

Solution Focused Basics

- Using a non-pathological approach makes problems solvable. Labels are everywhere. ADD, ADHD, ODD, OCD, Bipolar and more. These labels are important but only one description of a person. This model discourages focusing on pathology and instead, on times when the person is able to be in control.
- Always let the student define the goal. When we choose our destiny, we are motivated. When students are referred, read what their teacher, AP wants them to do but then ask them what they want. “Staying out of trouble” is a goal. It’s just not specific. Focus then on what the student imagines he/she will do in the future to achieve this.
- Complex problems do not necessarily require complex solutions. No matter how difficult a presenting issue is, ask, “so what are your best hopes?” or, “how do you want things to be?” Then, go into what that person needs to do to achieve this. See Ideas for a Solution Focused Conversation.
- It is not necessary to understand or promote insight to be helpful. Even if you do know, it will not help you come up with a solution. Period. End of story. Instead, seek out what the person wants. That gives you direction.
- Students, parents and families have complaints, not symptoms.

They are just stuck trying to solve things, usually with a problem focused lens. Help them with the Ideas for a Solution Focused Conversation.

- There is a ripple effect when one person changes that affects the system.

Be the ripple! Be the SC who sits at a RTI meeting where teachers have no hope but lots of interventions and suggest that they invite in the student to see how he/she wants things to be. Be the SC who notices that the student does well in 3 classes out of 7. Be curious. It's contagious.

- Fitting into the school client's worldview will lessen resistance. When we cooperate with what people want in their lives, no matter how impossible, resistance disappears. Here's a magic question when you hear impossible requests: "What difference will that make to you?" A teacher may say: I want him out of class. "What difference will that make to you?" The answers you get will surprise you, and keep asking it again and again until you get to a place and action that is doable. Then, jump into exceptions.

- Go slowly, building on successes in other situations. Remember always, there is always an exception. The seventh grader who is absent twenty times this year but only five times last year? Seek out what was different last year. The child who doesn't want to come to school but comes to school? Ask him how he made it to school. The parent who says her daughter never used to be this way? Ask about times when she was not that way. Exceptions are KEY.

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