

Western Australian Solution Focused Interest Group (WASFIG) Meeting 12



WASFIG Best Hopes: Share, Connect, Grow, Learn, Develop

1. Share SF knowledge and update our SF knowledge since original training;
2. Connect and network with like-minded SF practitioners to enhance community and reduce isolation;
3. Grow interest in the SFBT approach in Perth and WA to do our bit to change the world one SF step at a time;
4. Learn where and with whom SF might be best applied in our practices;
5. Develop our clinical effectiveness and efficiency (we may only have a set number of sessions so how do we do the very best with each session as though it may be the only one or the last).

WASFIG Zoom Meeting 12: Saturday 29 April 2023 9:30am-11:30am WA Time

When: Saturday 29 April 2023 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (VIC/NSW/QLD = 11:30pm-1:30pm, SA/NT = 11am-1pm)

Where: Zoom

Attendees: Michele Thomas, Theresa Acutt, Nadia Truong, Kym Madden, Janet Lim, Shona Scallan, Johanna Saltis, Ruth Leveson, Sara Ristovska, Theresa Hewlett, Lisa Jooste, Eleni Goimil, Emma Burns, Steve Runciman and Kerry Drummond (Co-Cordinators).

Apologies: Yvette Strawbridge, Magdaline Wendot, Lisa Cregan, Annie Ross, Michael Bazeley, Brent Dagleish, Keera Pethick, Suzanne Milligan and Fiona Skahill.

Group Facilitator: Steve Runciman and Kerry Drummond

Group Presenter: Kerry Drummond with the support of all Attendees!

Topic: Benefits of Using SFBT in Supporting Clients Experiencing Family and Domestic Violence (FDV): How SFBT supports FDV survivors/victims to notice their resistance shown by their resilient version of self and works to amplify this to build on hope for possible futures which can empower clients to reclaim their lives.

Our April 2023 once again drew upon the knowledge and experience of our attendees in relation to working with clients experiencing FDV and the difference SFBT can make to empower clients. This could have included:

- a SF tip/strategy for working with clients experiencing FDV;
- a key idea from a Solution Focused training workshop on FDV you attended;
- a title of an interesting Solution Focused book or article you read on FDV and what you got out of it;
- an inspirational success story or sparkling moment of some good Solution Focused work you did with your clients experiencing FDV and what you did that contributed to the good outcomes;

- any other thoughts or questions you have for the group to consider when working with clients experiencing FDV from the Solution Focused approach.

Steve Runciman shared a Solution Focused tool by Guy Shennan (2017) which we used for our break out room exercise in trios to discover what has been good in our client work or in our lives more generally.

“What have you been pleased to notice about how you’ve been working recently?” This can be separate things in your life you are pleased to notice yourself doing or a few good things you saw yourself do in working with a client in session.

Ask what else 5x. Keep going until you have come up with 5 answers or for five minutes, whichever comes first.

Listener/Observer: Give feedback to speaker about what you appreciated hearing, what you were impressed by.

Shennan, G. (2017) Solution Focused Practice (Second edition). London: Bloomsbury

The group then watched the demonstration video by Anne Bodmer Ludz, psychiatrist and Executive Director of the Institute of Solution Focused Brief Therapy, working with her client Demi who was experiencing FDV. This video is available to view at the end of the article *Recognising the Power of a Women’s Voice: A Solution Focused Approach to Domestic Violence*: <https://solutionfocused.net/domestic-violence-approach/>

Kerry invited the group to share their thoughts and reflections on the following questions, and some of their insightful comments are recorded below:

1. What did you like about the way the practitioner worked with the client?

What’s been better since we last met? Be mindful of the importance of persisting with this question as the client initially responded with ‘nothing has been better’ as she had not thought about this. With some gentle persistence, the client realised a lot had been better as she had left her ‘jerk of a husband’! The practitioner can then go about discovering how she did this to highlight the client’s strength and courage of their resilient version of self – or whatever language the client would use to describe themselves.

Amplification – how has that been helpful for you? How else? What tells you your kids are ok even though it’s hard for them? What else?

Validation – this has been scary for you, hard for you.

How did you get out of the situation, you have been gone for a week, sounds it was really tough and scary for you, how did you do it? (How did you do that? - coping questions)

What are your Best Hopes for you and your kids moving forward?

What would you hope to do instead of putting yourself in these ‘stupid’ situations? Client: Finish school, close relationship with grandmother, work aged care – own money to take care of me.

