

SFBT WA Interest Group Meeting 2

When: Saturday 17 April 2021 9:30am-11:30am

Where: Steve Runciman's rooms: 2nd Floor, Northcourt Building, corner Burroughs and Davenport Street, Karrinyup

Attendees: Steve Runciman, Kerry Drummond, Yvette Strawbridge, Michelle Thomas, Kris Giesen, Dawn Barrett

Apologises: Steve Edwards, Michael Bazeley, Rob Tyler and Lois Lily

Group Facilitator: Kerry Drummond

Group Best Hopes: Share SF knowledge and update our SF knowledge since original training; connect with like-minded SF practitioners and practitioners generally as working in private practice can be isolating; grow interest in the SFBT approach in Perth and WA to do our bit to change the world one SF step at a time; learn where and with whom SF might be best applied in our practices; develop our clinical effectiveness and efficiency (may only have a set number of sessions so how do I learn to do the very best with each session as though it may be the only one or the last).

Topic: Exploration of SF Ideas Useful in Guiding Sessions with Clients

SFBT: Simple Shifts to Make a Powerful Impact:

Sharing SF ideas we have come across that we find helpful to remember in working with clients:

- Evoke the hero in session to rise up and resolve their own problem (Elliott Connie - USA) by asking SF questions that are resource activating rather than problem activating (Arnoud Huibers – The Netherlands). The problem has nothing to do with the outcome (Steve de Shazer - USA). Discuss the outcome and the impact the outcome has on client's life and things get better. Problem is irrelevant to the client's capacity to change.
- In session we have a choice each time it is our turn to speak to ask a resource activating question (connected to the presence of client's Desired Outcome) – empowering client strength/resilience/recovery/hope VS a problem activating question – making problem more powerful and overwhelming the client (and ourselves).
- Client tends to be 'problem saturated' so they continue to bring the session back to the problem – will we choose to join in and ask problem question to activate the problem (how else is the problem impacting you?) or ask a resource activating question – it is important to validate struggle, empathise and shift towards hope ("I hear how hard it has been for you, ...pause, and yet and I wonder what small things you have done that you are proud of despite how hard it has been?") Empathise with the client's problem to not leave the client feeling ignored but then inspire their spirit – one foot in acknowledgement and one foot in possibility (Evan George – UK).
- Resource activating questions lead towards possibility, hopefulness, and eliciting the hero - resilient/coping version of the client in session. Asking resource activating questions can help client and counsellor feel less overwhelmed by the problem. Talking to the hero or best self coping/resilient/confident version of client in session evokes/empowers this version of client to take care of their problem themselves.
- Client leaves as an activated different version of themselves who is more aware of the option to go and do things differently. In follow up sessions we ask what is better to hear what they did differently. SFBT does not solve anything, it transforms the client to the version of themselves that they want to be, by evoking their best version of self, to then respond in a different more desired way.
- The magic of SFBT is in the mindset - the way we view clients and believe in them which makes change more likely. Go into sessions with a mindset of an explorer of client resilience despite the problem/trauma they present with; this empowers the client and ourselves as the counsellor.
- Show belief in client by asking more resource activating or pre-suppositional questions about client's desired outcome and description of this in the past, present and future more often. Rather than asking a question about the problem and magnifying this, get good at infusing Desired Outcome/Best Hopes throughout time. Asking a SF question when it is your turn to talk keeps the session focused on the presence of the client's Desired Outcome/Best Hopes. This creates hope and takes practice.

- SF questions show our belief in client but can be hard for clients to answer and clients may appear like they do not want to or can't answer the questions; choose to believe the client can answer the questions and when they do, even after the session, this will have a positive and life changing impact on a client's life (believe in client, not believe client – listen for hope and not to doubt) this is how to keep up gentle persistence and patience to ask the next SF question – which can be the same question asked a different way. Do not bail client out of their opportunity to answer question that could change their life. (Elliott Connie).
- Persisting to ask the client SF questions about their desired outcome communicates that we believe they can achieve their Desired Outcome which helps the client to be successful. If we stop asking client about their Desired Outcome it communicates to client we do not believe in them. Have stubborn belief in client capacity to change as we are meeting them in their valley not their peak. Belief in self takes work. Be deliberate to make sure actions are consistent with belief in client. See client for the capacity for which they have and help client interact with multiple difficult circumstances from their capacity. Client learns they are the kind of person who can do difficult things when necessary. Explore points of success (resources) to build evidence of their skillset.

