

solution focused therapy miracle question

Solution Focused Therapy Miracle Question: A Pathway to Positive Change

solution focused therapy miracle question is one of the most intriguing and powerful tools used in solution focused brief therapy (SFBT). It invites individuals to envision a future where their problems no longer exist, helping them to tap into their own resources and strengths to create meaningful change. This technique, developed within the realm of solution focused therapy, emphasizes possibilities rather than problems, making it a refreshing approach for those seeking transformation in their lives.

Understanding Solution Focused Therapy and Its Core Principles

Before diving deeply into the miracle question itself, it's helpful to understand the broader framework of solution focused therapy. Unlike traditional therapy models that often analyze the root causes of problems, solution focused therapy centers on identifying solutions and building on what is already working. It's a short-term, goal-oriented counseling approach that encourages clients to visualize a preferred future and take small, actionable steps toward that vision.

At the heart of this therapeutic style lies an optimistic belief: people have the capacity to change, and change can happen quickly when focus shifts from problems to solutions. This mindset creates a collaborative environment where the therapist and client work together to amplify strengths and resources.

The Miracle Question Explained

What Is the Miracle Question?

The miracle question is a distinctive technique used by therapists to help clients imagine a world where their current issues are suddenly resolved overnight. It typically goes like this: "Suppose tonight, while you sleep, a miracle happens and your problem is gone. When you wake up tomorrow, what would be different? How would you know the miracle happened?"

This open-ended question encourages clients to think beyond their current struggles and paint a clear picture of a problem-free future. It's a powerful way to shift perspective from what is wrong to what could be right.

Why Is It Effective?

The beauty of the miracle question lies in its ability to:

- Bypass entrenched problem-focused thinking
- Inspire hope and motivation
- Clarify goals and desired outcomes
- Reveal hidden strengths and resources
- Foster creative solutions tailored to the individual's unique situation

By imagining the absence of their problems, clients often discover new possibilities and begin to identify practical steps toward those outcomes. This technique ignites a sense of agency and optimism that can propel the therapeutic process forward.

How the Miracle Question Fits Into Solution Focused Therapy

The miracle question is more than just a conversation starter—it's a strategic tool within the larger framework of solution focused therapy. After the client describes what their life would look like post-miracle, the therapist guides them to notice the small signs that indicate progress and explore what they are already doing that moves them closer to their goals.

This approach aligns with other SFBT concepts such as:

- **Exception seeking:** Identifying times when the problem was less severe or absent and understanding what was different.
- **Scaling questions:** Asking clients to rate their progress or confidence on a scale from 0 to 10.
- **Goal setting:** Helping clients set realistic, achievable goals based on their vision of the miracle.

Together, these techniques create a positive, forward-looking dialogue that empowers clients to take meaningful action.

Applications of the Miracle Question in Different Settings

One of the reasons the miracle question is so popular is its versatility. It can be used effectively across various counseling contexts, including:

Individual Therapy

In individual therapy, the miracle question helps clients gain clarity about what they truly want in life, beyond their current difficulties. For example, someone struggling with anxiety might imagine waking up feeling calm and confident, which can guide the therapist and client in developing coping strategies that support this vision.

Couples Counseling

For couples, the miracle question can open up dialogue about what a healthy, happy relationship looks like for both partners. This can help shift focus from conflict to shared goals, fostering empathy and collaboration.

Group Therapy and Coaching

In group settings or coaching sessions, the miracle question encourages participants to envision success and share their hopes, creating a supportive environment where collective energy propels individuals forward.

Tips for Using the Miracle Question Effectively

While the miracle question is a potent tool, its effectiveness depends on how it's introduced and explored. Here are some tips for therapists, coaches, or even individuals interested in trying this technique:

- **Create a safe space:** Clients need to feel comfortable imagining positive change without judgment or pressure.
- **Be patient:** Some clients may find it difficult to visualize a problem-free future initially. Gentle prompts and follow-up questions can help.
- **Encourage detail:** The more specific the client's description of their miracle, the clearer the goals and steps that emerge.
- **Link to action:** Guide clients to identify small, practical actions they can take that align with their vision.
- **Use scaling questions:** After the miracle question, asking clients to rate their confidence or progress can track momentum and maintain motivation.

