapy with Children and Families* provides tools and strategies for work with children and families by integrating SFBT and play therapy. The book delivers on this promise considerably and uses several techniques to deliver high quality material to the clinician and their clients. First, the author uses strong theoretical foundations throughout the book; the thread between SFBT and play therapy is apparent and well-articulated. Second, the author uses case vignettes to demonstrate how these techniques can look. These vignettes provide insight into how the child and the family respond to the use of SF play therapy. Lastly, Pamela applies her knowledge of play therapy and SFBT to several presenting concerns, including a section focused on childhood trauma and abuse solutions.

The author includes detailed vignettes with each technique. I appreciate that Pamela took the extra step to help clinicians better understand how children and families incorporate her suggestions. Client work is included in this book as well (with permissions and with identity removed), which gave a visual to the child's interpretation of the intervention. These tools are to help us, adults, better understand and be invited into the understanding of the children we work with rather than expecting them to meet us at the communication level we are at. Further, the author uses items that the children are likely to have when they leave the therapy room. For example, Pamela invites the child to choose from a random assortment of toys to describe their progress. Families may have similar objects at home for them to recreate the conversation after the therapy session has ended. As clinicians, we may not know all the resources of our clients, so to use toys or objects that can be more adaptable makes home-application more tangible across cultures and demographics.

The author has crafted a book that is approachable and exciting to read. My critique comes from a stylistic idea. When reading, there were times when I wish the case vignettes stood apart from the main text, such as having them overlaid a grey box like the quotes at the beginning of each chapter. This is, in my eye, is minor but would make the chapters easier to reference back when looking to apply this material.

Pamela King writes with an honest voice. As I read through the book, in particular the case studies, I read the hope she sees the kids and families she works with. The language is clearly strengths-based and genuine. The passion she has for working with families, I felt, came through in this text. To the credit of the author's writing, it also felt like I was reading a gift rather than reading a manuscript from an expert telling me how I should do things.

The author specifically addresses this book to professionals in mental health fields. Mental health clinicians, whether just starting out or "seasoned", should take time to invest in this thoughtful and well-articulated book. She offers innovative tools for creating solution conversations that meet kiddos and families where they are at. I would also suggest

this book for any professional that works with children or families. I think the discussion within this book can offer useful techniques for any professional working with kids or families. The author integrates solution-focused dialogue throughout the book so that the connection between model and application is clear. Even if you are new to SF or well-versed, there is something to gain at any experience level of SF practice.

The reviewer

Benjamin Finlayson, M.S., is doctoral student at Texas Tech University in the Program of Couple, Marriage, and Family Therapy, and currently practices in the state of Colorado and works for United Counseling & Wellness. Benjamin is published and has presented in local, state, and national arenas and has worked with Pamela King in professional settings, e.g. conference planning, and has attended her professional development workshops.

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