



## What is Solution Focused Practices?

**Solution-Focused Practices** as a coaching model were developed from:

- the systems thinking and communication research of Gregory Bateson;
- the psychotherapeutic findings of Milton Erickson;
- the 'Interactional View' developed by John Weakland and co-workers at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California;
- and the shift from problem to solution focus led by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg at the Brief Family Therapy Centre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Paul Z Jackson and Mark McKergow give the following definition:

*“Solution-Focus is a powerful, practical and proven approach to positive change with people, teams and organizations. The focus on solutions (not problems), strengths (not weaknesses) and on what’s going well (rather than what’s going wrong) leads to a positive and pragmatic way of making progress.”*

On the SFWork website (<http://www.sfwork.com/jsp/index.jsp?lnk=210>) Solution-Focused Practices are described as follows:

*“Solutions Focus is an exciting and complete approach to change. From origins twenty years ago, it is now being used by major corporations, top business schools and many coaches and consultants as the methodology of choice where efficient, respectful and lasting change is wanted.*

*The approach is based on simplicity and building on what works. Many people have attempted to sum up the subtleties of SF. Some descriptions which come close to capturing the flavour include:*

- *Finding what works and doing more of it.*
- *Putting positive difference to work.*
- *Radical simplicity.*

*As people get to know the approach, they realize that it is:*

- *A great way to find positive actions.*
- *A subtle skill with language, capable of delicate deployment in the most challenging situations.*
- *A new paradigm in the way we work with and speak about people.*

Mark's book *The Solutions Focus* (co-authored with Paul Z Jackson) describes the approach in terms of six SIMPLE principles and six solutions tools. The SIMPLE principles are:

- Solutions - not problems.
- Inbetween - the action is in the interaction.
- Make use of what's there - not what isn't.
- Possibilities - from the past, present and future.
- Language - simply said.
- Every case is different - beware ill-fitting theory.

The six solutions tools are:

- Platform - where are we starting from?
- Future Perfect - suppose the problem went away overnight - what would happen instead?
- Scaling - where are we now?
- Counters - whatever helps us forward.
- Affirm - what's already going well?
- Small Actions - tiny next steps that make big differences.

**Solution-Focused Practices** is an approach to help people who got stuck in a problem. It is a technique to give people hope for change. It works from the following premises:

- 🕒 **Coaching needs to take a goal orientation.** A focus on the possible and changeable is more helpful than a focus on the problematic. Analysis of the problem is not necessary to come to a solution. No problem is always the same in intensity. Solutions are to be found in those situations when the problem is less of a problem or does not exist. Exceptions to the problem are significant to the solution.
- 🕒 **The client is the expert.** Most clients already have the recourses, strengths and competencies to get to their preferred solution. The coach's role is to facilitate a process whereby the client can arrive at his/her preferred future.
- 🕒 **The client determines what comes onto the table of the coaching session.** It's all about what the client wants. The coach gives guidance to reach an attainable and sustainable goal and makes sure that all influences are considered. The coach gives motivation for the change in behavior.
- 🕒 **Change is happening all the time.** The task of the coach is to help the client to be on the lookout for positive changes so that they can continue in that direction. Small changes within a system can be amplified to great effect. Even rapid change is possible, if not probable.
- 🕒 **The future is negotiated and created.** Coaches are co-authors in rewriting the client's success story. The action is in the interaction of all role players. The focus is on tasks rather than insight. We focus on what is observable and describable rather than what is unseen.
- 🕒 **There is not only one "right" way of looking at things.** Different views may fit the facts just as well. We should be careful of being "married" to a preferred model. One size does not fit all.
- 🕒 **Do not fix what is not broken.**
- 🕒 **Find what works, and do more of it.**
- 🕒 **If it does not work, don't do more of it.** Stop digging the hole deeper.
- 🕒 **Focus on what fits the client and his/her situation today.**

### References:

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