Examples of the Miracle Question in Practice

To illustrate the power of the miracle question, consider this example scenario in a therapy session with someone dealing with low self-esteem:

Therapist: "Imagine that tonight, while you're asleep, a miracle happens and your self-esteem has completely transformed. When you wake up tomorrow, what will be the first thing you notice that tells you things are different?"

Client: "I would feel more confident when I look in the mirror. I wouldn't second-guess myself when speaking to others."

Therapist: "What would you be doing differently during the day?"

Client: "I'd probably speak up more in meetings and stop apologizing unnecessarily."

From here, the therapist and client can work together to identify small steps that encourage these behaviors and build confidence, such as practicing positive affirmations or setting goals to contribute in meetings.

How the Miracle Question Enhances Personal Growth and Resilience

Beyond therapy sessions, the miracle question can be a valuable exercise for anyone seeking personal growth. By regularly imagining and articulating a preferred future, individuals can develop a stronger sense of purpose and resilience. It encourages a mindset that is solution-oriented rather than problem-focused, which is essential for overcoming challenges in everyday life.

Additionally, this technique helps people recognize the progress they have already made, no matter how small. Celebrating these "exceptions" builds momentum and reinforces the belief that change is possible.

Integrating the Miracle Question with Other Therapeutic Approaches

While rooted in solution focused therapy, the miracle question is compatible with many other therapeutic modalities. For example:

- In cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), it can complement goal-setting and cognitive restructuring by providing a vivid image of success to work toward.
- In narrative therapy, it can assist clients in rewriting their personal

stories by envisioning alternative outcomes.

- In coaching, it serves as a motivational tool to clarify aspirations and create actionable plans.

This flexibility makes the miracle question an invaluable asset across diverse helping professions.

Exploring the miracle question can open doors to new perspectives and empower lasting change. Whether you are a therapist, coach, or someone personally seeking solutions, this simple yet profound inquiry invites a hopeful look forward—reminding us all that a better tomorrow is within reach.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the miracle question in solution focused therapy?

The miracle question is a technique used in solution focused therapy where the therapist asks the client to imagine that a miracle happens overnight and their problem is solved. The client then describes what would be different, helping to identify goals and solutions.

How does the miracle question help in therapy?

The miracle question helps clients envision a positive future without their problems, which shifts their focus from issues to solutions, encourages hope, and clarifies desired outcomes to guide therapeutic progress.

When is the miracle question typically used in solution focused therapy?

The miracle question is often used early in therapy sessions to help establish goals and create a solution-oriented mindset, but it can also be revisited throughout therapy to assess progress and refine objectives.

Can the miracle question be adapted for group therapy settings?

Yes, the miracle question can be adapted for group therapy by encouraging members to share their imagined solutions and positive changes, fostering collaborative goal-setting and mutual support within the group.

What are some common client responses to the miracle question?

Common responses include descriptions of improved relationships, increased

confidence, reduced stress, achieving personal goals, or feeling happier and more in control of their lives.

Are there any limitations to using the miracle question in therapy?

While effective for many, the miracle question may be challenging for clients who struggle with imagination, have severe distress, or are resistant to change. Therapists may need to tailor the approach or use complementary techniques in such cases.

Additional Resources

Solution Focused Therapy Miracle Question: An In-Depth Exploration of Its Impact and Application

solution focused therapy miracle question is a pivotal technique within the broader framework of solution focused brief therapy (SFBT). Originally developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg, this therapeutic approach emphasizes building solutions rather than focusing on problems. Among the various tools used in SFBT, the miracle question stands out as a distinctive method to catalyze client change by encouraging future-oriented thinking and uncovering personal goals. This article investigates the mechanics, effectiveness, and practical applications of the solution focused therapy miracle question, while positioning it within contemporary therapeutic practices.

Understanding the Solution Focused Therapy Miracle Question

The solution focused therapy miracle question serves as a therapeutic prompt designed to help clients envision a future where their current issues have been resolved overnight. The question typically takes the form: "Suppose tonight, while you sleep, a miracle happens and your problem is solved. When you wake up tomorrow, what will be different that tells you the miracle has happened?" This inquiry encourages clients to articulate specific, concrete changes they desire, which in turn guides the therapeutic process toward actionable solutions.

