



Dear SFBT Readers,

We hope you are enjoying the summer! This is our second newsletter on this website and we are extremely excited to share some of the stimulating updates that are going on!

First, our directory has been a big success! Now when people ask us to recommend an SFBT therapist we actually have a geographic list to offer them. The demand for Solution-Focused therapists is growing – our reputation precedes us. Starting this September as we renew everyone’s listing we will be charging a small fee (\$20 per annum) to cover the website and administrative costs and provide member opportunities.

The SFBTC Certificate Program at the University of Toronto launched the inaugural SFBT Summer Institute. Dr. Warner and Joanna Boutilier offered the first two courses of the Summer Institute in July. The third summer course took was facilitated Keith O’Meara and Aleya Courtnege and took place August 12 & 13. The Summer Institute was a huge success! Enrolment was high, people appreciated the opportunity to learn and practice SF in the summer and we are committed to making the Summer Institute an annual event. For more updates you can visit the OISE CPL website.

We want our readers to know that this year’s SFBTA Conference is in Montreal and it is not to be missed! It is usually in the United States and often in far places such as Santa Fe or Denver. The dates for 2019 are November 7-9th, 2019. This conference brings together some of the top SFBT people from around the world. The meeting is an energizing experience with camaraderie and a friendliness that befits the SF approach. We hope to see you there!

In this newsletter Dina Bednar has written an article on strategies for anxiety and depression that the SFBT therapist can use. It is extremely applicable to single session work and will definitely add to your professional tool box. There is also a review of a Canadian philosophy professor’s book that is partly autobiographical called *Seizure The Day: Living a Happy Life Despite Illness*.

15 STRATEGIES TO USE FOR ANXIETY & DEPRESSION – by Dina Bednar

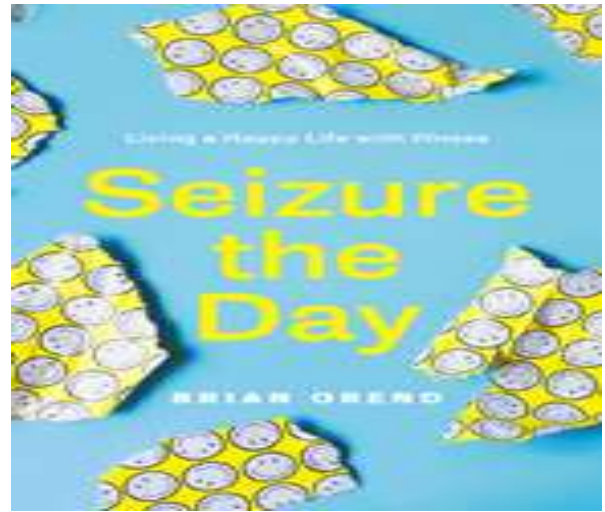
In May 2019, I had the good fortune to present at the Ontario Walk-In Counselling Symposium (Single session therapy and walk-in). One of the talks I really appreciated was offered by two therapists from Wilfrid Laurier University: Joanna Bedggood and Melissa Page Nichols. Like me, they see many clients for

one session through their walk-in centre. They made the point that since they work with university students, they want to maximize their therapeutic impact by providing strategies that the clients can take with them to deal with their presenting issues, which frequently include either anxiety or depression, and sometimes both. Their reasoning made a great deal of sense to me in my own work. In a Solution-Focused Brief Therapy single session, I always take a break to look over my notes and craft my feedback, since being able to give clients some tools that may be helpful is not only good sense but essential. Here is the list of strategies for facing anxiety and depression, with a brief description of how each can be used therapeutically.

