

## **BASIC INTERVIEWING REFERENCES**

Corcoran, J. (1999). Solution-Focused Interviewing with Child Protective Services Clients. *Child Welfare*, 78(4), 461-479.

(K1, K2)

### About the study-

This article provides a rationale for using a solution-focused approach to the practice of child welfare. The value base of both social and solution-focused practice is explored, and processes for implementing the solution-focused approach in child interviewing, including joining and working with the mandated client, exception-building, goal setting and scaling questions, are discussed.

### Findings-

- Solution-focused practice assumes the all client situations carry with them possible solutions. The worker's role is to find these resources and assist the client in developing and using them to find solutions to problems.
- Joining-the worker should use idiosyncratic language, be vigilant for any strengths and resources to compliment, recognizing that every problem contains within it a strength. Another effective way to join with a client is to side with the client against a common "enemy," such as the judge or court system.
  - Working with the mandated client- The main goal for this type of client is to get the worker and CPS out of his or her life; therefore, this motivation is used for the work of change. An example of a question used to support this motivation is: "What do you need to do so that the judge knows that you don't need anyone involved in your life?" With the complainant client who blames others, circumstances, etc. for their problems, the worker asks coping questions, such as "How do you find the strength to go on?"
- The worker should use language that creates an expectancy for change. One way is to use past tense language to put a problem in the past. A worker should also use words, such as "when" and "will."
- Exception finding- The central practice of solution-focused practice is identifying times when the problem is not a problem and building on the client's strengths and resources. The purpose of exception finding is to give clients credit for their own successes. Another example is intervention questioning which presumes that client have resources and strengths to tap, even in the most difficult situations. Another way to identify exceptions is to separate the person from the problem,i.e., "the anger" instead of saying "your anger."
- Goal setting and scaling questions- Negotiating of goal-setting is initiated early in the interviewing process, by asking a question such as, "What will you have to do so you no longer have CPS in your life?" A convenient and flexible way to set goals is to use scaling questions. Scales are constructed by having clients rank-order for themselves, on a scale of 1 to 10, the goals they have self-identified.
- If all attempts to find positive and strength-based behaviors fail, then use the pessimistic stance. This compels clients to switch positions and argue for their own change.

- The termination of the interview should always be structured, with the worker summarizing the goals that have been discussed and the progress already made towards the goals. The worker should also compliment the client and reinforce any strength-based behaviors.

#### Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of the guidelines for interviewing and the type of questions that can be used to identify and reinforce the client's strengths. This will help to create rapport with the client and create a positive relationship with them.

Cross, T., Jones, L., Walsh, W., Simone, M. and Kolko, D. (2007). Child Forensic Interviewing in Children's Advocacy Centers: Empirical data on a practice model. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 31(10), 1031-1052.

(K4)

#### About the study/citation-

This article's analysis focuses on investigative or forensic interviews by police, CPS, and other professionals to assess the truth about a suspicion of child abuse following a report. This paper examines (1) whether child advocacy centers (CACs) have more interagency coordination in interviewing than comparison samples; (2) whether CACs have fewer investigative interviews and interviewers than comparison sample cases; and (3) how the location of interviews in the CACs compares to non-CAC communities. Using a sample of 1,069 child sexual abuse cases, this paper compares data on forensic interviewing from four CACs to case data from within-state comparison communities who lacked CACs. The four CACs were located in Dallas, TX, Charleston, SC, Huntsville, AL, and Pittsburgh, PA. Qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews conducted at site visits and in follow-up telephone interviews.

#### Findings/content-

- Information from literature review-
  - With uncoordinated investigations, agencies can miss out on crucial information from each other and make decisions at cross-purposes.
  - Most child advocacy centers increase coordination by conducting multidisciplinary team interviews. The team can share information and decision-making, and coordinates communication with the family.
  - If working on separate uncoordinated investigations, police, CPS, physicians and others can interview children separately, putting children in the position to tell their stories over and over again.
  - The number of interviews can also be a problem when the same interviewer meets with the child a number of times. The biggest objection to repeated interviewing is that it could make children re-live the trauma of the abuse in the retelling. Children could change their answers because they thought they got it "wrong" the first time.
  - Some professionals have reported that many children need multiple interviews, hopefully with the same interviewer to disclose abuse.
- Greater coordination in CACs was evident in a number of variables. Greater police involvement for CACs than comparison for Huntsville and Dallas.
- In both the Huntsville and Dallas CACs, police and CPS were significantly more likely to be involved together in a child forensic interview.

