

Top-10 Solution Focused Brief Counseling Techniques
 A guide for a sequenced, solution-focused counseling conversation

Strategy	Description	Example questions/statements	Refine, Expand and Connect (REC)
1. Obtain student's description of the problem.	The identification of how the student currently views the reason(s) they are meeting with you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What seems to be getting in the way of you being more successful in school? • What would you say is the biggest reason we are meeting today? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you did know, what would you say? • What would your teacher/parent/friend say is the reason we are meeting? • How would you/they know we no longer have to meet?
2. Scaling	Identifying a starting point for severity of the problem according to the student; Helps student be specific in describing change; helps track progress in resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a scale of 0-10, where 0 equals problem free, and 10 is the problem at it's worst, where are you today on the scale? <p>0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10</p> <p>☺.....☹.....☹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would a 5 look like? • If you were to go down to a 4.5 how would you know? • What would be different or better if you went down the scale closer to zero? • How would you know you were getting closer to moving down the scale? • How did you keep it from going higher?
3. The Miracle Question	Helping students visualize a time in their life where they are problem free- if they can see it, they can achieve it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you got up out of my office and the problem that brought you in here disappeared, what would be the first sign? • If a miracle occurred and the problem we've been discussing was suddenly gone, what would be different? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would that do for you? • How would that make your life better? • How would you know a miracle occurred? • Who else would notice? • What would they be doing different to show you the miracle occurred?
4. Positive Goals	Identify a goal that involves something the student can do, not something someone else needs to do. Use when students report wanting someone else to change. Use the word " instead "	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When students report wanting someone else to change- ask: • If that person did change, what would you do differently? • If that person stopped _____how would that help you? • If that person did want you wanted them to do, what would that do for you? • What would you want them to do instead? • If they did change, what would you be doing instead of what you're doing now? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would that be helpful? • If they did, what would you do different? • When was the last time that person did (what student reports). • What was different then? • What were you doing different when that was happening?
5. Exceptions	Identify times where the problem is happening less, or not at all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you remember a time when this problem wasn't happening? • Can you remember the last time you were doing better than you are doing now? • When was the last time you noticed you were doing a little better? • When things were better, what were you doing instead? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was different then? What were you doing different? What were you thinking different? • How were you able to make that happen? • Remember to use "instead" questions: • When things were a little better, what were you doing instead?

Strategy	Description	Example questions/statements	Refine, Expand, and Connect (REC)
6. Cheerleading	Encouraging positive success, no matter how small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Attendance issue) I noticed you were able to make it to class on time for 4th period- awesome! How did you do that? • (Academic issue) I noticed you raised your math grade by 2%, that's really great! • (Behavior issue) I noticed that today you were able to behave in class for 15min, that's really great. How were you able to do that? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to celebrate even the smallest successes. Look for instances of positive behavior change, and celebrate it in an authentic, genuine way. • Augment cheerleading with "what else" questions. • What else did you do to make that happen?
7. Flagging the Minefield	Identifying times, behaviors, conditions that hinder positive change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now that you had some success is there anything that might get in your way of continuing to do well? If so, what might get in your way? • What are some things that seem to prevent you from keeping the positive change you've made from continuing? • When does the problem seem to take over? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is one thing you could do to prevent that from interfering with your success? • (What else? x 3) • When that challenge arises, who could help you overcome it? • What's one thing you can do to prevent the problem from taking over?
8. What Else and Instead Questions	<p>Questions that elicit more ideas, thoughts, insights from students.</p> <p>These questions help elicit behaviorally specific ideas, goals, conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Relationship problem) So, it sounds like your parents are yelling a lot; what would you like them to do instead? • Once they start doing that, what else could they do? • If the problem that brought you here was gone, what would you be doing/thinking/feeling instead? • If you were feeling happier, what would you be doing instead? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat the phrase "What else?" a few times • If you moved down the scale to being problem free, what would you be doing instead? • What else would you be doing differently if you were a point or two down the scale?
9. What's different or better questions	Asking what is different or better since the last time you met with the student, helps identify exceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's different or better since the last time we met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you make that happen? • If nothing is better, how were you able to keep things from getting worse?
10. Write a note & Compliment, Summarize Strengths	A quick note to students highlighting the positive insights gained from meeting; or to check in with them if you have not had a chance to meet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just wanted to share with you that I noticed that your GPA as the quarter was 2.35 and now it's a 2.65 which is an 11% improvement. When you have a moment please share with me what you are doing to make that happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send the letters home and address them to parents • Use the letter as a meeting