1. **BELIEVABILITY:** (Pie shape or scale). Ask the client to ask themselves how believable the negative thought is. They can visualize it in a pie shape or scale. This assists the client in slowing down and challenging the negative thought – even if it is a 9 out of 10 in believability. It also ‘seeds’ the possibility that the thought(s) are not ‘real’ or believable.
2. **MINDFUL VERSUS MINDLESS** (Distraction versus Reaction). We can encourage the client to be more mindful instead of ‘mindless’. This intentionality can assist in changing patterns as the client ‘distracts’ themselves (doing something different) instead of the more habitual reaction (doing the same thing over and over again).
3. **COUNT BACK BY THREES** (from a high number such as 430). This has a few applications. It can be used as a distraction tool because the counting back by threes from a high number needs some focus. It can also assist in better sleep hygiene. The trick here is to demonstrate to the client how to count backwards by going slowly and maybe even making an intentional error so as not to set the client up for a negative experience themselves.
4. **10,000 BRICKS:** a way to think about depression. The voice of depression includes sadness, hopelessness, exhaustion, and all or nothing thinking. All of this can feel like 10,000 bricks on your back. Joanna Bedgood actually shows clients a picture of 10,000 bricks and tells them not to be discouraged if after they leave the session they still feel depressed. She shares with clients that when someone has all these bricks on their back it is hard for them to notice that maybe 500 have been lifted, but to keep going and keep doing those things that lift the bricks. Eventually they will notice the lighter load!
5. **55/5:** This is a time strategy. Here the client is told to continue on their usual procrastination or whatever occupies their time for 55 minutes and then to take 5 minutes to do something productive such as take out garbage, print an article, or book an appointment. Then repeat. This helps reduce “all or nothing” thinking and promotes doing something different. One of the SFBT assumptions is that small change leads to bigger change.
6. **INTENSE 10 TO 20 SECONDS ACTIVITY** (activating and calm, activating and calm). This can be demonstrated and done with the client during the session. Research supports exercise as one way to activate energy, which is something lacking in individuals dealing with depression in their lives.

7. **CONNECTING WITH OTHERS:** Most people dealing with depression and anxiety tend to isolate themselves, and this strategy is intended to get them to connect and reap the benefits of social engagement. Never underestimate how the obvious can escape even the most brilliant!
8. **“FEEL IT AND DO IT ANYWAY”:** Similar to the book “Feel the fear, and do it anyway.” Most people think they have to get rid of the anxiety before they start doing things and this reframes it to having to do the things first to shrink the anxiety. This is psycho-educational and impactful for clients to hear!
9. **S.T.O.P.** (DBT technique). This acronym for ‘Stop, take a step back, observe, then proceed’. This strategy, like many of the others ones, promotes the idea of ‘doing something different’, and how taking a momentary pause can change how someone reacts and behaves.
10. **ASK ABOUT PAST EXPERIENCES.** (You’ve got some gold in those experiences). SFBT therapists know that there are always exceptions that can be utilized! Discussing the ‘gold’ in their past generates hope and potential solutions. Reverse it if they are complainants – when was it worse?
11. **CRITICAL INNER DIALOGUE.** Ask what the quality of the inner dialogue is like. Tone - does it sound like anyone they know? How about volume? And add the voice of self-compassion by asking: *“What would it be like to talk to yourself like you would talk to a friend?”* In single session therapy, ‘novelty’ and impactful strategies can create faster change.
12. **CONNECTING WITH NATURE.** Research again supports this as a strategy to shrink depression and anxiety. Getting clients to go for a walk outdoors, or even sit in a park creates positive opportunity.
13. **CONNECTING WITH YOURSELF** (painting, extra time in the shower). This promotes self-care and doing things of interest.
14. **NAGGING TASKS:** Pick a small nagging task and take care of it. (Like sewing a button on your coat.) This small task can make a significant difference in increasing hope and agency and it promotes self-efficacy.
15. **NEGATIVE THOUGHT PATTERNS:** (e.g. Black/White thinking, overgeneralizing, catastrophizing, and more – lists are available online). These CBT constructs can be very useful to provide as a handout. The list normalizes negative thought patterns, allows clients to identify them, and even to think differently about them.