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

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)

Group attendees thoughts on the topic:

- Trust the SF questions – think fast and talk slow.
- Teach clients to fish themselves by instilling within them SF ideas and questions to look for, such as what is working to keep building on.
- The SF approach can be conceptualised as spiritual discipline or art, a practitioner's way of being with the client in an appreciative, creative, respectful and curious way where we listen for exceptions that make 'exceptional' people.
- Good SF questions give to both client and practitioner - the client is valued, trusted and flourishes and practitioner can experience delight and sustenance, an antidote to burnout, in a vocation where we witness this on a daily basis.
- Weave hope and empowerment through the session by the questions and comments we make that use the client's language so that the client leaves an empowered/hopeful version of themselves.
- We can deepen the experience of a felt or imagined change Eg how will others see and know we are cheerful, hopeful, delighted to see them, and broaden the description eg How else will they know?
- Elliott Connie – if you want to change someone's mind use your language, if you want to change their heart use theirs.
- If we use a different word to depression, what would that mean to the client and with what effect on their responses. If we said to someone experiencing release or freedom, "the gate is open what is the next step?" what might that evoke in response from the client.
- Hope is contagious – with this attitude present it never looks like or happens that you are going to work.
- Find strength in the client's past to build resilience and ground people in strength.
- Chris Iveson – the way we look at the past has a massive impact on what we see; the push of a hopeful past and the pull of a hopeful future.
- Elliott Connie – not about removing the struggle, it's about showing up as your best for the struggle – help clients tap into the best version of themselves to better cope with a challenging situation – even if their job is not their preferred career, they can show up as the best version of themselves to cope with it.
- If we have a set number of sessions eg EAP or Medicare, what is the best resource activating questions to use? When have you succeeded before? What have you learnt from that time that might be helpful now in your life? What kind of strength did you draw upon to succeed previously? If this resilience were to continue to grow within you in future, what would be the first sign you are moving forward in the right way for yourself? What would your three wishes be?

Steve's SF Practice Tool Kit and I SHAPES ME EARS – When to do what in an SFBT session

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1073/solution-focused-practice-toolkit.pdf>

I SHAPES ME Steve's earlier version to remind him of how to know when to do what in a first SFBT session.

- Intake – what is the problem and how has it impacted you? More importantly, what have you done to help yourself and or how have you coped? Important to be empathic, create rapport and build the beginning of the essential therapeutic alliance.
- Strengths, Resources, of the person has that you are constantly listening out for so that their best resourced self can help build their better life.
- Hopes for the best outcome from the therapy overall, and after this and each session.
- Alternative preferred future. What would a better situation ideally look like for you?
- Progress toward that currently rated out of 10
- Exceptions to the problem and instances of the ideal scenario that are evidence of this progress
- Scaled sign of improvement. eg If you were to go up a smidgin on your measure above, what you and others be pleased to notice about you for you to tell me about next time?
- Message back to the client on what you see them doing well despite the circumstances, what seems to be important to them and perhaps a suggestion to do something, or simply notice anything better.
- Evaluation ie What are you taking away? Will we meet again? If so when would you like that to be?

Future group topics to be considered:

SF Mediation – Yvette Strawbridge to present some ideas from her client work

Grief and Loss

Trauma

Disability

Couples work

Suicide Prevention

News:

Steve Runciman is looking for a SF practitioner to rent his office space in Karrinyup on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Fridays – fortnights only for the Fridays. Contact Steve for more information.

Next SFBT WA Interest Group Meeting 3:

Saturday 26 June 2021 9:30am-11:30am at Steve's office in Karrinyup.

Topic: SFBT: Working with Clients who have Experienced Grief and Loss

Speaker: Kerry Drummond

SFBT WA Interest Group Meeting 4: Saturday 28 August 2021 9:30am-11:30am

Topic: Guest Speaker – Dr Andrew Turnell – SFBT Signs of Safety work in Child Protection

SFBT WA Interest Group Meeting 5: Saturday 23 October 2021 9:30am-11:30am

Topic: TBA

Thank you to all who attended our second SFBT WA Interest Group meeting. Looking forward to seeing everyone again and anyone else who would like to join us at the next meeting.