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Solution-Focused School Counseling: The Missing Manual

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BOOK REVIEW**Solution-Focused School Counseling: The Missing Manual**

Dr. Russell A. Sabella Ph.D.

Publisher Sabella and Associates, 2020, 289 pages, ISBN 9798680013052 £30.24 Hardback (Kindle Edition Available)

Review by Tara Gretton

Solution Focused Practitioner, Trainer and Consultant

Dr. Russell Sabella was first introduced to the solution focused approach in 1989. However his interest was not properly rekindled until 1995 when he was working as a school counsellor by his colleague Dr “Jerry” Sklare and as they say the rest is history...

Russ is providing a book that answers all the questions in one book for school counsellors in America. Russ waited for when he thought the time was right to write his book; when the books that he had been recommending for so many years, no longer answered all the questions and were not as up to date.

I had the absolute joyful experience of meeting Russ via Zoom this year on some solution focused training he was delivering. Russ has this wonderful laid back; fun approach and you feel enveloped by his charm and American dulcet tones. In that training experience Russ exuded his wealth of knowledge and experience in a very detailed and accessible manner. And this goes for his writing too - it's hard not to read his book as if he is reading it to you! In that, you sense what it must be like to be one of his school's counsellor students.

The book tells you everything you need to know and more; all of the possible eventualities that may occur in your interactions with a student in a school setting as a school counsellor. This makes this book a comforting experience, as well as a book that you can go back to when eventualities arise at any given moment.

There are 9 chapters in this book and 289 pages - most definitely the weight of a manual! Russ shares a comprehensive overview of the SF approach and takes us on a journey; from the advantages of SF, through to the techniques that Russ sees included in SF, which he describes as:

Detailing	Cheerleading
Mind mapping	Amplifying
Mine fielding	Reframing or Refocusing

Following the techniques Russ shares a comprehensive example of the SF approaches application in various school settings and scenarios, including group work, conflict resolution and much more - all settings where I too love to apply the SF approach.

I suppose my question is - do you need to know this much? I read this book as an English solution focused practitioner working in schools who would not deliver SF training in such a prescriptive manner. Coming from the perspective that less is more and that each solution focused practitioner will have their own unique way of practicing. In saying that I am not criticising Russ's book at all; I am merely highlighting difference. People will have a lot to take from this book and they can make use of what Russ shares with them in a manner that best suits them and their practice and the people that they work with.

I would say that for school counsellors and school-based SF practitioners at the beginning of their journey Russ's manual could answer so many curious questions and enable counsellors/practitioners to notice how versatile the approach is in that it can be applied to pretty much any situation in a school setting and can not only include students, however that it can include staff and parents. The energy, care and knowledge that has been poured into this 'manual' is abundant and would be a great read for any school counsellor starting out on their SF journey.

The reviewer

Tara Gretton is a solution focused practitioner, trainer and consultant working in schools and private practice with children, young people and their families.

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