As brief therapists we want to have as many useful resources as we can, as at times these resources can be the difference that makes a difference, especially in Single Session Therapy. If you have any resources that you would like to add to this list, please email us at dina.bednar@hotmail.com



Book Review by Dina Bednar

Seizure the Day: Living a Happy Life Despite Illness by Brian Orend

One of the advantages of this profession is that we can find inspiration and resources all around us that we can use with our clients. This can generate creative energy, impact and maximize utilization. One book I read this summer did all that and it is written by a Canadian too! Brian Orend is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Waterloo. He is the author of six books, including *Morality of War*, which apparently is one of the most widely-used books in universities on the ethics of war and peace. His newest book ***Seizure the Day*** was motivated by Orend's own health struggles, which include epilepsy resulting from an inoperable and benign brain tumour. His condition inspired him to put to use his exceptional research abilities to explore and examine the topic of 'happiness' despite illness. Even though this book is intended for a particular audience dealing with chronic conditions it can benefit anyone who wants to examine and learn about happiness.

Orend has done extensive investigations and presents the latest scientific research on happiness along with references to philosophy and ethics and offers the reader many practical ideas, exercises and evidence-supported applications and steps to becoming happier. He has neatly divided his book into three sections. The first section introduces 'happiness' as a concept and discusses whether happiness can and should be pursued and whether it should be a goal.

The second section examines 'the external goods' that promote happiness such as work, income, social institutions, interpersonal relationships and the body. The third section explores 'the internal goods' such as mental hygiene, emotional hygiene and how moral character affects happiness.

The 'therapist' reader will find a treasure trove of useful information, well-researched exercises along with scientific explanations that support their efficacy and application. For instance, Orend has compiled lists

of the most popular comedies, movies and television shows. He discusses the benefits of laughter and provides studies that support ‘humour therapy’ as effective in decreasing the stress hormone cortisol, reducing blood pressure, increasing pain tolerance and increasing one’s immune system.

Couple therapists will appreciate his chapter on interpersonal relationships. He states that studies by Harry Reis and Shelly Gable conclude that good relationships are the single most important source of life satisfaction and emotional well-being for people across all cultures (p. 197)! Orend also provides a very adequate description of attachment theory as well as excellent exercises and ‘advice’ for couples. Orend includes the “zero negativity challenge” developed by Harville Hendrix, which encourages couples to track how many days they can go without doing or saying anything negative or hurtful to their partner, and when they break their streak they can start again. Another exercise that Orend shares that fits nicely with SFBT is from Harriet Lerner. In this exercise, couples are encouraged to think of three concrete things that they can do over a week which they know their partner will appreciate, and then do them without telling their partner!

This book is full of excellent suggestions and information and I am recommending it to clients, friends, and therapists. Brian Orend has not only shared valuable information, he has also provided us with the philosophy behind happiness and virtue. This book will make you want to read and learn about Aristotle and it will inspire you to continue to live courageously and well. Enjoy!

UPCOMING COURSES & EVENTS

Fall 2019 SFBTC Certificate Program Courses

at the University of Toronto, OISE Continuing & Professional Learning

Foundations, Assumptions, Theory, & Skills Course

– Sep. 27 & 28

Solution-Focused Single Session Practicum Course

– Oct. 4 & 5

Solution-Focused Groups That Work / SF Group Applications Course

– Oct. 25 & 26

Crisis Intervention: Solution-Focused Approaches Course

– Nov. 15 & 16

Solution-Focused Clinical Case Presentation Course

– Nov. 22 & 23

Couple & Family Course

– Dec. 6 & 7

***We invite you to join us at the
2019 SFBTA CONFERENCE***

**The 2019 Solution-Focused
Brief Therapy Association
Annual Conference
Nov. 6-9, 2019
Montreal, Quebec**

**A wonderful professional
development opportunity.**

**To learn more about the innovative work
taking place using the Solution-Focused
approach and for conference details,
please visit:**

<http://www.sfbta.org/2019-conference>

For more information and to register, please visit the SFBTC Certificate Program Page on the OISE CPL website at <https://cpl.oise.utoronto.ca/public/category/programStream.do?method=load&selectedProgramAreaId=18120&selectedProgramStreamId=26005>