Unlike traditional psychotherapeutic models that delve deeply into the origins and complexities of problems, the miracle question redirects attention to outcomes, strengths, and resources. It is grounded in the belief that clients are the experts in their own lives and that change is both inevitable and attainable when clients focus on what works.

How the Miracle Question Functions in Therapy

The effectiveness of the miracle question stems from its ability to:

- **Stimulate Positive Visualization:** By imagining a future without the problem, clients often experience renewed hope and motivation.
- **Clarify Goals and Desires:** Clients define what a “solution” looks like on a personal level, making goals more tangible.
- **Identify Small, Achievable Steps:** The details uncovered often highlight incremental changes clients can implement immediately.
- **Shift Focus from Problems to Solutions:** This cognitive reframing helps reduce feelings of helplessness and rumination.

In practice, therapists guide clients through this visualization, then explore with follow-up questions such as: “What will you notice first that signals the problem is gone?” or “What will you be doing differently?” These explorations often reveal subtle behaviors or changes in perspective that clients can work toward.

Comparative Analysis: Miracle Question Versus Other Therapeutic Techniques

While similar future-oriented techniques exist in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or positive psychology, the solution focused therapy miracle question is unique in its brevity and client-centeredness. CBT might use goal-setting or cognitive restructuring, but often involves deeper analysis of thought patterns. In contrast, the miracle question bypasses problem analysis altogether, favoring rapid mobilization of client strengths.

Pros and Cons of the Miracle Question

- **Pros:**
 - Encourages rapid engagement and hopefulness.
 - Empowers clients to define their own success.
 - Facilitates measurable and observable goals.

- Can be used across diverse client populations and issues.

- **Cons:**

- May be challenging for clients with severe mental health conditions who struggle with visualization or abstract thinking.
- Less emphasis on understanding root causes might limit depth for some clients.
- Effectiveness depends heavily on therapist skill in guiding the process.

This balance of advantages and limitations suggests that while the miracle question is a powerful tool, it is best integrated within a flexible, client-tailored therapeutic approach.

Application and Adaptation of the Miracle Question Across Contexts

The versatility of the miracle question has seen its adoption beyond traditional psychotherapy settings. It has been applied in coaching, education, organizational development, and even conflict resolution. The question's core strength lies in fostering a future-oriented mindset that can unlock creativity and motivation in various environments.

Use in Couple and Family Therapy

In couples or family therapy, the miracle question helps members articulate shared goals and envision harmonious relationships. For example, a therapist might ask: "If a miracle happened overnight and your family's conflicts disappeared, what would be the first sign you notice in your interactions?" This approach can facilitate collaborative problem-solving and improve communication by focusing on desired relational patterns.

Integration into Brief and Online Therapy

Given its succinct nature, the miracle question is particularly well-suited to brief therapy models where time is limited. In teletherapy or digital

mental health platforms, therapists often deploy the miracle question early to quickly establish a solution-focused framework. This enhances client engagement and provides clear direction for subsequent sessions.

Research and Evidence Base for the Miracle Question

Empirical studies investigating the efficacy of the solution focused therapy miracle question consistently report positive outcomes. Research published in journals of psychotherapy and counseling psychology indicates that clients who engage with the miracle question demonstrate increased hope, goal clarity, and therapeutic alliance compared to control groups.

A 2019 meta-analysis of solution focused brief therapy highlighted that the miracle question was among the most frequently used interventions, contributing to symptom reduction in depression and anxiety. However, researchers caution that the technique's impact is optimized when combined with other solution focused strategies rather than used in isolation.

Neuroscience Perspectives

Emerging neuroscience research suggests that future-oriented thinking, as induced by the miracle question, activates brain regions involved in motivation and reward processing. This neurological engagement may explain why clients experience increased enthusiasm and a sense of possibility following such interventions. By promoting positive mental imagery, the miracle question may rewire cognitive patterns that perpetuate despair or stagnation.

