

Brief Coaching with Children and Young People: A Solution Focused Approach

Harvey Ratner and Denise Yusef

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Brief Coaching with Children and Young People: A Solution Focused Approach, is a useful text for any beginning educational and developmental psychologist, however it also provides a solid refresher for those who currently practice solution-focused therapy or those that would like to extend their client reach to children and groups.

Through this text, Ratner and Yusef provide a tool to assist with coaching rather than explicit guidelines for therapy. The main thrust of their argument is that young people are able to devise their own goals and process to move towards improved outcomes and that the self-generation of ideas for behaviour change can be more effective than *other-generated* ideas. This book is an excellent primer for brief positively-focused engagement with young people. Moreover, given that educational and developmental psychologists often work with groups and parents, this book provides guidance for all contexts that a psychologist working in a school or in private practice may face.

The language and structure of the text ensures it is accessible to a broad audience. Case studies are employed throughout the book offering practical and useful solutions to generating conversations with young people. When a young person fails to see how their circumstances could be different, solution-focused brief coaching suggests using the perceived views of other people, like “How will Mum know that you’re at your best?”, “What will be different in the classroom?” and “How will your best friend see that you’re happier?”. Such leading questions can be invaluable in assisting young people to progress within a therapeutic sense.

Ratner and Yusef offer reminders to focus on solutions while coaching rather than engaging in problem-focused conversation, which is, of course, the premise of this approach. Likewise, they urge continuing encouragement to explore ‘best hopes’ even if the desired situation is out of the young person’s control because the personal outcomes (e.g., being happier, caring less about what other people think) can still be achievable. For clients at risk, the book specifically encourages use of risk assessment tools to ensure ethically sound practice. Further reading and resources are provided in this text, which may be useful for practitioners wishing to extend their knowledge in the area of solution-focused therapy.

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