

## ***Brief Therapy: Strategic Psychotherapy, Solution Focused Brief Therapy and Solution Orientated Therapy***

**About this Course:** This Level III Option Course is for those people who wish to use Brief Therapy within a range of settings. The focus is on the theoretical basis of Brief Therapy as derived from the strategic approaches to counselling/psychotherapy of, for example, Jay Haley's Strategic Psychotherapy, Steve de Shazer's Solution Focused Brief Therapy, and William Hudson O'Hanlon's Solution Oriented Therapy. The psychodynamic tradition rooted in Freudian and post-Freudian models is not addressed. Candidates might be involved with auditing their work, to give an accurate professional account of its process and outcomes. Therefore, a likely audience for the course could include:

- Counsellors working within Employer Assistant Programmes (EAP);
- Sessional Counsellors;
- Mental health practitioners;
- Educationists, social services;
- Line Managers;
- HR personnel;
- CABs and Debt Advice services; and
- A variety of charities actively engaged with their clients, particularly those working within the field of alcohol and substance abuse.

This Course is needed because an increasing number of the patient population are expressing the need to discuss their personal issues rather than only receiving medication from their doctors for mental health difficulties. There is a corresponding demand from employees to have support in dealing with their issues, and as these can impact upon their productivity at work, employers also want a counselling service. The third strand is fuelled by the gradually changing philosophy of charities that seek to empower their clients in dealing with the difficulties they are faced with in their lives. Brief Therapy may provide a structured, time-limited framework that is both productive and economical. It therefore fulfils many of the requirements stemming from the above trends. Recent research indicates that counselling compares favourably with the usual GP care in the management of anxiety and depression, and counselling has enhanced the speed of recovery for patients suffering from a range of psychological conditions. Moreover, follow-up studies indicate that their recovery is sustained. Brief therapy, therefore, contributes to effective results. Similarly, the workforce of an organisation has shown reduced levels of absenteeism when counselling has been provided.

1 Mackay, M. in *Counselling at Work*, Winter 2000

2 Kay, Sibbald, Ward, Bower et al. *British Medical Journal*, December 2000 (in Hodson, *Counselling at Work*, Summer 2001)

**Aims:** This Course is designed for trainee or experienced counsellors planning to work in settings where the concept of psychological welfare is supported. It aims to:

- Act as a springboard to developing the candidate's understanding of Brief Therapy (BT) practice and theory while remaining grounded and congruent with the Level III framework. It should therefore prepare the candidate to take a constructively critical perspective on the strengths and limitations of BT;
- Facilitate the candidate in taking up the opportunity to develop a counselling career within organisations where there is a growing need for BT;
- Hone the candidate's professional and academic skills in preparation for further study at Higher Level leading to full practitioner status.

### Objectives (Learning Outcomes)

**In meeting each of these objectives, candidates must be made aware of the risks to the health and safety of both the counsellor and the client associated with the counselling process, with particular reference given to coping with aggression, violence and emotional involvement.**

By the end of the course, candidates should:

- Demonstrate their understanding of the theories and topics presented;
- Compare and contrast two of those theories;
- Critically analyse the potential for effective outcomes using Brief Therapy and how this may be integrated into their work.
- Indicate some of the potential outcomes of a Brief Therapy model in terms of its effectiveness and relevance to their work.

This course requires the following for internal assessment:

- Journal; and
- Essay or structured writing.

### **Subject Content:**

#### 1. How the main Models of Brief Therapy Have Developed.

Brief Strategic Approaches of Milton Erickson as developed by Jay Haley. Foundations in communication within a time limited paradigm.

Gerard Egan's Skilled Helper Model. A potential framework for time-limited work.

Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg and the Brief Solution Focused model. The steps involved in doing brief therapy.

William Hudson O'Hanlon . A Solution Oriented approach. A comparative and contrasting model with de Shazer's.

#### 2. A critical evaluation of two of the main approaches to Brief Therapy in terms of their view of the person and the principles of the therapeutic relationship.

3. Outcomes-comparative studies of Brief Therapy, variables affecting outcomes (e.g. the therapeutic alliance, client characteristics, client actions and experiences of Brief Therapy, counsellor characteristics and actions in Brief Therapy).

In spite of its apparent simplicity, working with Brief Therapy is a sophisticated skill with a firm theoretical basis rooted in the belief, (and increasingly supported by firm scientific evidence).

Throughout delivery of this course:

- The candidate will be exposed to the ethical principles and challenges implicit to Brief Therapy;
- Debate will be encouraged about the suitability and contraindications of using Brief Therapy. This will include diversity issues, mental health problems and personal styles of communication amongst the client cohort;
- There will be a climate of constructive critical and evaluative discussion, which is presented in a summative way through keeping a journal and presenting the Discussion Paper.

## Reading List

Bergin, Allen, E. and Garfield, Sol L. (eds) (1994), Fourth Edition *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behaviour Change*. (Wiley).

Berg, Insoo Kim and Dolan, Y. (2001), *Tales of Solutions: A Collection of Hope-Inspiring Stories* (Norton).

Cade, Brian and O'Hanlon, William Hudson (1993), *A Brief Guide to Brief Therapy* (Norton).

de Shazer, Steve (1985), *Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy* (Norton). Haley, Jay *Uncommon therapy: The Psychiatric Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.*

O'Hanlon, William H. and Weiner-Davis, M. (1992), *In Search of Solutions: A new direction in psychotherapy* (Norton).

O'Hanlon, William H. and Wilk, J. (1987), *Shifting Contexts: The generation of effective psychotherapy* (Guildford).

Palmer, Steve and Gladeana McMahon (eds) (1997), *Handbook of Counselling* (2nd Edition, Routledge).

Walter, John L. and Peller, Jane E. (1992), *Becoming Solution-Focused in Brief Therapy* (Brunner/Mazel).

*Author's note: the editions I have cited are from my own stock; therefore, tutors may wish to seek later editions. American spellings have not been anglicised.*

*JMC Counselling & Training, Unit 3, Ballysaggart Business Complex, Dungannon Co. Tyrone  
BT70 1BS*

Tel: 028 8772 9399 Website: [www.jmccounsellingandtraining.co.uk](http://www.jmccounsellingandtraining.co.uk)

Email: [info@jmccounsellingandtraining.co.uk](mailto:info@jmccounsellingandtraining.co.uk)