Solution Focused Methods

RAYYA GHUL

2017

Starting Point

If you want to build a ship,

don't drum up the men to gather wood,

divide the work

and give orders.

Instead,

teach them to yearn

for the vast and endless sea

Antoine De Saint-Exupery

Plan

Learn underlying principles of Solution Focus

Learn skills for practicing Solution Focus

Gain an overview of the Solution Focused Method

The Solution Focused Approach

Roots within systemic and family therapies led to development of Solution Focused Brief Therapy

Evolved in Brief Therapy Centre, Milwaukee through work done by

de Shazer, Berg and colleagues (1986)

Influenced by systemic therapists such as John Weakland and Jay Haley

Also by Milton Erickson and Ludwig Wittgenstein

Some Core Assumptions

Attempts to find out the cause of a problem are not necessarily a step towards resolution

It is more helpful to consider the history of the solution than the problem history

Presenting problems are seldom static

People/Families have hidden resources

Small steps can facilitate major changes

When you are being solution focused you are …

Creating expectation of change
◦ by using the language of change

Generating hopefulness for the future
◦ through visualising it in rich detail
◦ by rooting it in evidence in the present and past

Conveying confidence in the client's ability
◦ by assuming and identifying strengths and resources

Collaborating on solution-building
◦ through exploring possible small steps

Celebrating success
◦ through deliberate focus on improvement, however small

Solution Focus vs Problem Focus

Solution Focus is very different to a problem focus.

When you are problem focused you start with a problem (you engage in problem-solving)

You try to find out as much as possible about the problem and its component parts

You try to find out 'what's wrong' and fix it

Most medical and psychological approaches are problem focused.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Identify what has gone wrong

Fix or mend something broken

Add something to correct a deficiency

Take away something which is causing difficulty

SOLUTION-BUILDING

Clarify the preferred future

Identify what part of that future is happening now, or what is currently working

Explore possible small steps toward the preferred future

Agree on next small step

Problem or messy situation?

Solution Focus Focuses On:

What *difference* a person wants to see in their life – their 'preferred future'.

What is working or going well right now

Finding out strengths and resources in the person and their wider context

Working out what small steps will bring about changes towards that desired difference

Skills to be solution focused

Listening for strengths and resources

Being able to feed back those strengths and resources in an 'evidence based' way

Avoid getting sucked into long discussions about problems

Building solutions through asking solution focused questions
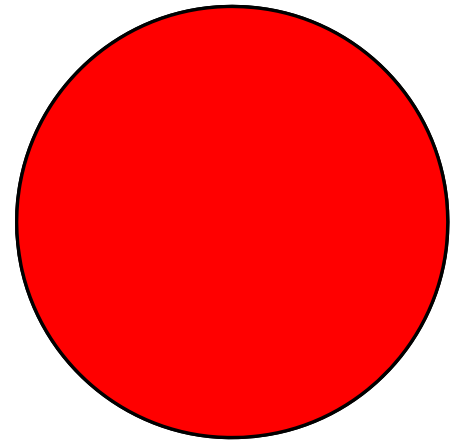
Who Are You?

Spend some time chatting to your neighbour

Ask about their hobbies and interests (not work!)

Ask them **'how do you do that?'**

Keep the conversation going with **'what else?'**

Listen hard for their strengths and qualities

Create some 'evidence based' compliments for your partner

Be curious…

Problems are like whirlpools

They suck you in

Working with Complaints

Sometimes when people are meeting with you they feel the need to complain

The listener generally wants to either avoid getting involved or to get stuck in to solving the problem.

Instead Solution focus sees everything as an opportunity to learn about something that can help to build a solution.

Klaga, klaga, klaga…

- People in pairs – A & B   A = moaner B = listener

- Instruction for A: you have to moan to B about something that really annoys you. You have to keep moaning for 3 minutes, don't stop, just keep going

- Instruction for B: you have to listen to A without saying anything. You may only nod your head. As you are listening to A I want you to think about what qualities and strengths A has simply from listening to them moaning.

- At the end of the 3 minutes B spends a little time formulating some compliments for A based on what they have heard and delivers these to A.

End

Who makes your heart sink?

Spend a few minutes describing your most difficult client to your partner.

