

Therapeutic Modalities Resource Kit



This resource kit was created to support your work as a helper. Inside, you'll find practical, trauma-informed tools designed to be flexible and easy to use in your own practice.

These tools draw from a range of foundational counselling modalities, so you can make significant impacts on the people you support.

We hope these resources help you feel grounded, confident, and better equipped to support your clients.

Here's what you're getting:

- Questions Are Key
- Questions to Highlight Success
- Identifying Cognitive Distortions
- Thinking Like a Behaviourist
- Exploring Identity Through Metaphor

Core Counselling Modalities



Solution-Focused Therapy

Solution-focused therapy (SFT) is a therapeutic approach that emphasizes building on your clients' existing strengths and resources to find solutions to their problems. Unlike traditional forms of therapy that focus on diagnosing and analyzing problems, SFT is future-oriented and seeks to identify and achieve the client's goals.

Solution-focused questions are central to SFT and are designed to help clients visualize and clarify their goals, recognize their resources, and identify actionable steps forward.

Resource: Questions Are Key



Questions in Counselling

Counselling is informed by curiosity, skill, and artistry to discern the what, where, when, and why of what's going on with your clients – and understanding what might be preventing you from asking great questions is just as important.

Whether you are supporting people with addictions, trauma, anxiety, depression, or other life struggles, the art of asking good questions is critical in any helping role.

Resource: Questions to Highlight Success



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a popular approach that helps clients understand the connection between their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. It's based on the idea that how we think shapes how we feel and act.

This approach focuses on identifying unhelpful patterns, and then exploring practical ways to shift them. By changing thoughts and behaviours, clients can reduce distress and respond to challenges more effectively.

Resource: Identifying Cognitive Distortions



Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) was originally created to treat individuals with borderline personality disorder. However, it has since been adapted for a wide range of mental health conditions, particularly those involving emotion regulation issues such as depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and disordered eating.

DBT aims to equip people with practical skills to manage emotions productively, foster healthy relationships, and improve their overall quality of life. The skills taught in DBT can help clients avoid emotional extremes or all-or-nothing thinking, so they can take a balanced approach to everyday situations and challenges.

Resource: Thinking Like a Behaviourist



Narrative Therapy

Narrative therapy is based on the idea that people construct meaning and identity through the stories they tell about their lives. This unique form of psychotherapy aims to help people recognize and reshape their story in empowering ways.

It can be useful for individuals, couples, and families seeking to understand and transform the narratives that shape their identities and experiences. And it's particularly beneficial for those dealing with issues of identity, trauma, and interpersonal conflicts. By focusing on storytelling, your clients can gain clarity about their life experiences and adopt empowering perspectives that foster personal growth and resilience.

Resource: Exploring Identity Through Metaphor

Questions Are Key

Purpose-driven questions are an essential element of solution-focused therapy, and there are four core questions that help propel the process. These questions can be asked at the beginning of the counselling process and/or at the beginning of each session.



Four basic solution-focused questions:

1. What are your best hopes?
2. What difference will that make?
3. What works?
4. What will be the next sign of progress or what will be your next step?

Many traditional approaches to trauma, depression, anxiety, and other human struggles have been problem-focused – in other words: *What caused this, and how do we get rid of it?*

A solution-focused lens explores using questions like, “What will life look like when these struggles are less influential?” and “How do we incorporate more of that into the present/future?”



Anxiety

1. How could you regain hope that life can get easier in the future?
2. What would be a small sign that things are better?
3. What did the anxiety not change? How did you manage to maintain that?



Depression

1. What helps you keep the depression under control?
2. How can you comfort yourself?
3. Who can comfort you now, even if it's just a little bit?
4. How will you celebrate your victory over depression?



Trauma

1. How have you been able to cope with what happened?
2. What else have you been through that was difficult? What helped you manage?
3. What will you be doing differently when your traumatic memories are less of a problem in your daily life?
4. How will you be able to tell when you are handling things a little better?

Questions to Highlight Success

Problems are incredibly influential – they tend to dominate our own and other people's experiences. However, no problem is absolute, and there are always exceptions.

As counsellors, we are constantly paying attention to successes, both big and small. And identifying successes is the first step towards building on them. Good stories thrive with rich descriptions, and inquiring into the details surrounding a client's success further integrates the experience into their consciousness and builds the therapeutic relationship.



- Where were you when...?
- Who was with you?
- How did you know you were ready?
- What led up to...?



As we explore the details of the person's successes and progress, it's also helpful to go deeper and inquire into the meaning(s) behind the event. Be sure to focus on values, understandings, realizations, and the knowledge gained by asking:

- What did it take to achieve [the action]?
- Do you have a name for [the action]?
- Why is [the preferred direction] important to you?

