

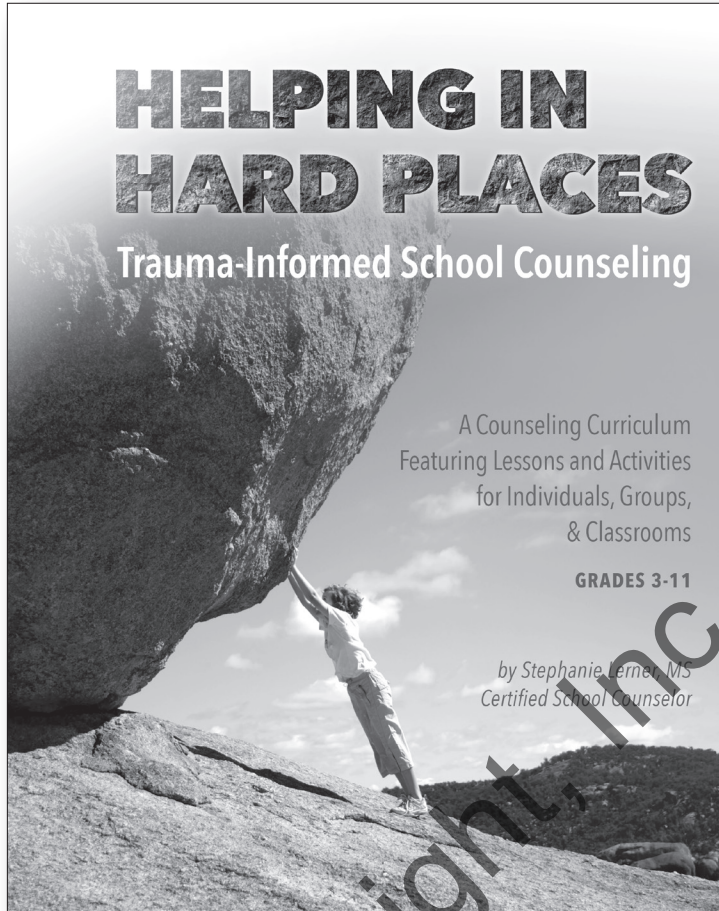
# HELPING IN HARD PLACES

## Trauma-Informed School Counseling

A Counseling Curriculum  
Featuring Lessons and Activities  
for Individuals, Groups,  
& Classrooms

GRADES 3-11

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Certified School Counselor



Like and follow me on Facebook and Instagram, respectively, to see weekly posts on counseling adventures and on the latest counseling resources!

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Purpose of the Book & Topics Covered.....	4
What is Trauma-Informed School Counseling & Why is it Important?.....	5
Solution-Focused Brief Counseling.....	6
Virtual Counseling .....	6
<b>II. Way to Goal: An Individual Counseling Guide .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Flora’s Story .....	7
Recommendations for Facilitating Individual Counseling .....	8
American School Counselor Association Standards Alignment .....	12
Session 1: Building Rapport & Identifying Problem Areas.....	13
Session 2: Creating the SMART Goal.....	21
Session 3: Specific Behaviors & the Positive Change Cycle.....	24
Session 4: Celebrations!.....	29
Additional Activities .....	32
Data Templates .....	34
<b>III. The Support Cohort: A Group Counseling Guide.....</b>	<b>37</b>
A “Hard Places” Group Story.....	37
Recommendations for Facilitating Group Counseling .....	38
American School Counselor Association Standards Alignment .....	42
Session 1: Getting to Know You.....	43
Session 2: Success with SMART Goals.....	52
Session 3: Nature and Exercise for the Win!.....	56
Session 4: There’s No “You” in “I” Message.....	60
Session 5: Positive Coping Habits at Your Desk .....	65
Session 6: The Final Countdown .....	70
Additional Activities .....	74
Data Templates .....	78
<b>IV. Overcoming Strife in Life: Classroom Counseling Lessons.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Our Crisis Story .....	81
General Information.....	82
Recommendations for Implementing this Guidance Curriculum .....	83
American School Counselor Association Standards Alignment .....	86
September Lesson: Introductions & Key Guidance Concepts .....	87
October Lesson: Let’s Resolve Some Conflicts! .....	97
November Lesson: The Gratitude Attitude .....	101
December Lesson: Be a Hope Builder .....	105
January Lesson: Connection Reflection.....	109
February Lesson: Grow Your Mindset.....	112
March Lesson: Flipping Your Lid! .....	114
April Lesson: Child Abuse Prevention .....	118
May Lesson: Wishes for the Future.....	121
Additional Activities .....	123
<b>V. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>124</b>
Hope for the Future .....	124
Next Steps .....	124
Thank You .....	124
<b>VI. References .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>VII. About the Author .....</b>	<b>127</b>