What else would be your Best Hopes that your life is moving forward for your kids?

Scaling – 1-10 where 10 is confident you can move forward, 1 the opposite. 6 – what gives you confidence at a 6 – stayed away a week – how did you manage for this long? How helpful for kids even though they don’t realise it 10 – most helpful, 1 the opposite, 8 – what else makes it an 8 and not lower?

Appreciative summarising – impressed at your strength in a frightening situation, vision for yourself in future and your kids hopes for the future, stayed the week and using time to think, accept help despite difficulty. Notice when it’s a 4 – one point up.

2. What would you have done differently as the practitioner working with the client?

Rather than tell the client 'that takes tremendous strength/courage' to leave – ask them what would you call that kind of strength that you drew upon to leave this time?' Invite client to create their own language to be more meaningful for them and have opportunity to say they are a courageous person, avoid risking client saying I don't feel strong/courageous.

What are you pleased/proud to hear yourself say in the way you have supported yourself and your children through this scary time?

What does this tell you about the kind of person you can be at your best? (identity questions to improve client's self perception)

If you were to continue to draw on this strength/courage to keep caring for yourself and your children over the next few weeks, what would be the very first sign of this strength growing within you when you woke up tomorrow morning? How might your kids notice there is something different about Mom on this morning? Who else might notice? (Preferred future questions)

Explore scaling with more detail, how her kids might know Mom is a 6. What else would let her and others know she is a 6. Compare where she might have rated herself if we had asked her this question during a previous session.

What lesson do you hope to teach your kids about how best to live their lives and the kind of relationships to bring into their own lives?

Be mindful to let the client describe their own experience, let them come up with their own meaningful language, rather than the practitioner suggesting their language to describe the client's experience. Eg. The practitioner used the words 'scary' and 'courageous' rather than waiting to hear and use the client's own language to build into her next question.

Ensure to address the client's negative perception of herself as 'stupid' more directly, rather than relying on discussing what the client would want to be doing instead, as the client may not link this back to improve their self perception. Perhaps some more SF questioning around identity, summarising some of the many useful steps the client reported she has already taken, and asking the client how she might describe a person who takes similar steps to herself. Eg. Courageous, brave, strong.

Be mindful not to come across as judging/assessing the client's responses even in a positive way. Work to remain neutral/curious instead. The practitioner told the client her score on the scale of 8 was a 'good number'. This may also limit the client's possibilities to move further up the scale if they perceive the practitioner feels 8 is good enough for them.

Ensure not to close the session too abruptly. Find a way to invite the client to summarise the session for themselves, 'what have you heard yourself say today that you might find helpful to remember?' (Evan George closing question); use the client's language to summarise key topics they discussed that you appreciated them sharing in session rather than placing our judgement (even positive judgement) on the client.

Look to highlight the hopeful emotion the client might be feeling in the moment after describing the positive steps they have taken that they may not have noticed. Eg. feeling a sense of safety from leaving her partner and creating the foundation for a better life for herself and her children.

3. What might be a useful SF tip for working with FDV clients that you would like to take to use in your client work?

Asking Best Hopes for the client and best hopes for the client's children.

Importance of SFBT working to build 'secondary resilience' for our clients rather than 'secondary trauma' as Jacqui von Cziffra-Bergs has suggested.

Importance of inviting the client to identify a more hopeful perception of themselves by highlighting the evidence for this that the client might not have noticed, or forgot to since they were so focused on the problem, so they can leave the session to be more likely to change their reality as Elliott Connie has recommended.

Importance of being mindful which questions we ask the client as these can serve to highlight their strength and resilience rather than amplifying the struggle of their experience. As Steve Runciman has said before, SFBT aims to feel for but not aggravate a client's distress.