4 minutes
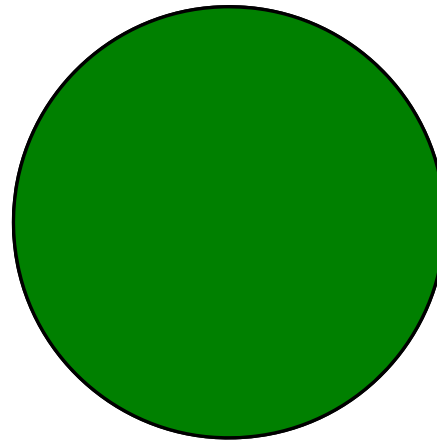
Thinking Differently about … People

PROBLEM FOCUSED

Individualised view

People are the site and source of the problem

People are flawed, damaged or weak

People need help, guidance, care and protection

There is an ideal person who we should try to become

SOLUTION FOCUSED

Systemic/Interactional view

People and their contexts are interlinked and interdependent

People are talented and resourceful

People are experts in their own lives

You are who you are right now and tomorrow you'll be different

Creating new descriptions

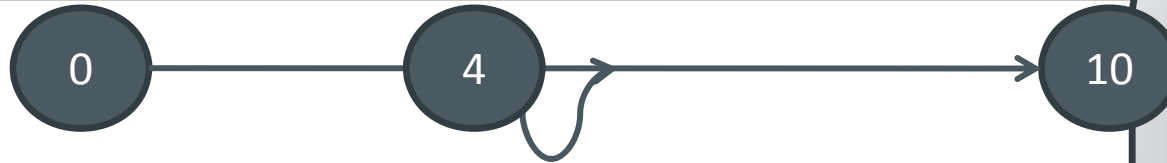Now redescribe y⌀   ⌀ing their best.

What strengths ar

What does this ne⌀   ⌀ou any clues about
what you might be

Thinking Differently about ….
Change

PROBLEM FOCUSED

You have to work out what caused the problem and what is holding it in place in order to solve the problem.

You may need to fix something

You may need to add something

You may need to take something away

SOLUTION FOCUSED

You don't need to know anything about the problem, you just need to know what you want to be different.

Change is to be expected

Small changes are generative

Change can happen in unexpected ways and places

Thinking Differently About … Language

PROBLEM TALK

Elicits richer detail about the problem

Further grounds people into the old problematic patterns of thinking and acting and makes it harder to create positive outcomes.

Is a medium of fact-finding and problem formulation

SOLUTION TALK

Elicits richer detail about the preferred future

Shifts people into new possibilities and ways of thinking and acting which supports positive outcomes