# SESSION 1

# Building Rapport & Identifying Problem Areas

## TOPIC OVERVIEW

### The student will:

- Begin relationship building with counselor
- Explore the problem that necessitates counseling work
- Start establishing the solution for counseling work

### Materials

- Reproducibles (attached at the end of this session):
  - > Parent/Guardian Permission Letter
  - > Initial Individual Counseling Notes Form
  - > Interest Form
  - > The "3 Hurts" Emergency (should be displayed prominently in counseling area)
  - > My Scales
  - > SFBC Questioning Guide
- Pencil
- Note card

### Procedures

#### 1. Introduction

- Begin the rapport-building process with the student by introducing yourself and having them complete the attached Interest Form. Tell the student that the purpose of the Interest Form is for you to be able to plan sessions tailored specifically for their interests and strengths.
- Have the student share their Interest Form responses with you or ask them a few open-ended questions about their responses. Establish some commonalities and start \*cheerleading, if possible.  
\*Cheerleading is "supporting and encouraging student's success with praise" (Sklare, 2014, p. 58).
- Briefly review the purpose of the counseling session and the general reason they were referred to you.
- Explain the limits of confidentiality by showing the "3 Hurts" Emergency. Let the student know that every adult in the school building must work with another adult/s if students tell them of a "3 hurts" emergency; this is because the top priority is to keep students safe.
- At this point, ask the student if they have any questions and if they are ready to proceed with the session.

#### 2. Problem Identification

- Begin by asking the student, "In your opinion, what is the reason you are here?" and "What can we do to make things better for you?"
- Give the student the attached My Scales sheet and go over the directions with them. Explain to the student what scaling is (choosing a number on a 1-10 scale, where 10 is the best, to evaluate something) and tell them that usually we will scale verbally, but today they will start off with a paper scale. Have them complete all 3 scales on the sheet.
- Review how the student has rated each aspect of their life on the My Scales sheet. Next, have them select which part they want to work on first in the counseling sessions; this is their "problem."
- In order to learn more about their problem as they experience it, discuss some of the step two questions in the attached SFBC Questioning Sheet.

# Building Rapport & Identifying Problem Areas

## Procedures (continued)

### 3. Goal Work

- Explain to the student that the focus of our sessions will be on goal work because achieving goals increases student success and promotes positive mental health, no matter what previous challenges they have faced in their life (Sobhy & Cavallero, 2010).
- Review the problem that was discussed in Step 2 above. Discuss with the student what type of goal or solution might help them solve that problem. Help them to create a tentative goal to solve the problem (it doesn't have to be a SMART goal at this point as this is just their preliminary goal to get them thinking about goal work). Write the student's tentative goal in the appropriate section of the attached Initial Individual Counseling Notes Form and on a note card for the student to take with them.
- If student has no idea of a goal, ask Dr. John Murphy's Futureland goal question, "Pretend that you are flying in a spaceship to a planet called Futureland, where you can live your life without this problem. Describe what your life is like at school in Futureland" (2008, p. 101). You can also try the "Million Dollar Question" from the SFBC Questioning Sheet. Turn the student's answer to this question into a preliminary goal (i.e., "In Future land, no one ever yells at me to stop blurting out answers" → "So, let's talk about a goal like raising your hand to give answers, so no one will yell at you."
- Tell the student to think about turning this tentative goal into a specific one for the next session—how will they know when they achieve it? Is it even possible to achieve? Is it important to them? How long will it take them to achieve it? Tell the student that this is their counseling homework that will be discussed at the next session.

### 4. Wrap Up

- Praise the student! Point out successes such as answering challenging questions. Let the student know that you will continue working together on their goal in the next session.
- Ask the student if there is anything more they would like to discuss or need help with for this week.
- Send the student their reminder note (explained in recommendation section) on the following day.

# PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION LETTER

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Counseling Program at \_\_\_\_\_ School includes individual counseling sessions. Your child \_\_\_\_\_, has been referred for participation in short-term individual counseling. With your permission, your child will attend individual counseling sessions on a scheduled basis at school by the counselor. These sessions will focus on the topic of \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ The sessions will not change the child's academic program. Participation in the sessions is voluntary, and confidentiality will be discussed and respected.

At times, the counselor and school-based staff (principal, assistant principal, social worker, psychologist, behavior specialist, teacher, nurse, etc.) will need to exchange information about your child (goals, strategies, etc.). All communication will take place only on an educational need-to-know basis.

This permission is for the school year \_\_\_\_\_.

If you would like for your child to have individual counseling sessions with the counselor, please sign and return this form to the counseling office. If you have any questions or concerns, please call \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Counselor

I give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in individual counseling sessions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

INITIAL INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING NOTES FORM  
*Counselor Information Sheet*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ **SESSION # 1** Date \_\_\_\_\_

> Student's Goal (It doesn't have to be SMART since it is just a tentative goal at this point.)

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> Session Activities:

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> Session Summary Notes:

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# Interest Form

*Student Reproducible*

*The purpose of this form is for the counselor to get to know you a little better, so that they can plan your sessions in the most interesting and helpful way for you. Please answer the questions below in as much detail as possible. Alternatively, you can dictate your answers to the counselor who will write them down below.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. My favorite thing to do is \_\_\_\_\_.

2. I really enjoy this part of the school day: \_\_\_\_\_.

3. I really do not enjoy this part of the school day: \_\_\_\_\_.

4. The best thing about my family is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

5. The best thing about me is \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Something that I really struggle with is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

7. Something that I have never tried but want to experience is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

8. The job/career I want to have in my future is \_\_\_\_\_.



# The "3 Hurts" Emergency

*Student Reproducible*

**An emergency is a serious situation where someone could get physically hurt!**

If you tell me about an emergency, I may have to tell another adult to keep you or someone else safe. An emergency usually involves one or more of the following "3 Hurts" situations:

**1.**  
**You might physically harm YOURSELF.**

**2.**  
**You might physically harm ANOTHER PERSON.**

**3.**  
**SOMEONE ELSE threatens or physically harms you (or another person).**

**If you have one of these "3 Hurts," tell me or another trusted adult immediately.**





# My Scales

*Student Reproducible*

Directions: Circle the number below to show where you are (1-feeling unhappy to 10-feeling very happy) in the following three areas of your life.

## SCHOOL



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



## HOME LIFE



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



## ME, MYSELF, AND I



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10





## SFBC QUESTIONING GUIDE

### *Counselor Information & Instruction Sheet*

*Solution-focused brief counseling (SFBC) uses several different tasks to help a student to find their solution and achieve success (Murphy, 2008). I have created questions that the counselor can use to help guide a student to their solution/s or goal/s. These questions are grouped into my own 5 stages below.*

#### **1. Building Student-Counselor Relationship**

- Tell me about the best part of your day or week.
- What is something you'd like me to know about you?
- What do you want to be when you grow up? (Can link to problem and goal.)
- How do you feel about starting counseling today?

#### **2. The Problem**

- Tell me about a problem in your life.
- If I could watch your problem on my phone, what would I see?
- What are the 5Ws of the problem (who, what, where, when, why)?
- Tell me about previous counseling you've had.

#### **3. Creating a Goal**

- What would you like to do to change this problem?
- Million Dollar Question: If someone would give you a million dollars to hear the solution to the problem (or a goal that would solve the problem)- what would you tell them?
- What have you already tried to solve this problem? Tell me about the success of this.
- How could we turn the solution to the problem into a SMART goal?

#### **4. Celebrate Successes**

- How will you know once you've achieved your goal (aka- solved the problem)?
- Now tell me about a time in the last month when you didn't have the problem.  
What was different about that time?
- Tell me about a time since our last session when you were successful with your goal.
- What were you doing when you were successful with your goal?

#### **5. Reflecting on Counseling Experience**

- How did you/your parents/teachers/friends feel when you achieved your goal?
- Tell me about how someone treated you differently once you started achieving your goal?
- How did you react to this person treating you differently?
- What are some other goals you might like to achieve?