- The fact that the interview at the CAC was typically the last interview in multiple interviews suggest that subsequent interviewing by other agencies may be unnecessary once children get to the CAC.
- Limitations-some interviews may have been missing from the records, CAC researchers could have introduced some bias, research needed CACs with some research experience and larger client base, comparison samples were not chosen for superior program development like the CACs, and it is difficult to generalize from the number of CACs to all CACs.

#### Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of the impact of multiple interviewing on children and the need for collaboration in cases, such as those involving sexual abuse, to minimize the trauma to the child and avoid repeat interviewing.

De Jong, P. & Miller, S.D. (1995). How to Interview for Client Strengths. *Social Work*, 40(6), 729-736.

(K2)

#### About the study-

The article presents a set of interviewing questions that are appropriate to the philosophy and practice principles of the strengths perspective, including the commitment to work with the client's frame of reference. These questions are known as the solution-focused approach to interviewing. The article also presents the two key concepts behind solution-focused interviewing, the questions and a discussion of how the questions fit with the key concepts of the strength perspective.

#### Findings-

- In solution-focused interviewing, the characteristics of well-formed goals are:
  - Goals are well-formed when they belong to the client and belong in the client's language.
  - Goals are small.
  - Goals are concrete, specific and behavioral.
  - Goals seek presence rather than absence.
  - Goals have beginning rather than endings.
  - Goals are realistic within the context of the client's life.
  - Goals are perceived by the client as involving "hard work."
- Exploring exceptions is another interviewing approach. The worker focuses on who, what, when, and where of exception times instead of the who, what, when, and where of problems.
- The "miracle" question is a good question to ask. This question is the starting point for a whole series of satellite questions designed to take the clients attention away from difficulties and to focus it on a future when problems are solved.
- Exception-finding questions are used by the worker to discover a client's present and past successes in relation to the client's goals. Eventually these successes are used to build solutions.
- Scaling questions are a clever way to make complex features of a client's life more concrete and accessible for both client and worker. They usually take the form of asking the client to give a number from 0 to 10 that best represents where the client is at some specified point.

- Coping questions can be helpful in uncovering client strengths. These questions accept the client's perceptions and then move on to ask how the client is able to cope with such overwhelming circumstances and feelings.
- "What's better" questions are an approach to beginning later questions by continuing the work of building solutions and uncovering client strengths. An example is "What's happening in your life that's better?"
- There are six key concepts behind the strengths perspectives to be operationalized in the worker-client relationship: empowerment, membership, regeneration and healing from within, synergy, dialogue and collaboration, and suspension of disbelief.

#### Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of the type of questions that can be used to identify and reinforce the client's strengths. This will help to create rapport with the client and create a positive relationship with them.

Faller, K.C. and Hewitt, S. (2007). Special Considerations for Cases Involving Young Children. In Faller, K.C. (Ed.) Interviewing Children About Sexual Abuse: Controversies and best practice. New York: Oxford University Press.

(K3)

#### About the study/citation-

In this chapter, various definitions of "young children" and their responses to interviews are discussed, and research on the memory capacities for nontraumatic and traumatic events is described.

#### Findings-

- Young children have less general and sex-specific knowledge; they have less developed language with which to communicate; they have undeveloped free recall memory; and they are more suggestible than older children.
- Children younger than three years 7 months usually do not understand the concept of having a doll represents themselves. Before children understand that a doll represents themselves, they must also be able to show on their bodies where something has happened to them.
- Hewitt(1999) divides young children into three developmental stages, organized around developmental capacities.
  - If a child is younger than 18 months, he/she cannot be evaluated for possible sexual abuse. For these stage "1" children, sexual abuse can only be determined by physical findings, an eyewitness observer or a confession.
  - Children in stage "2" are 18 months to age 3. These children require a combination of careful history, current status and detailed behavioral repertoire. Their behaviors and spontaneous utterances, across situations and time, provide the most powerful information about their possible abuse history.
  - Preschoolers age 3-4 who can respond to a somewhat structured interview are stage "3" children. They have intelligible speech and sufficiently

developed language, an understanding of representation of self, narrative capacity, the ability to cooperate in an interview and level of competence.