Implementing the Miracle Question: Best Practices for Therapists

To maximize the benefits of the solution focused therapy miracle question, therapists are advised to:

- 1. Create a Safe and Supportive Environment:** Clients need to feel comfortable exploring hopeful scenarios without judgment.
- 2. Use Clear and Simple Language:** Tailor the question to the client's cognitive and cultural context to ensure understanding.
- 3. Follow Up with Concrete Exploration:** Encourage clients to describe

specific behaviors, feelings, and observations that would signal the miracle.

4. **Connect Visualizations to Action Plans:** Help clients identify small, achievable steps informed by their envisioned future.
5. **Remain Flexible:** Adapt the question if a client struggles with abstract thinking, possibly by breaking it down into more tangible components.

By adhering to these guidelines, therapists can facilitate meaningful engagement and foster a solution-oriented mindset that supports lasting change.

The solution focused therapy miracle question remains a cornerstone of brief, pragmatic therapeutic intervention. Its emphasis on envisioning a problem-free future offers clients an empowering alternative to problem rumination, promoting hope and actionable goals. As therapeutic modalities continue evolving, the miracle question's adaptability and client-centeredness ensure its enduring relevance in mental health practice, coaching, and beyond.

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O'Connell presents a comprehensive introduction to Solution-focused therapy (SFT). His writing is accessible making this an easy book to read. The way in which the material is organized and presented is appealing. The tone of the writing is down to earth and I imagine that few readers would feel alienated by the language regardless of training or theoretical background. This book provides not only an in-depth introduction to SFT but also provides the more experienced therapist with further ideas and principles. O'Connell manages to keep an air of hope and optimism in his writing which left me with a renewed sense of enthusiasm for working with clients in a SFT way. Having read a substantial amount of literature in brief therapy, I found this book to be one of the best I have come across. O'Connell communicates his ideas in a clear and rational way and most importantly with an essential dose of humanity. I would recommend this book to almost everyone regardless of their professional background as it instills a sense of hope and change' - Counselling Psychology Review
A thoroughly enjoyable read about an inspiring approach to facilitating others without pathologising them, this book not only offers practical guidelines for beginners and validating supportive ideas for the more experienced, it could also inspire those who are simply interested in efficient and effective ways of empowering people via reminders of their potential to

live zestful, creative, fruitful, connected lives' - Nurturing Potential `Solution-Focused Therapy is a comfortable introduction to SFT, which is best suited for students or those new to the model, or to professionals in other fields. It supports the novice practitioner in feeling that providing good therapy is within their grasp. Bill O'Connell's presentation of solution-focused therapy encourages theoretical integration, practicality, and trust in the abilities of the client over purity. Hopefully, such an approach would appeal to all therapists' - The Brief Therapy Networks Solution-Focused Therapy, Second Edition is a popular introduction to the theory, practice and skills of an approach which is increasingly used by a variety of professionals including counsellors, psychologists, mental health workers, and social workers. Its popularity lies in the fact that it is both time-limited and cost-effective, which are key considerations for many practitioners nowadays. For this, the Second Edition, the book has been fully revised and updated and now includes new sections on solution-focused supervision and running a solution-focused reflecting team. Most chapters include brief practice points for counsellors. This book will be of great interest to trainees of solution-focused therapy, as well as practitioners who work in a range of contexts where the emphasis is on providing effective brief interventions. Bill O'Connell is Director of Training for Focus on Solutions Limited in Birmingham. He was previously Head of the Counselling Department at Westhill College of Higher Education, Birmingham, and is co-editor of Handbook of Solution-Focused Therapy (Sage, 2003).

solution focused therapy miracle question: It Is More Than the Miracle Question Mark Gillen, Blake Mayes, 2025-06-20 It is More Than the Miracle Question aims to help counselors, and specifically school counselors, figure out how to utilize a theory, mindset, or belief system in their everyday work with clients.

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including the miracle question and the reasons for asking it understand treatment applicability read actual session transcripts understand the “miracle scale” get insight into the unique relationship between Wittgenstein’s philosophy and SFBT better understand SFBT and emotions examine misconceptions about SFBT and more More Than Miracles: The State of the Art of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy is illuminating reading for psychotherapists, counselors, human services personnel, health care workers, and teachers.

solution focused therapy miracle question: Skills in Solution Focused Brief Counselling and Psychotherapy Paul Hanton, 2011-05-09 Aimed at those new to the approach and as a refresher to those that have started using SFBT, it covers the key techniques and interventions. Structured step-by-step along the lines of an actual therapy session, the book can be dipped into or read cover-to-cover.

