**CLINICAL PRACTICE MEMO (2) MAX INNES**

**Solution Focused Therapy Beginnings: Problems and Goals from Wishes and Complaints** Three rabbit holes (wishes, complaints, diagnoses) to avoid lingering in during early sessions.

Opening Question**: *e.g., What’s your goal in coming here? What would you like to work on?*** Client may respond in various ways - a statement in terms of:

* **What they want**: *I need to get a job. I want to feel better. I’d like to lose weight*
* **Wishes**: *I wish my husband understood me. I wish I wasn’t stressed out.*
* **Complaints**: *He’s so insensitive. She’s so emotional. I’m fed up with the way I’m treated.*
* **Diagnoses**: *I’m depressed. I have panic attacks. My psychiatrist says I’m bi-polar.*

What they want

* In a way that implies some action is possible (i.e. leads to goal) – something for Th to work with
* In the form of a wish or complaint – Therapist needs to translate into a problem statement or goal before being able to work effectively with client

Wishes may be

* Affective statements by the client of how s/he would like things to be - cravings or desires
* They are NOT goals which a therapist can address effectively

Complaints

* Frequently statements of discontent, grief, pain, or resentment
* Other side of the coin (Wishes)

Wishes and Complaints

* Do not include an indication of a solution, a step towards anything can be done
* Are usually statements of affect about a situation

Diagnosis

* Client’s
* Professional’s
* Label that describes a state or condition at a moment in time (Client unlikely to act the same all the time)
* Does not imply any action or solution: in this way diagnoses are disempowering
* States the situation as if the person and the problem were the same (Confusion of logical levels)

**N.B.** If we wish to be effective as therapists, it is unhelpful to accept negative feelings, wishes, complaints, diagnoses **as** **goals.** To do so is to be trapped in an endless pursuit of trying to change the client’s feelings about their situation. When diagnoses, wishes or complaints are **translated into goals**, clients can formulate directions for, and steps toward, activities or solutions.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Helping clients change expressions of unhappiness into statements of goals (See Clinical Practice Memo 3) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)