Solution Focused Approaches | A Resource For Social Care Practitioners

What is it?
Solution focused approach differentiates from traditional forms of interventions as the basic principle that it focuses on the future. It seeks to move towards what is wanted instead of trying to move away from an unwanted problem. Below, our Social Work and Care Professionals have put together some useful Solution Focused Approach Questions for working with Service Users. They can help formulate assessments and should result in improved engagement at the intervention delivery stages.

Building on the ‘Miracle Question (De Shazer, 1988):
“Suppose that one night, while you are asleep, there is a miracle and the problem that brought you here is solved. However, because you are asleep you don’t know that the miracle has happened. When you wake up in the morning, what will be different? What else?”

Basic philosophy & assumptions:
• Believe that change is constant and inevitable
• Service Users are expert and define goals – we, as professionals, are facilitators of that change.
• Emphasis is on what is possible and changeable.
• Require to identify short term and long term changes.

For this approach to work, there are three fundamental skills that practitioners must develop or use. They include:
• Ability to be an active Listening.
• Intelligent Questioning – Understanding the difference or when to apply closed or open questions. We have provided a guide on questioning.
• Demonstrating Interest – Finding a common link to build a client-professional working relationship. Focusing on the fact that change is possible. Requires us to be facilitators of change.

REMEMBER: EARS
• Elicit Strengths – What helps?
• Amplify – How do you do that?
• Reflect – Where, when, how and what are the benefits?
• Start over

Top Tip: Solution Focused Approaches uses focuses on scaling events/situations/events to context. E.g. Scale from 0-10 – 0 = no impact/10 = significant impact.

Solution Focused Approaches – Questioning:

Building on the Miracle Question:
• What are the first things you notice?
• Has any of this ever happened before?
• What would need to happen to do this?
• What differences would you (& others) notice?
• Would it help to recreate any of these miracles?
• What else?

**Exception Questions:**
- Has anything been better since the last session/appointment?
- What’s changes & what’s better?
- Can you think of a time in the past that you did not have this problem?
- What would have to happen for that to occur more often?
- When doesn’t the problem happen?
- What’s different about those time?
- What are you doing or thinking differently during those better times?
- When have you been able to stop doing…?

**Coping Questions:**
- How do you manage to cope with everything you’ve just described?
- What is it about you that got you through these difficult times?
- How do you manage to get out of bed in the morning?
- What is it you are doing that helps you make it through a bad day?
- What do you do that’s helpful?
- What do you do that stops the problem getting worse?

**Scaling Questions:**
- On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is the worst its ever been and 10 is after the miracle has happened, where are you now?
- Where do you need to be?
- What will help you move up one point?
- How can you keep yourself at that point?
- What would be the first sign that you have moved on one point further?
- Who would be the first person to notice you’ve moved one point up?
- What would they notice?

By using Solution Focused Approaches and Questioning will enable you at assessment interview stage and in the planning for your intervention delivery. Remember Social Work and Care Professionals are only ever ‘facilitators of change’. What we mean by this is that in order for the change to be successful (and/or permanent) you must get the 'buy in' from Service Users.