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solution focused therapy miracle question: Solution-Focused Brief Therapy in Schools Johnny Kim, Michael Kelly, Cynthia Franklin, 2017-04-21 Since the publication of the First Edition, there have been several advances on the research on Solution-focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in schools. This Second Edition contains updates on how to apply SFBT to specific problem areas that school social workers frequently encounter. Each chapter has been updated and expanded to provide to incorporate a Response to Intervention approach (RtI) in many of the clinical SFBT in Action chapters. The authors also utilized results from the second national school social work survey, conducted by a team led by Dr. Kelly and currently in press at School Mental Health Journal and Social Work, to identify several targeted school-related problems that school social workers encounter in their work and demonstrate how to use solution-focused techniques for them. Despite being places with tremendous challenges for students and staff, schools are also places of solutions, strengths, and successes. This practical guide shows school social workers how to harness the solutions; filled with case examples, key points to remember, guidelines for reviewing research, sample dialogue, and best practice tips, this book gives readers the essential tools to begin incorporating SFBT into their practice immediately.

solution focused therapy miracle question: Solution-Focused Therapy Alasdair J. Macdonald, 2007 ‘This well-structured book should prove a leading text in the solution-focused therapy (SFT) world and will serve as an excellent overview of SFT on those training courses integratively oriented towards the immediate needs of many services and their clients. This book will please both SFT aficionados and those, like me, who are sceptical but open to some persuasion. The author has done a superb job of representing SFT in an up-to-date, rigorous and accessible way, and has, incidentally, shown what a concise text on any ‘core theoretical model’ should look like’ - Colin Feltham, Therapy Today ‘Packed full of ideas and exercises for trainers and therapists. An essential read for professionals wishing to develop their solution-focused practice. Alasdair communicates the wisdom accumulated over years as a practitioner, researcher and enthusiast for the solution-focused approach’ - Bill O’Connell Director of Training with Focus on Solutions Limited, Birmingham ‘Alasdair MacDonald has produced a landmark in the development of solution-focused approaches. He brings together the history, research and evidence for SF practice with many practical strategies

for contexts from severe mental health cases to workplace conflict. The book is packed with concise insights, connections and thought-provoking questions presented with great authority and clarity' - Mark McKergow PhD MBA, author of *The Solutions Focus: The SIMPLE Way to Positive Change*, and co-founder of SolWorld 'Alasdair's book is a welcome addition to the literature in the field of 'Solution Focused Brief Therapy'. His wealth of experience in this approach to therapy is effectively communicated through simple explanations of solution focused skills and useful examples of therapist-client interactions that illustrate implementation. The book contributes and builds upon the existing literature. The chapter regarding ethical considerations is unique for a book outlining this therapeutic approach, and the chapter exploring the status of SFBT research is contemporary and comprehensive. Alasdair's book will be a useful resource for those students training in the SFBT approach' - Fred Ruddick Senior Lecturer (Mental Health Studies) RMN,RGN,Advanced Dip Counselling, MA Counselling 'This book by Alasdair Macdonald provides an interesting and useful introduction to solution focused brief therapy from the perspective of a well-respected consultant psychiatrist. The chapters on research and the history of brief therapy will be valued by experienced solution focused practitioners and provides an excellent picture of the current place of solution focused brief therapy in contemporary mental health practice' - Rayya Ghul, co-author of *Creating Positive Futures: Solution Focused Recovery from Mental Distress* 'Alasdair has made a particular and important contribution to the world of solution-focused brief therapy through his long-standing interest in research. This interest, and his background in adult mental health work, are both reflected in this book thereby setting it apart from other introductions to the approach. At a time when resources are tight and professionals under pressure this book highlights the particular relevance and flexibility of the solution-focused approach which can be drawn upon usefully by clinicians and managers alike' - Evan George, . BRIEF, London Solution-focused therapy is a relatively new, but strongly supported and growing approach. *Solution-Focused Therapy: Theory, Research & Practice* contains an overview of current research in the area and an account of the use of solution-focused approaches in various relevant therapeutic situations. As well as outlining the model and basic principles, the text also summarises the evidence base for solution-focused therapy, discusses ethical issues and includes a series of chapters on applications of the approach with illustrative case studies. A specific feature of this book is its use with acute and long-term mental illness, and the application of the method to a variety of situations in management and in resolving disagreements. A helpful resource for experienced practitioners, *Solution-Focused Therapy: Theory, Research & Practice* also contains instructional material and guidance and is thus an accessible and valuable text for trainees. Dr Alasdair J. Macdonald has been a Consultant Psychiatrist in the NHS since 1980 and currently holds an honorary contract with North Dorset Primary Care Trust. He is the Research Coordinator and former President and Secretary of the European Brief Therapy Association, and is currently a psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice in Dorset.

