

# Western Australian Solution Focused Interest Group (WASFIG) Meeting 15



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

1. Share SF knowledge and update our SF knowledge since our original training;
2. Connect and network with like-minded SF practitioners to reduce isolation and enhance a community spirit;
3. Grow interest in the SFBT approach in WA and beyond and 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 for greater focus;
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 15 Review: Saturday 28 October 2023 9:30am-11:30am WA Time**

**When:** Saturday 28 October 2023 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (QLD = 11:30am-1:30pm; VIC/NSW = 12:30pm-2:30pm; SA/NT = 12pm-2pm; New Zealand = 2:30pm-4:30pm)

**Where:** Zoom

**Attendees:** Yvette Strawbridge, Johanna Saltis, Ruth Leveson, Theresa Hewlett, Keera Pethick, Lauren Daniel, Theresa Acutt, Steve Runciman and Kerry Drummond (Co-Coordinator).

**Apologies:** Janet Lim, Shona Scallan, Lisa Jooste, Daniela Kolundzija, Sara Ristovska, Andrea Yeo and Penny Jak.

**Group Facilitator:** Steve Runciman and Kerry Drummond

**Group Presenter:** Theresa Acutt

**Topic:** *Unlocking the Magic of Young People: SFBT with Children, Adolescents and Families*

How do we use SFBT to best support children, adolescents and their families?

Elliott Connie and Adam Froerer of the Solution Focused Universe (SFU) offer many useful SF tips in how to 'unlock the magic of young people' in working with young clients and their families effectively with the SFBT approach. One great tip they shared in their free video series *SFBT with Children and Families* is when the Best Hopes/Desired Outcome of a young client and their parents contradict each other - 'Don't Panic!'. Instead of panicking, listen for and build on the existing greatness within the family by asking SFBT questions that cause the family to compliment each other and help to invite the best versions of themselves into the session. Although the family tends to present in session with the story about 'what is not going well', remember that there is also the parallel story about their strength, resources and what is going well in the family. This is where SFBT shines the light to invite young clients and their families to notice the times that what they want to be happening has already happened. By learning about how this happened, families can work together to make this happen again more intentionally in future:

*If your parent knew that despite how difficult the relationship is now that you are someone they can trust, what are they overlooking?*

*What do you value about your child that if they knew you thought this about them, they would feel respected and loved?*

*Given things are difficult now, what do you know about your partner/family member that lets you know they are somebody worth working with and worth trying to fix the situation with?*

Adam Froerer (2023) just released a wonderful new video on this topic. Have a look at Adam's thoughts on working with teenagers here: <https://youtu.be/MWxXQ-wmruo>

We were delighted to have Theresa Acutt as our October 2023 presenter. Theresa is a Registered Counsellor working as a primary school based education assistant since 2012. She also provides helpline volunteer support for Grief Line, and started her own Private Practice in Mindarie in 2022. She is married and has a 21 year old daughter and a 18 year old son. Theresa first joined WASFIG during our April 2022 group. She kindly co-presented with Kerry Drummond for WASFIG October 2022 on Linda Metcalf's Solution Focused Narrative Therapy. Theresa is a passionate practitioner of SFBT, her warmth, encouragement and creativity in working with her clients is inspiring.

Attendees at our October 2023 WASFIG meeting were duly inspired by Theresa to work in a more creative, playful and respectful way with both children and adult clients! Theresa shared useful tips, provided illustrations of SF questions and stance from her own work with children, and kindly created a handout that is packed with SFBT resources in working with children from the SFBT approach which is attached with this summary. Theresa also recommended the following video during her presentation:

Ben Furman - empowering children to learn skills: <https://youtu.be/QhvY-W1gRGU>

### ***Thank You Theresa!***

Thank you to Theresa for agreeing to share her thoughts and experiences in working with children and families from the SFBT approach with us. Also for putting so much time and effort into preparing information for us and sharing very generous and thorough resources to send around to the group.

### ***Following up a Question Raised in the WASFIG Meeting: Working with Violent Children in a SF Way***

A question was raised during the group about how to work with violent or aggressive children in a solution focused way. This brought to mind Andrew Turnell's Signs of Safety Approach in working with children. Practitioners can set up a safety scale for clients at risk from 0-10, for example with 10 being everyone is living safely in a kind and respectful home and 0 everyone is feeling unsafe at home for clients to rate where they are on the scale and what puts them that high and where on the scale they would feel safe and what would be happening at this point. Have a look at this link for a video on a brief overview of the Signs of Safety Approach by Andrew and see the Signs of Safety Assessment and Planning Framework below this: <https://www.signsofsafety.net/what-is-sofs/> For more information in working with Family and Domestic Violence with the SFBT approach see the recommended book by Milner and Myers (2017) below which includes the Signs of Safety framework.