Identifying Cognitive Distortions

This activity can help you recognize and identify ways to overcome thinking patterns that distort how you see yourself or perceive situations.

Use the chart below to help you identify the cognitive distortions, and then come up with some alternative thoughts in the examples on the next page.

Common cognitive distortions	Alternative ways of thinking
All-or-nothing thinking Believing everything is either good or bad, with nothing in between.	Look for the middle ground: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there more than two options here?• How else can I think about the situation?
Filtering Focusing on the negatives and ignoring the positives.	Consider the whole picture: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Am I looking at the negatives and ignoring the positives?
Personalizing Unfairly blaming yourself for anything that goes wrong.	Look at all possibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is this really about me?• What other explanation might there be for this situation?
Mind reading Assuming you know what others are thinking.	Question your assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do I know what others are thinking? What is the evidence?
Catastrophizing Imagining that potential negative consequences will be disastrous.	Seek a more realistic perspective: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the evidence that this will happen?• Will this matter in a month's time?
Overgeneralization Reaching a conclusion about one event and then applying it to everything. For example, one poor math test score causes you to say you're no good at math.	Be specific: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is it true that this is always the case?• What are the facts? What are my interpretations?
Emotional reasoning Believing something is true because you feel it is true.	Look for evidence of this belief: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Am I confusing my feelings with the facts? Are my perceptions correct?
Labelling Reducing yourself or others to a single characteristic (for example, "I am a failure," or "They're just a drunk").	Shift judgement to curiosity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What other qualities do I have?• What might be causing their actions?
"Should" statements Thinking in terms of what "should" be said or done. This is often based on "rules" learned in the family.	Rewrite your "rules": <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change "should" to "could."

EXAMPLES

- 1** A person does not get a job they applied for and thinks, *I am failing at life. I can't do anything right.*

Cognitive Distortion: _____

Alternative Thought: _____

- 2** While a student is eating in the cafeteria, they look around and think, *Everyone thinks I am such a loser for eating alone.*

Cognitive Distortion: _____

Alternative Thought: _____

- 3** A parent of young children compares themselves to others, focusing on the times when they lose their cool and disregard their usual gentle approach.

Cognitive Distortion: _____

Alternative Thought: _____

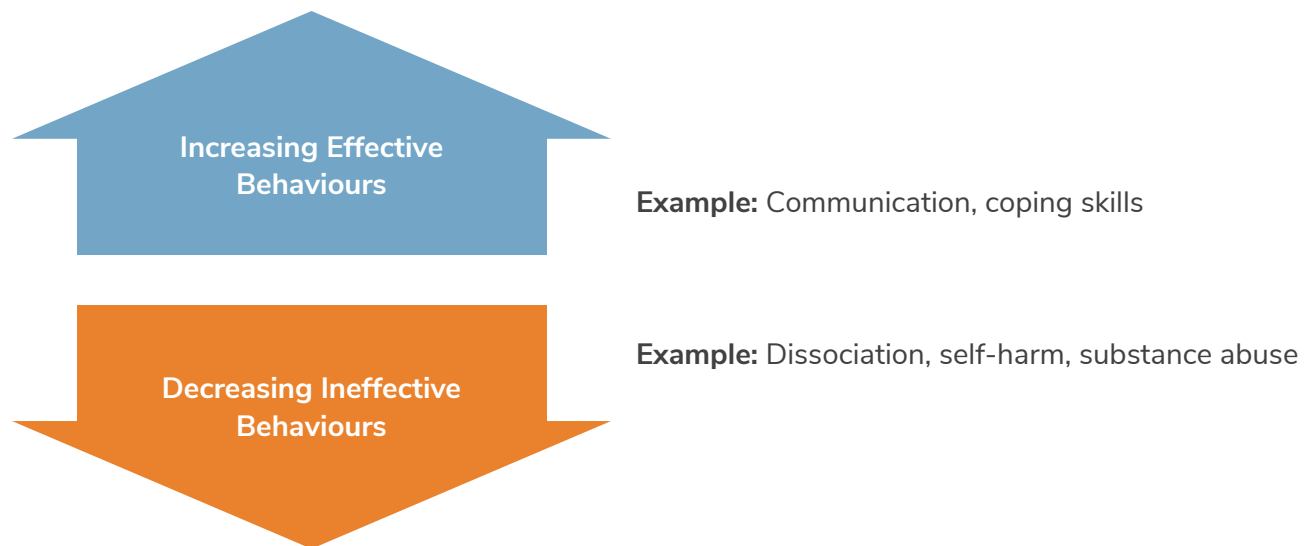
REFLECTION

- What cognitive distortions do you tend to use?
- What are the warning signs you notice when you may have a cognitive distortion?
- What alternative thoughts would be helpful to you?
- What would help you shift toward believing alternative thoughts?