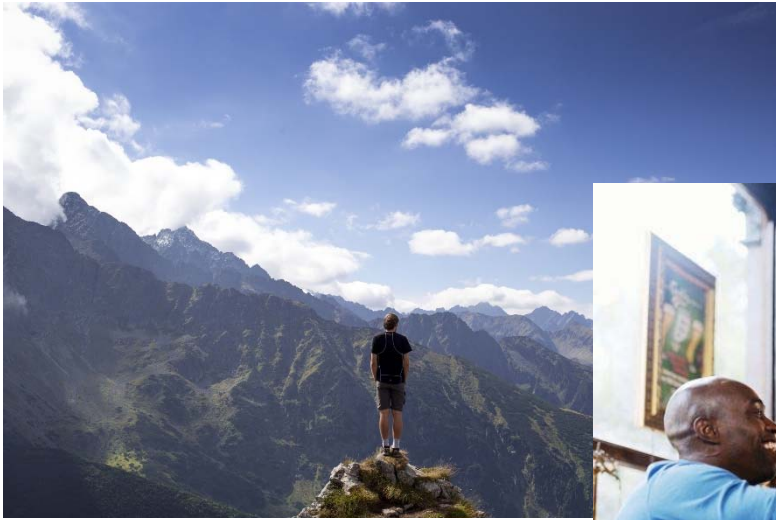Is a medium of collaboration and solution-building
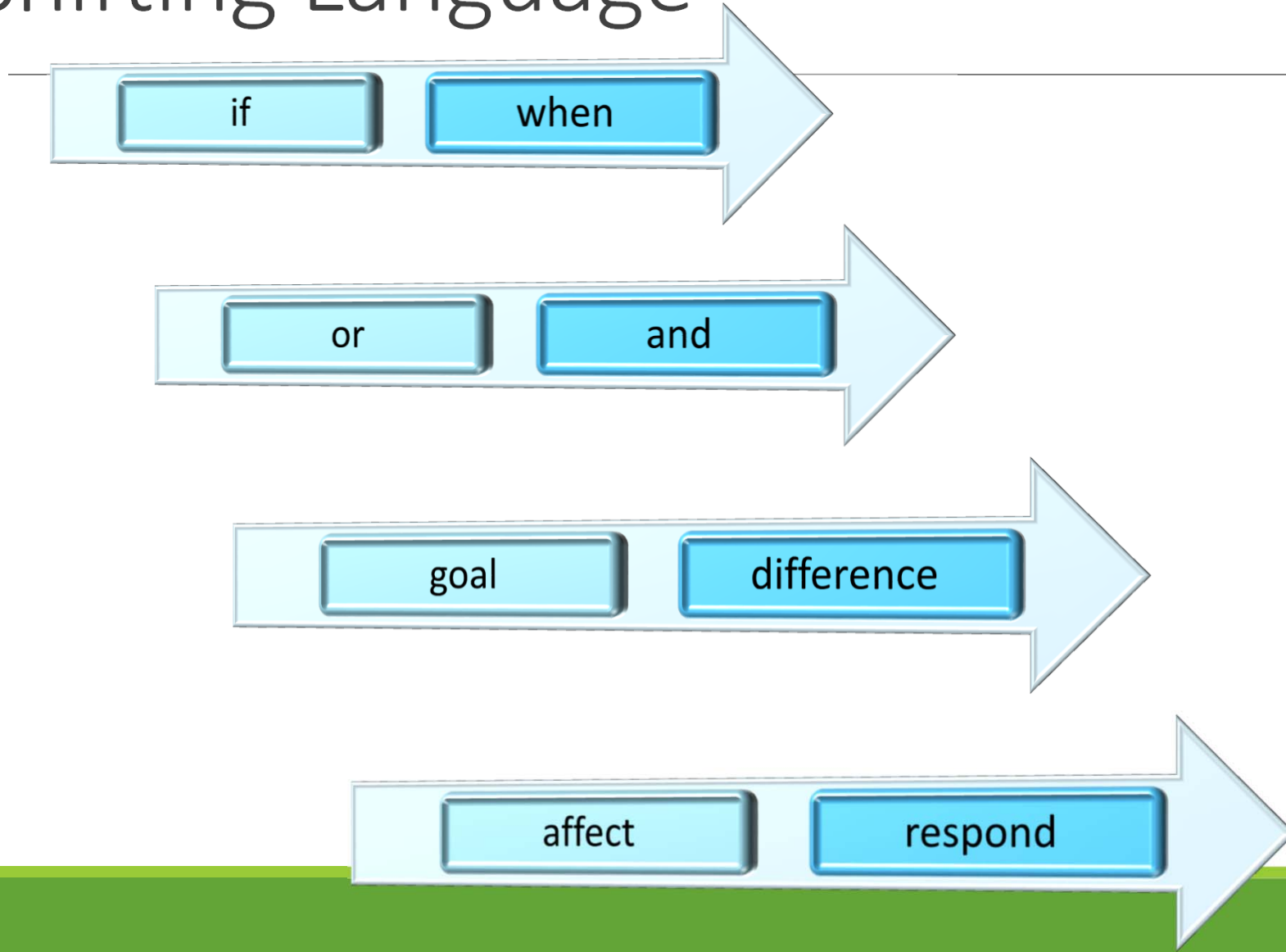
Misunderstanding creates conversation
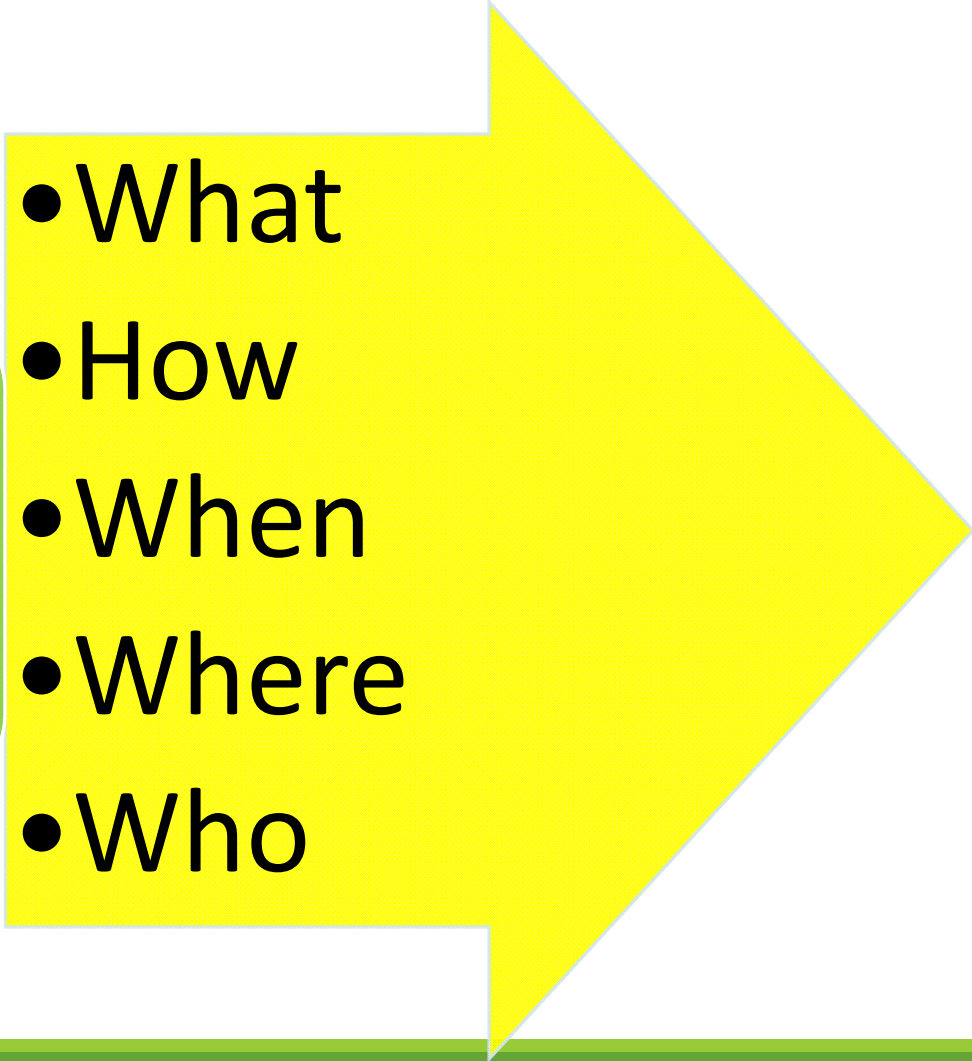
What makes you 'happy'?