Kerry attended supervision with Evan George of BRIEF London and raised this question around working to create safety when children are violent or aggressive. In speaking with Evan, Kerry was reminded to never forget to believe the best in people, and to talk to the best of people, particularly during hard times. In addition to the safety scale, Evan had a number of useful suggestions for practitioners to keep in mind:

- Find out what parents are already doing that is working to keep everyone safe.
- Find out what is NOT working, even though it would seem the 'right' thing to do, but tends to make things worse and stop doing this.
- Remember to adopt the SF mindset (be a Resilientologist!) and assume children do not want to be aggressive or cruel to others: 'Would you like to do things differently?'... 'Yes'...'Would you like to be kind to

those around you?' (offer the word kind for a younger child, or ask how they would like to be instead if they did things differently) 'How would others around you notice that the kindness within you is growing?'

- Explore exceptions when the child resisted the urge to be violent 'tell me about the last time when you were really, really angry and upset that you had the urge to do X but did not and walked away instead?'...(remember gentle persistence if the first answer is that this has never happened as there are always exceptions even when the client forgot to notice them).. 'How did you do this?' 'What were you thinking about at the time that caused you to walk away instead?' 'What did others do that helped you to resist the urge and walk away?'
- If working with a child and you ask the question around whether they would like to continue aggressive behaviour and they do say 'yes' then you can ask 'I suppose you have a very good reason for that? What does this do for you? ... And if we were able to find some other ways to achieve X without others being hurt would this be good for you?' Continue to explore signs of feeling in control/heard etc. that happens without violence.
- Use the same 'honeymoon' talk that we would use with couples (when we explore the history of their relationship and how they met etc.) when we have a parent and child/teenager in the session. We could invite the parent to reflect on what their Best Hopes were for the kind of relationship they hoped they would have with their child in future that they looked forward to when their child was first born. This would be powerful in building hope/connection with the teenager listening to this in the session. Perhaps we could then invite the child/teenager to describe the kind of relationship they would like to have with their parent. Then we could even extend this to looking for glimpses of this relationship showing up over the years that they appreciate, and what both did to contribute to bringing this relationship about even a little bit, and of course signs of this desired relationship growing in future.

Evan recommended the book *Children's Solution Work (2010)* by Insoo Kim Berg and Theresa Steiner <https://www.amazon.com.au/Childrens-Solution-Work-Insoo-Berg/dp/0393703878> who provide a list of assumptions that inform the SF mindset when working with children and parents on page 18:

*Until proven otherwise we believe that all parents want to:*

*Be proud of their child*

*Have a positive impact on their child*

*Hear good news about their child and learn what their child is good at*

*Give their child a good education and a good chance at success*

*See that their child's future is better than their's*

*Have a good relationship with their child*

*Be hopeful about their child.*

*We believe that all children want to:*

*Have their parents be proud of them*

*Please their parents and other adults*

*Be accepted and be part of the social group in which they live*

*Learn new things*

*Be active and involved in activities with others*

*Be surprised and surprise others*

*Voice their opinions and their choices*

*Make choices when given an opportunity.*

### **Additional Recommended References:**

Ajmal, Y. and Ratner, H. (2020), *Solution Focused Practice in Schools: 80 Ideas and Strategies*, Routledge: London

Hsu, K., Eads, R., Lee, M. Y. and Wen, Z. (2020), Solution-focused brief therapy for behavior problems in children and adolescents: A meta-analysis of treatment effectiveness and family involvement, *Children and Youth Services Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105620>

Karababa, A. (2023), A Meta-Analysis of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy for School-Related Problems in Adolescents, *Research on Social Work Practice*, 0(0): 1-13 <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315231170865>

Metcalf, L. (2017), *Solution Focused Narrative Therapy*, Springer Publishing Company: New York

Milner, J. and Myers, S. (2017), *Working with Violence and Confrontation Using Solution Focused Approaches: Creative practice with children, young people and adults*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: UK

Ratner, H. and Yusuf, D. (2015), *Brief Coaching with Children and Young People: A Solution Focused Approach*, Routledge: New York

Sabella, R. A. (2020), *Solution-Focused School Counselling: The Missing Manual*, Sabella and Associates: USA