Thinking Like a Behaviourist

When applying dialectical behaviour therapy, it's helpful to think like a behaviourist and get curious about what your client is trying to understand and where you think they can strive for change. Also consider where they may need to improve their ability to accept things as they are in the moment.

Striving for behaviour change includes:



What is keeping them stuck here?

- Is it lack of skill? Teach them new skills.
- Is it problematic thinking? Practice cognitive restructuring.
- Is it the environment? Look at what's providing reinforcement.
- Is it fear of experiencing emotions? Work on their emotional exposure.

All behaviour is a form of communication.

Consider:

What function does this serve?

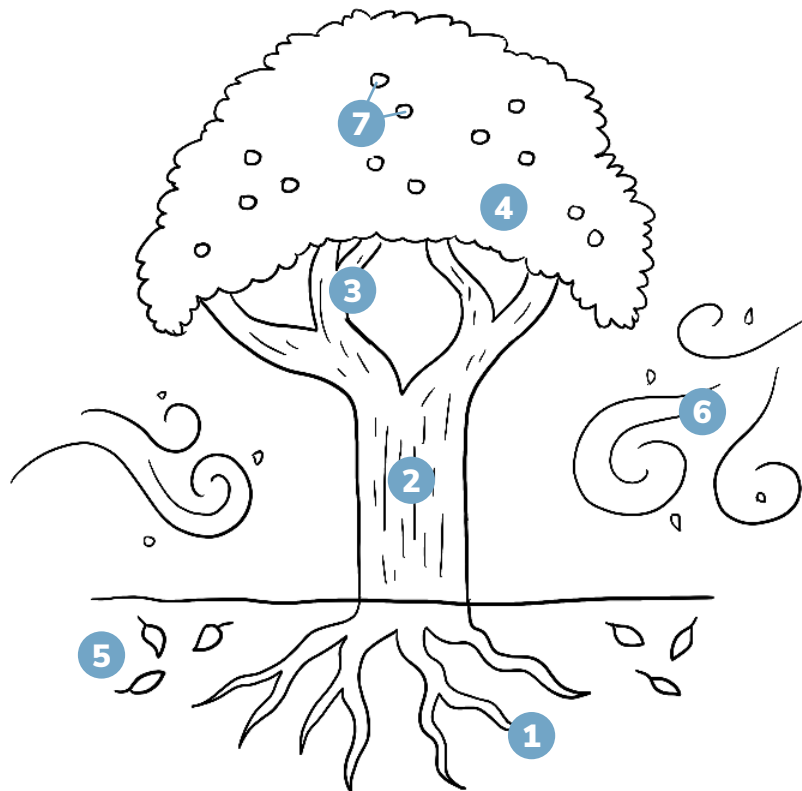
Exploring Identity Through Metaphor

Narrative therapy is interested in how stories shape identity. One useful tool that may help organize aspects of a person's narrative is the Tree of Life exercise first developed by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough.

The Tree of Life

Instruct the person to draw a tree, one stage at a time. At each stage, encourage the person to reflect on the list below.

1. **Roots:** Where we are connected to the earth and our past, our ancestry, the places we come from, the people we come from, etc.
2. **Trunk:** Our name for ourselves.
3. **Branches:** Skills and knowledge we have learned or been taught.
4. **Leaves:** People and animals we are connected to.
5. **Fallen leaves:** Loved ones who have died.
6. **Storms:** Events we are surviving or have survived.
7. **Fruit or nuts:** Our hopes, dreams, and values for ourselves, loved ones, community, world, etc.



Encourage further conversations through reflective questions:

- Where are trees the safest? Alone or with others? (If you're in a group setting, invite everyone to collect their drawn trees into a "forest.")
- What happens to trees? (e.g., storms, forest fire, etc.)
- What are the storms in people's lives? (e.g., pain, hurt, loss, etc.)
- What do animals do when storms come? (e.g., come together, run, hide, etc.)
- What do people do when storms come? (The same...)
- When do animals know it's safe to come out? (e.g., wind, sun, new day, rain stops, no thunder, etc.)
- When do people know it's safe to come out? (e.g., yelling or fighting stops, the next morning, no drinking, feeling better inside, etc.)
- What do the animals do after the storm? (e.g., run, play, eat, live their normal life, etc.)
- What do people do after the storm? (The same...)