Shifting Language
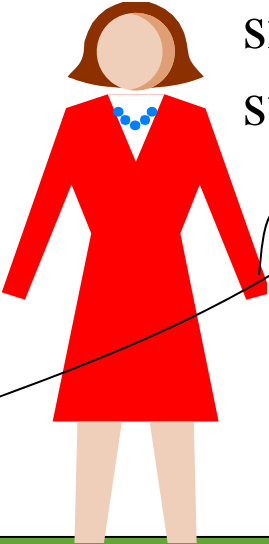
Hosting Useful Conversations

10

Preferred Future?

What will you be doing differently?

Who will notice?

What difference will that make?

Next small step?

3.5

3 How do you know?

0

When you are being solution focused you are ...

Creating expectation of change
- by using the language of change

Generating hopefulness for the future
- through visualising it in rich detail
- by rooting it in evidence in the present and past

Conveying confidence in the client's ability
- by assuming and identifying strengths and resources

Collaborating on solution-building
- through exploring possible small steps

Celebrating success
- through deliberate focus on improvement, however small

References

Burns, K (2005) *Focus on Solutions: A Health Professional's Guide*. London: Wiley

de Shazer, S. (1994) *Words Were Originally Magic.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Duncan, L., Ghul R., & Mousley, S. (2007) *Creating Positive Futures: Solution Focused Recovery from Mental Distress.* London BT Press

George, E., Iveson, C, & Ratner, H. (1998) *Problem to Solution: Brief Therapy with Individuals and Families* (revised). London: BT Press

Macdonald, A., (2007) *Solution-Focused Therapy: Theory, Research & Practice*. London: Sage