- Although children age 16-18 months cannot verbally report events they have experienced, they can reproduce elements of the event sequence.
- Children experiencing events at 22 months of age can recall and verbalize these events at age 4.
- Practice recommendations differ somewhat from those of older children. These include heavy reliance of information from caretakers, use of standardized measures, several interviews, and the use of “scaffolding” when questioning.

#### Implications-

The worker needs to be aware of the verbal abilities and limitations of young children that will affect the interviewing process, as well as other developmental issues, such as memory capacities.

Kadusin, A. (1983). *The Social Work Interview* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Columbia University Press. (K1)

#### About the study/citation-

A major part of the book is concerned with the techniques of social work interviewing. Interviewing is discussed as communication, the interview and interpersonal relationships, the interview process and special aspects of interviewing, such as self-disclosure, cross-cultural interviewing and nonverbal communication.

#### Findings/content-

- In the introductory phase of interviewing, the client first needs to recognize that he or she has a problem, one that she cannot resolve on his or her own.
- There may be a need to overtly recognize that the client is not happy with having to come to the interview and this feeling is then acknowledged in open discussion.
- Data suggests that initial motivation is neither a necessary requirement for a successful interview nor a guarantee of one. It is the interviewer's responsibility to nurture whatever motivation the client brings and to develop motivation in those clients without it.
- The interaction between the interviewer and client also begins when scheduling the appointment and around the immediate pre-interview situation, i.e., a client facing frustration when trying to find the agency.
- The physical accessibility of the agency is a determinant of the client's presenting attitude at the beginning of the interview.
- The interview begins before it starts for the interviewer as well as the interviewee. It begins for the interviewer when he or she prepares, in advance, for all the interviewees he or she will encounter in the office.
- The interviewer's preparation must involve a clear idea of what he or she hopes to accomplish in the interview. The interviewer needs to specify the interview's purpose, translating objectives into specific items that need to be covered.
- The client's home as the interview setting furthers the interviewer's diagnostic understanding of his or her situation and issues.
- Once the interview begins, the book provides information related to pre-interview amenities, opening questions, and clarifying the purpose of the interview.

- Progression through the interview in the terms of range and depth, problem solving interventions, questions and techniques of questioning, and termination and recording. These areas of discussions include subject matter, such as:
  - Paraphrasing
  - Transitions
  - Identifying and calling attention to feelings
  - Clarification and interpretation
  - Confrontation
  - Sharing information
  - Support
  - Probe questions
  - Summary and post-interview conversations

#### Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of all the factors that influence an interview before the interview even starts, such as preparation. The worker should also understand the different stages of interviewing and the skills involved in each stage. This can all affect the interview with the client, the rapport built and the information gathered.

Maple, F.F. (1998). Goal-Focused Interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. (K1)

#### About the study/citation-

The book focuses on goal-focused interviewing, which emphasizes a collaborative approach between clients and workers. The construction of much of this book is in an interactive mode, with the reader given the opportunity to select an intervention at a key moment in a helping session. The cases in the book are represented in a script form.

#### Findings/content-

- The flow chart for a goal-focused interview includes:
  - Presenting frame-
    - Focus briefly on difficulties
  - Outcome frame-
    - Identify desired state
  - Obstacle frame-
    - Find key obstacles to desired state
  - Resource frame
    - Identify several resources
  - Action frame
    - Plan how to use resources to achieve desired state by overcoming obstacles
- The first goal of GFI emphasizes the helper's effort to speak in the client's language. This is matching.
  - Matching involves connecting precisely with a client's words (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) and the pace of the client's speech.
- The second goal refers to the helper leading the client. Leading a client means focusing on identifying change goals or finding resources to achieve these goals. Leading involves taking the client's messages and directing them toward the four desired outcomes of GFI:

- Finding goals and clearly stating them in action terms.
- Finding strengths and resources that can provide the means to move toward the identified goals.
- Eliciting guidelines from clients about their plans and how they plan to achieve the goals.
- Eliciting preferences for clients about their priorities in relation to the different parts of their plans.
- Different cases examples are offered for using GFI with individuals, families and groups.

Implications for CWS-

The worker should understand the process of interviewing, such as with GFI, in order to best meet the needs of the client, minimizing any further exposure to trauma for the client, and to gather the information needed in a case.