Recommended Readings:

Connie, E. and Froerer, A. (2023), The Solution Focused Brief Therapy Diamond: A new approach to SFBT that will empower both practitioner and client to achieve the best outcomes, Hay House Inc.: USA

Crosswhite, D., Kim, J., and Williams, S. (2018), Interpersonal Violence, in Solution Focused Brief Therapy with Client's Managing Trauma, A. Froerer, J. Cziffra-Bergs, J. Kim and E. Connie (Eds). Oxford University Press: New York

Medina, A. and Beyebach, M. (2014), The Impact of Solution Focused Training on Professionals' Beliefs, Practices and Burnout of Child Protection Workers in Tenerife Island, Child Care in Practice, 20:1, 7-36; <https://www.tandfonline.com/.../10.1080/13575279.2013.847058>

Milner, J. and Myers, S. (2017), Working with Violence and Confrontation Using Solution Focused Approaches: Creative Practice with Children, Young People and Adults, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Milner, J. and Singleton, T. (2008), Domestic Violence: solution-focused practice with men and women who are violent, Journal of Family Therapy, 30:29-53

Information for our Upcoming WASFIG Zoom Meeting 13 in June 2023

WASFIG Zoom Meeting 13: Saturday 24 June 2023 9:30am-11:30am WA Time

When: Saturday 24 June 2023 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (VIC/NSW/QLD = 11:30pm-1:30pm, SA/NT = 11am-1pm)

Topic: Meeting Evan George: Evan's Tips for Next Generation SF Practitioners

Evan George is one of the premier SF trainers, educators, and practitioners in the world today. He along with his colleagues and friends, Chris Iveson and Harvey Ratner, are the founders of BRIEF London over 30 years ago which is now the leading SFBT training organisation in the UK (see link: <https://www.brief.org.uk/>). Evan, Chris and Harvey contributed to the shift from SF 1.0 to SF 2.0, as Mark McKergow has called it, and mentor leading SF experts like Elliott Connie and Adam Froerer of the SFU. Evan is also an invaluable, generous and affirming consultant to Steve and Kerry personally in our SF professional development.

Evan talks more about how SFBT has evolved over the years to 2020 in this video: <https://vimeo.com/436732403>

Photo Left to Right: Harvey Ratner, Evan George, Chris Iveson and Elliott Connie – London, 2023.



The June WASFIG group is a chance to be introduced to one of the best in the field, considering Evan's reflections after 30 years of writing, teaching and training. We will explore Evan's thoughts on the advantages, and 'disadvantages' of SFBT, and how working from this approach can reduce the risk of burnout for practitioners. Evan also shares with us what he wishes he knew 30 years ago when he just discovered SFBT, and his 'top tips' for how to best work with 'I don't know' clients, or those who just really (really!) want a strategy, and clients who would like to talk about the problem. Another scholar (Joseph Campbell) once said, 'when you find someone good, read all you can of what they have written'. Not to be missed!

We will send around more information and resources once we have confirmed these, and invite you to come along and share your thoughts on Evan's recommendations and some top SF tips of your own! Please let Steve and Kerry know if you would like to join us and we will email you the Zoom link.

ASFA CONFERENCE BRISBANE 7-9 July 2023:

A special thank you to Emma Burns – President of the Australasian Solution Focused Association (ASFA) - for attending our April WASFIG meeting and sharing some insight into her amazing journey through SFBT since 2011, as well as her work in the DFV space using an SFBT approach. Emma also kindly invited us all to attend the upcoming ASFA Conference in Brisbane at the Queensland University of Technology for 2023, and outlined what attendees can look forward to!

Have a look at this link for more information and to register:

<https://www.solutionfocused.org.au/conference/2023-conference>

Remember to join the **Australasian Solution Focused Association** to access free workshops with special guest presenters during the year (which is recorded to access at a later time if you cannot attend), articles from the Journal of Solution Focused Practices, monthly online peer group supervision on Monday afternoons, and the members only Facebook group. <https://www.solutionfocused.org.au/>

FIND US ON FACEBOOK: WA SFBT Interest Group Facebook Group

Please join our WASFIG Facebook Group to keep connecting and building our network between meetings, see up to date news and information for our group, share great SFBT resources and get support in working with clients. If you have any more thoughts to add on this April Summary it would be great to start a discussion in the Facebook group so we can all join in: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/3103428583276551>

Thank you again to all attendees who shared their thoughts and experience of SFBT and we look forward to seeing you again at our June 2023 meeting.

The Nobel physicist Isaac Isador Rabi said, "There are questions which illuminate, and there are those that destroy. [We should] ask the first kind." Therapists who have cultivated an appreciation of the efficacy of questions understand that to question is to wield a powerful linguistic blade. It is necessary to ensure that the blade is used to reveal strength and beauty rather than to carve away these same qualities. (McGee, DelVento, & Bavelas, 2005, p.381)

(Heather Fiske (2008) *Hope in Action: Solution Focused Conversations About Suicide*, Chapter 2, page 37)