**Common Social Work Practice Models**

Now that you know a bit more about the theories underpinning the social work profession, what follows is a quick look at how these theories are put into action. The social work practice models identified below are among the most widely accepted and proven techniques in the field. Because clients come from different backgrounds, experiences, and areas of need, these techniques may vary. The models below give social workers and their clients several different approaches to intervention, treatment, and therapy. As a social worker, it is up to you to choose an approach that resonates with you, whether you take your cues from one of these models, or you build an approach by drawing on several different models.

**1. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

Cognitive behavioral therapy offers social workers a framework for helping individuals address issues in their own behavior that may be impacting personal, social, and professional outcomes. Cognitive behavioral therapy offers a proven treatment strategy for individuals with mental illness, mental health issues, or those dealing with trauma or crisis. This treatment model incorporates both cognitive and behavioral dimensions into strategies that help clients navigate situations by altering negative thought processes and dysfunctional behaviors.

**Key Literature**

* [A. Antonio González-Prendes, Laurel M. Hicks, Thea Matthews, Sarah Domke — Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (Bibliography)](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0149.xml) (2017)

**2. Crisis Intervention Model**

The crisis intervention model offers a framework for social workers helping clients manage crisis. This is a model which is commonly used to support clients experiencing thoughts or feelings of suicide. The crisis intervention model is commonly implemented through seven stages: making a thorough danger assessment; establishing a relationship; identifying problems; encouraging the exportation of feelings; exploring alternative coping strategies; restoring functioning through an action plan; planning follow-up strategies. These stages provide social workers, as well as other emergency workers and first-responders, with a systemic framework for diffusing and navigating acute crises.

**Key Literature**

* [Albert R. Roberts, Ph.D. & Allen J. Ottens, Ph.D. — The Seven-Stage Crisis Intervention Model: A Road Map to Goal Attainment, Problem Solving, and Crisis Resolution](https://triggered.edina.clockss.org/ServeContent?rft_id=info:doi/10.1093/brief-treatment/mhi030) (2005)

**3. Narrative Therapy**

Narrative therapy is an interdisciplinary treatment model designed to help us reframe the problematic narratives we tell ourselves by using a process called externalization. In the context of social work, this entails working with clients to recast internal problems as external entities. This promotes the separation of the person from the problem, and it allows the client to escape from patterns of negative thinking. This approach uses language strategies and metaphors to help clients address their problems and consequently think about approaching them with greater clarity and control.

**Key Literature**

* [Edith E. Freeman — Narrative Approaches in Social Work Practice](https://www.amazon.com/Narrative-Approaches-Social-Work-Practice/dp/0398086559) (2011)

**4. Solution-focused Therapy**

A collaborative process between social worker and client, solution-focused therapy emphasizes each client's strengths, and helps the client find ways of using these strengths to confront problems. Solution-focused therapy takes a systemic view of problem situations, identifying the contextual factors that might be influencing individual behavior. This moves the focus away from dysfunction, and toward manageable, short-term coping mechanisms. Through conversation with a social worker or counselor, the client should be able to achieve changes in perception that can inform modest behavioral changes and improve how the client manages relationships and challenges.

**Key Literature**

* [Jacqueline Corcoran — Solution-Focused Therapy (Bibliography)](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0088.xml) (2013)

**5. Task-centered Practice**

Also known as "brief therapy," task-centered practice is a practical strategy of treatment which recognizes the various time-based imperatives surrounding social work. Clients often require strategies that can help bring them immediate progress in navigating challenges. Likewise, social work agencies often must conform to various limitations in the availability of time, resources, and personnel. Task-centered practice treats the client as a partner in the treatment process, one empowered with the tools to manage a problem or crisis independently. From an agency perspective, task-centered practice typically begins with the diagnosis of acute challenges, provision of short-term strategies for dealing with these challenges, and the construction of a plan for long-term treatment.

**Key Literature**

* [Cynthia Franklin & Krystallynne Mikle — Brief Therapies in Social Work: Task-Centered Model and Solution-Focused Therapy (Bibliography)](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0188.xml) (2013)