

## **SFBT: DO ONE THING DIFFERENT**

The following are 8 steps you can follow that will help things go differently. (Based on work of Bill O'Hanlon & Scott D. Miller, Ph.D.-solution-focused therapy.)

Step 1: Think about the things you do in a particular problem situation. Change any part you can. Choose to change one thing, such as, the timing, your body patterns (what you do with your body), what you say, the location (where the problem happens), or the order in which you do things. Think of a time that things do not go well for you. When does it happen and what part of that problem situation will you do differently now?

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Step 2: Think of something that somebody else does that makes the problem better. Try doing what they do the next time the problems comes up. OR: Think of something that you have done in the past that helped make things go better. What did you do that you will do again next time?

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Step 3: Feelings tell you that you need to do something. Your brain tells you what to do. Understand what your feelings are but do not let them determine your actions; let your brain determine your actions. Think of a feeling that used to get you into trouble--what feeling do you want to stop getting you into trouble? What does the feeling suggest you should do that would help thing get better?

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Step 4: Change what you focus on. What you pay attention to will become bigger in your life and you will notice it more and more. To solve a problem, try changing your focus or your perspective. Think of something you are focusing on too much. What gets you into trouble when you focus on it? Think of something you will focus on instead. What will you focus on?

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Step 5: Imagine a future time when you are not having the problem you are having right now. Work backwards to figure out what you could do now to make that future come true. Think of what will be different for you in the future when things are going better. How will things be different? Think of one thing that you would be doing differently before things could get/go better in the future. What one thing will you do differently?

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Step 6: Sometimes people with problems talk about what other people are doing that makes them have the problem and they talk about why it is not possible to do better. Change your story. Talk about times when the problem was not happening and what you were doing when the problem was not happening. Control what you can control; you can't control other people but you can change what you are doing and that might change what the other people are doing. Tell about a time when you were NOT having the problem that is bothering you.

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Step 7: If you believe in God or a Higher Power, focus on God to get things to go better. When you are truly focused on God or you are truly asking God to help you do what you need to do, things will often go better for you. Tell how you will get help from your God to make things go better.

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Step 8: Use action talk to get things to go better. Action talk sticks to facts. Action talk only talks about things you can see. Action talk does not talk about what you believe the other person was thinking or feeling because we do not know. Action talk: "I feel angry when you talk while I am talking". "I am upset right now. Could we talk about this later?" "Thank you for waiting to talk until I was finished." Make a complaint, make a request, and thank someone for doing what you asked.

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## THE MIRACLE QUESTION

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(BFTC)

The miracle question was developed beginning in the early 80s and I have been using it in almost every first session ever since.

I think my (our) initial mistake was to call it "the miracle question" when it has never been just a simple question. Rather, its purpose was to shift the conversation quickly and easily into the future when the problems (that brought the client to therapy) were gone. That is to say, the "question" itself was never as important as the client's response. Over the years of dealing with the wide variety of client responses I have somehow sort of learned how best to respond to their responses. In part, I learned this from watching how Insoo Kim Berg responds to her clients' responses. Further, I learned this from watching how other therapists' responsive behaviour did not lead to the kind of miracle picture Insoo's clients were able to develop. So here is a sketch of the pattern that I have worked out.

### PART ONE

"I have a strange, perhaps unusual question, a question that takes some imagination ...

*[Pause. Wait for some sort of signal to go ahead with the question.]*

Suppose ...

*[Pause. The pause allows clients to wonder what strange and difficult thing I might ask them to suppose.]*

After we finish here, you go home tonight, watch TV, do your usual chores, etc., and then go to bed and to sleep ...

*[Pause. Pretty normal, everyday stuff. Not so strange after all.]*

And, while you are sleeping, a miracle happens ...

*[Pause. The context for this miracle is the client's normal, everyday life. This construction allows for any kind of fantastic wishing.]*

And, the problems that brought you here are solved, just like that! ...

*[Pause. Now the focus is on one particular miracle that is in line with his or her coming to therapy.]*

But, this happens while you are sleeping, so you cannot know that it has happened."

*[Pause. This is designed to allow the client to construct his or her miracle without any consideration of the problem and without any consideration of the steps that be or might have been involved.]*

"Once you wake up in the morning, a) how will you go about discovering that this miracle has happened to you?" OR, b) "how will your best friend know that this miracle happened to you?"

*[Wait. The therapist should not interrupt this silence; it is the client's turn to talk, to answer the question. In fact, when the client's response is "un-reasonable" (in the therapist's view) the*

*therapist's most useful response is to continue his/her silence which gives the client a change to "fix" the response, to make it more reasonable.]*

*[Many clients, particularly adolescents, find it easier to describe the day-after-the-miracle from the perspective of other people. The individual's perspective is then dealt with in Part Two.]*

## PART TWO

"A) How will your best friend discover that this miracle happened to you?"

OR,

B) "how will you discover that this miracle has happened to you?"

## PART THREE

"When was the most recent time (perhaps days, hours, weeks) that you can remember when things were sort of like this day after the miracle?"

## PART FOUR

"On a scale from 0 to 10, with 10 standing for how things are the day after the miracle and 0 standing for how things were at the point you called to arrange this appointment, where - between 0 and 10 - are you at this point?"

*[This "progress scale" is designed to help both therapist and client figure out where the client is in relation to his/her goal(s) for therapy.]*

"On the same scale, where do you think your best friend would say you are?"

"On the same scale, where would you say things were when things were sort of like this miracle day?"

## PART FIVE

(The opening question in second and later sessions.)

"So, what is better?"

*["Better" is a construction and this is designed to remind both therapist and client that one of the goals in these subsequent sessions is to help the client describe things as "better." Failure to begin the subsequent sessions with this question undermines the value of the other four parts.]*

## PART SIX

(The "progress scale.")

"Remember that scale where 10 stands for the day after the miracle? Where would you say you are today on that scale?"

*[It seems more useful to ask about this without reminding the client of his/her previous rating. If the question is asked this way: "Last time you were at 3, where are you now?" Clients tend to respond with "3" and they tend to respond to the open version with a rating "higher" than that they gave in the previous session.]*