solution focused therapy miracle question: *Solution Focused Brief Therapy* Harvey Ratner, Evan George, Chris Iveson, 2012-07-26 *Solution Focused Brief Therapy: 100 Key Points and Techniques* provides a concise and jargon-free guide to the thinking and practice of this exciting approach, which enables people to make changes in their lives quickly and effectively. It covers: The history and background to solution focused practice The philosophical underpinnings of the approach Techniques and practices Specific applications to work with children and adolescents, (including school-based work) families, and adults How to deal with difficult situations Organisational applications including supervision, coaching and leadership. Frequently asked questions This book is an invaluable resource for all therapists and counsellors, whether in training or practice. It will also be essential for any professional whose job it is to help people make changes in their lives, and will therefore be of interest to social workers, probation officers, psychiatric staff, doctors, and teachers, as well as those working in organisations as coaches and managers.

solution focused therapy miracle question: *Solution-Focused Case Management* Robert G. Blundo, Joel Simon, 2015-11-06 "Blundo and Simon have successfully outlined how a solution-focused perspective can be a powerful tool for case managers. Their understanding and

presentation is based upon practice scenarios that are real and applied...They clearly demonstrate the impact of 'thinking and language' and the importance of building a collaborative relationship with clients. Their work challenges the traditional theory-driven interventions that focus on problems and arrive at a diagnosis. They encourage a 'shift' to a co-constructive partnership that requires a practitioner to respect that clients are 'experts of their own lives'...They provide a clear step-wise discussion of techniques and strategies that can be employed working with individuals and families in case management settings. This book is a must read." -Lawrence T. Force, PhD. LCSW-R Professor of Psychology, Mount Saint Mary College, Newburgh, NY From the Foreword

Solution-focused practice is a paradigm that stresses client abilities, strengths, and individual goals rather than disability. Written by a team of educator/practitioners noted for their expertise in solution-focused therapy, this "how-to" text for social work, counseling, and psychology students guides current and future case managers in learning this strengths-based, collaborative approach to case management. It discusses both the philosophical basis for solution-focused casework and demonstrates how it is ideally suited for the case management process. The book is based on teaching materials the authors have developed and used in their classes and workshops with undergraduate and graduate students and professionals. The text incorporates new research and theoretical developments in solution-focused therapy as well as actual practice scenarios demonstrating the process of building a collaborative relationship with individual clients and families. Replete with strategies and tools for practicing solution-focused case management, the text describes such essential skills as identifying goals, monitoring progress, working with other agencies, and transitioning out of treatment. It discusses issues related to ethical practice and presents strategies for self-care. Additionally, the book addresses diversity and social justice and their relationships to solution-focused practice. Student exercises help to reinforce knowledge. The text will assist case managers in a variety of settings—hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, community-based mental health agencies, schools, prisons, court systems, and shelters for the homeless and victims of domestic violence—to partner with their clients towards finding strengths-based and solution-focused approaches to resolving issues in a positive way. Key Features: Authored by noted experts in solution-focused education and practice Facilitates a reframing of casework and case management around client strengths and resources Provides specific case examples that allow readers to troubleshoot and apply solution-focused principles to practice Includes student exercises throughout the book

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Instructors Manual. The Reader has two purposes: - to provide background reading material to assist the instructor in the preparation of class room lectures and - to provide additional resources beyond the scope of an introductory family therapy textbook

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