McConaughy, S.H. (2005). *Clinical Interviews for Children and Adolescents: Assessment to Intervention*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

(K3)

About the study/citation-

Chapter 2 addresses developmental considerations for child interviews, including questioning strategies. A table with information on developmental considerations, including cognitive and social-emotional functioning and typical peer interactions is included. There is also another table which has information interviewing do's and don'ts on interviewing for children of different ages. Other pertinent information is included as well.

Findings/content-

- Early childhood (ages 3-5)
  - They are at the preoperational stage and tend to focus on only one feature of an object, and they are easily confused by distinctions between appearance and reality.
  - In terms of social-emotional functioning, 5 year old tend to be egocentric because they lack the ability to understand another person's point of view
  - Young children's view of right and wrong are generally based on the consequences of their actions, which Kohlberg (1976) characterized as "preconventional" level of moral reasoning.
  - Questioning strategies include sitting at same level of child, shorten the length and complexity of questions, use simple questions, use open-ended questions, and allow children time to think about what they want to say.
- Middle childhood (ages 6-11)
  - Children enter the concrete operational stage. They can apply simple logic to tangible objects and actual event sequences. Children are able to focus on more than one attribute of an object at the same time; they have the concrete understanding of reverse relationships of simple operations, like addition and subtraction.
  - In terms of social-emotional functioning, most children master "recursive thinking," which involves the ability to imagine what another person

might be thinking. They can answer questions about how they think or feel and how others might think or feel.

- Some questioning strategies include asking what the child likes to do, listen to what the child says without casting judgments on their response, following the child's lead in conversation, avoid rhetorical questions, and avoid or minimize the number of "why" questions.
- Adolescence (ages 12-18)
  - These children are in the formal operational stage of cognitive development. They are able to reason abstractly and apply logical rules for solving problems in several areas. Normal developing adolescents become more systematic in their approach to academic tasks and social problem solving.
  - In terms of social-emotional functioning, many adolescents can take a third-person view of what they and other people are thinking, described as metacognitive thinking. Some adolescents who have emotional or behavioral problems may not have the capacity for this type of thinking, which can be a major factor in the poor quality of social relations with peers and adults.
  - Questioning strategies- many of the do's and don'ts discussed for middle childhood can be applied to adolescence. Due to their self-consciousness and insecure sense of identity, it is doubly important to establish rapport and trust early, show openness and respect to their unique points of view, explain limits of confidentiality, do not make judgments, be prepared for emotional lability and signs of stress, and it is important to ask screening questions about suicide risks.

#### Implications for CWS-

It is important for the worker to be aware of the developmental differences in ages of children, which influences the interviewing process. It is important to understand the cognitive, as well as social-emotional functioning, in order to use the most effective interviewing interventions and techniques.

Monit Cheung, K. (1997). Developing the Interview Protocol for Video-Recorded Child Sexual Abuse Investigations: A Training Experience with Police Officers, Social Workers, and Clinical Psychologists in Hong Kong. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 21(3), 273-284.

#### (K1)

##### About the study-

A series of training programs which focused on culturally relevant questioning skills and video-recorded interviews in child sexual abuse cases were designed for social workers, police officers and clinical psychologists in Hong Kong. An interview protocol was developed with four stages: rapport building, free narrative of the account, questioning, and closure. Seventy-four trainees participated in the training program which involved videotaping investigation interviews with Chinese sexual abuse victims in Hong Kong. They were divided into four groups, each attending a 5-day training program. The training program had two major components: language skills and videotaping interviews.

##### Findings-

- Among the interviews, the following techniques were found to be most helpful:

- Rapport building with the child
- Addressing the child's feelings when the child does not want to continue
- Using the 4WH technique-what, who, where, when, and how –to ask questions.
- Not using leading questions
- Clarifying the child's information by using follow-up questions
- 119 questions and statements were rated by both the trainer and trainee to be helpful or extremely helpful.
- Skills, such as following clues, active listening, demonstrating appropriate empathy, and using culturally appropriate eye contact, were rated by the child actors as helpful in most interviews.
- All the trainees found that the training program was most helpful in the three areas: protecting the child, assessing the child and collecting evidence.
- Limitations- A limitation could be that the study occurred in Hong Kong and may have limited generalizability.

#### Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of research regarding videotaping techniques that are helpful in interviewing. The worker should also realize that the interdisciplinary team approach in child sexual abuse interviews is an important method of investigation.

Poole, D.A. & Lamb, M.E. (1998). *Investigative Interviews of Children: A Guide for Helping Professionals*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

(K3)

#### About the study/citation-

Chapter 2 discusses the strengths and weaknesses of children as witnesses and targets some developmental capacities, such as the development of attention, trends in conversational remembering, and understanding truths and lies. Some information on children's eyewitness accuracy and suggestibility is also provided.

#### Findings/content-

- Despite clear instructions from adults, young children's performance often suffers because their attention frequently shifts to information that cannot help them accomplish the task at hand.
- Both biological maturation and prior experiences affect the extent to which children attend to task-irrelevant stimuli.
- Research on attentional development suggests several strategies for improving children's performance during investigative interviews:
  - Interviewers need to modify the environment to minimize distractions and help children focus.
  - Interviewers should review their goals before the interview begins.
  - The relationship between language comprehension and attention suggests that children might be better when they have a better understanding of the interview process.
- Children under age 2 are sensitive to the temporal and causal relationships in event sequences, indicating that they remember events as organized wholes.

- Young children provide less information about events than do older children, so they often require retrieval cues, such as specific questions, to get a narrative that is considered complete.
- Repeated accounts of the same events tend to be less consistent when provided by younger than by older children, because younger children are more likely to address different topics in different interviews.
- Children's understanding of truth and lies improves considerably at approximately age 4 and continues to develop gradually for many years afterward. At about age 3 or 4, most children define a lie in terms of objective reality: truths match reality and lies do not. Around age 8 to 9 years, children often consider the speaker's intent to deceive and realize that honest mistakes are not necessarily lies.
- Delayed recall is problematic when children are asked about somewhat stressful events.
- In a study, the performance of 6 year olds was consistent across a 3-week interval, but the three year olds showed declines in accuracy and increases in false assentions after 1-week delay.

#### Implications for CWS-

The worker should be aware of the influences on children memory recall and attention to interviewing details. This will assist the worker in knowing how to approach and interview children of different ages.

Suoninen, E. and Jokinen, A. (2005). Persuasion in Social Work Interviewing. *Qualitative Social Work*, 4 (4), 469-487.

(K1 )

#### About the study-

The article collects the variation of forms of subtle persuasion that are part of social work interviewing. The article also defines persuasion as an activity that invokes feelings, creates desires and calls forth certain kinds of stories or interpretations. A detailed analysis of interview episodes from different social work settings is used to illustrate interview practices. The article focuses on four basic categories of persuasion. The categories are persuasive questions, persuasive responses, asking explanations, and encouraging questions. The division into four categories is intended to facilitate an outline of the variety of forms of subtle persuasion, although the categories are not fully distinct from each other.

#### Findings-

- Persuasive questions- A question may be understood as a contrast to the suggestion, because it gives the respondent the power to state how things are. In an interview, the social worker may offer some "hints" to adequate answers to the questions. Persuasive questions appear to be a means to soften the pushing by the worker. They also give the client a higher status than direct advice giving and make it easier to take part in the construction of his/her situation.
- Persuasive responses- These are social worker's responses to situations in which a client is giving a somewhat dispreferred answer. Persuasive responses give a client clues that a social worker does not accept the answer as such, but instead persuades a client to continue changing his or her reasoning so that it would comply with the

- spirit of the original question. These questions serve all of these functions: guiding onto the right track, inviting explanation and empowering a client.
- Asking for explanations-Asking for accounts from clients may be seen as an activity that challenges the client's reasoning or decisions and tries to direct them into other avenues.
  - Encouraging questions- the ultimate aim as social work is helping a client to re-author his or her life by encouraging him/her to see his/her own resources and options. This kind of aim is emphasized most clearly in solution-focused and narrative traditions. The encouraging function may even be understood as a summary of all devices discussed in this article: persuasive questions, adjusting the enthusiasm level of responses, asking for explanations and encouraging questions.
  - This article does not aim at generalizing through the large amount of data. Instead, the article illustrates what is possible in social work context and to demonstrate in detail and how it is done in detail by a social worker and his/her client.

#### Implications for CWS-

The worker must be aware of the effectiveness of subtle persuasion as a part of social work interviewing and understand the techniques used to direct the client in the "right" direction.