Yusuf, D. (2021), *The Solution Focused Approach with Children and Young People: Current Thinking and Practice*, Routledge: London

### **Information for our Upcoming WASFIG Zoom Meeting 16 in February 2024**

#### **WASFIG Zoom Meeting 16: Saturday 24 February 2024 9:30am-11:30am WA Time**

**When: Saturday 24 February 2024 9:30am-11:30am WA Time (QLD = 11:30am-1:30pm; VIC/NSW = 12:30pm-2:30pm; SA/NT = 12pm-2pm; New Zealand = 1:30pm-3:30pm)**

#### **Topic: Solution Focused Toolbox – BYO Solution Focused Magic**

Please join us again in 2024 for our next WASFIG meeting on **Saturday 24 February 2024 9:30am-11:30am (WA Time) (QLD = 11:30am-1:30pm; VIC/NSW = 12:30pm-2:30pm; SA/NT = 12pm-2pm; New Zealand = 1:30pm-3:30pm)**. We invite you to come along and Bring Your Own Solution Focused Magic by reflecting on useful SF tools, videos, articles, books and other learnings to share with the group in working with clients from the SFBT approach. Each attendee can have 5-10 minutes to share thoughts on:

- Any books or articles you have read or videos you watched and what you got out of these;
- Any great SF activities or exercises you have found useful for working with clients;
- An inspirational success story or sparkling moment of some good Solution Focused work you did with your clients and what you did that contributed to the good outcomes;
- Any other thoughts, recent learnings in SF trainings or workshops or questions you have for the group to consider when working with clients from the Solution Focused approach.

We would also like to invite you to reflect on the lessons you have learnt from 2023 about the kind of practitioner you aspire to be, and how you can intentionally implement these learnings to be at your best for 2024. You might find it useful to get creative and find an object to share with the group that best represents the practitioner you aspire to be! Please let Steve and Kerry ([counsellingwithkerry@gmail.com](mailto:counsellingwithkerry@gmail.com)) know if you would like to join us and we will email you the Zoom link.

## ***Postponed to 2024 - SFBT Skills Practice and Supervision Groups:***

Thank you for your interest and feedback on our ***SFBT Skills Practice and Supervision Groups***. Although we had initially hoped to begin the SFBT Skills Practice and Supervision Groups this year, we have received feedback that while there is interest in attending these groups, this time of year is busy with too many competing priorities.

***We have decided to postpone the groups until the new year and consider other possibilities for providing these and will confirm a new date and time once this has been set.***

Building on 'what works', our bi-monthly WASFIG meetings have been such a joy to be a part of due to the online accessibility and shared knowledge from passionate practitioners joining us from around Australia. One possibility we are considering is to offer these groups via Zoom instead to enable easier accessibility around client work and for interstate practitioners to join us. Another possibility is to offer smaller Zoom groups of 4 to 6 people at different times that either Kerry or Steve would facilitate, for example holding both a Friday morning and a Saturday morning Zoom group. This would enable greater flexibility around work and family commitments.

With these 2-hour SFBT Skills Practice and Supervision Groups we hope to build your confidence in being the SFBT practitioner you aspire to be. These would be open group sessions and invite practitioners to join through the year in whichever months would best suit. Our Best Hopes from these groups are to connect with professionals who are keen to sharpen their SFBT practice in a supportive environment, and to navigate common SFBT challenges to better support our clients and ourselves as practitioners.

**Cost:** \$80

Again, to thank our WASFIG members for walking along our SFBT journey over the last three years, we are offering a **10% discount ie \$72 for first group session attended by WASFIG members** who have been to a WASFIG meeting in person at Karrinyup or via Zoom, for Australasian Solution Focused Association (ASFA) members and to ***SFBT: The Three Essentials*** workshop attendees.

For more information on the ***SFBT Skills Practice and Supervision Groups*** please contact:

Steve on [srunciman@inet.net.au](mailto:srunciman@inet.net.au) or Kerry on [counsellingwithkerry@gmail.com](mailto:counsellingwithkerry@gmail.com)

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/>

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 October 2023 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 Theresa for a thought provoking and inspiring presentation, and to everyone who attended our October 2023 WASFIG group and shared their passionate for SFBT and encouraging words. We wish you an early Merry Christmas and Best Hopes for the New Year. So, what lesson are you pleased to have learnt from your 2023 practitioner self that will continue to inspire your confidence and resilience to be the very best practitioner version of yourself in 2024?

Warmly,

Kerry and Steve

WA SFBT Interest Group Co-Coordinator